



Support Grants Handbook

A1: Introduction, overview and contents

In this section:

What we are working towards
MS Society support grants
About the Support Grants Handbook
Where to find documents signposted in this handbook
Support Grants Handbook contents

People with MS sometimes have additional needs as a result of their MS, and may need financial support to meet them. They may need equipment such as wheelchairs, riser-recliner chairs, computers and communication aids, adaptations to their homes or vehicles, or just need to take a short break away.

Sometimes these needs can be met by statutory funding. However statutory funding is not always available, and even when it is, it is often means tested and doesn't always cover the full cost. We aim to address this gap by providing grants to people affected by MS.

What we are working towards

Our ultimate **aim** is to beat MS.

Our **vision** is 'a world free of the effects of MS' and our **mission** is 'to enable everyone affected by MS to live to their full potential and secure the care and support they need until we ultimately find a cure'.

Our seven long-term organisational goals guide all of our work. These goals reflect the hopes and aspirations of people affected by MS, and are in order of priority.

Goal 1: Effective treatments - People with MS will have access to effective treatments for their condition, including treatments which can slow, stop or reverse the accumulation of disability.

Goal 2: Responsive care and support - People with MS, including those being diagnosed, will have access to support that is responsive to their needs and recognises them as equal partners in their care.

Goal 3: Preventing MS - Progress in research means that fewer people will develop MS.

Goal 4: Quality information - People affected by MS will have access to high quality information that meets their needs.

Goal 5: A strong community, independent lives - People affected by MS will be able to live their lives, strengthened by a community that ensures no one has to face MS alone.

Goal 6: Supporting families and carers - The families and carers of people with MS will have access to the support they need.

Goal 7: Greater certainty about the future - People with MS will have greater certainty about how their condition will progress.

Everything we do, we do to make progress towards our goals. To achieve them, we'll need to be an effective and efficient organisation, ensuring that we've got the resources and profile we need.

MS Society support grants

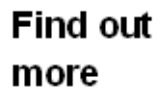
Financial assistance is a key part of the support that branches can offer to people affected by MS. Our grants make a difference to the lives of people with MS and their families and carers by maintaining or improving their quality of life. They also recognise the valuable role played by family and friends who are carers. Support grants enable them to take up an activity outside of their caring role, or to take a complete break from this role.

About the Support Grants Handbook

The **Support Grants Handbook** is for branch volunteers who deal with grant requests for people affected by MS across the UK. It will support you to develop the knowledge and skills to award grants from your branch. To do this, the handbook:

- explains why the MS Society provides grants
- describes the key principles that guide our approach to grantmaking
- gives detailed information on key grantmaking policies
- describes the minimum standards your branch must meet
- outlines the roles of branches and the **Grants Team** in grantmaking
- supports you to work with other funders where necessary
- includes real life case studies and frequently asked questions

You may have received this guide as part of your **MS Support training**, but it is also a stand alone reference guide for you to use as and when you need to.


Find out more

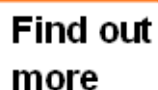
MS Support training is a four module programme for all **Support Volunteers**, covering the things you need to know and do in your role. Find out more:

- on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/ms-support-training>
- by contacting your **Local Networks Officer**

Top tip: Contact details for staff referred to can be found in [Appendix 1: Sources of support](#). Job titles rather than names are used so that this publication doesn't date when somebody leaves their post.

Where to find documents signposted in this handbook

The **Support Grants Handbook** signposts to a range of more detailed resources - look out for the **find out more** boxes throughout:


Find out more

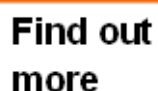
Further guidance can generally be found:

- on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk>
- by requesting a printed copy from the **staff member** indicated

Top tip: You can find a list of all volunteer website resources referred to in the **Support Grants Handbook** in [Appendix 2: Volunteer website resource index](#)

You'll also find the answers to common queries about grants in [Appendix 9: Grantmaking frequently asked questions](#)

The **Support Grants Handbook** on the **volunteer website** will always be the current version and we'll tell you when we've made changes in **Teamspirit**, our UK volunteer newsletter. We've also added a **version control box** at the end of each section so you know when it was last reviewed.


Find out more

See current and back issues of **Teamspirit**:

- on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/teamspirit>
- by requesting printed copies from the **Communications Team**

Must I do these things?

Where the word 'must' is used in this handbook, it means a specific requirement that you must comply with. Where the words 'may', 'should' or 'you are recommended to' are used, these indicate best practice - in other words, the suggested best approach.

If you are not meeting particular 'must' requirements in this handbook, please speak to your **Local Networks Officer** who can give you support in these areas.

Support Grants Handbook contents

Part A - Grantmaking fundamentals

A1: Introduction, overview and contents

- What we are working towards 1
- MS Society support grants 2
- About the Support Grants Handbook 2
- Where to find documents signposted in this handbook 3
- Support Grants Handbook contents 5

A2: Our grantmaking principles and policies

- Principles 8
- Policies 10

A3: The grantmaking process

- The role of branches 13
- The role of the Grants Team 14
- The role of local staff 15
- The grantmaking process flowchart 16

Part B - Branch grantmaking

B1: Developing your branch grantmaking policy and processes

- Branch grantmaking minimum standards 17
- Your branch grantmaking policy 17
- Considering grants 19
- Payment of grants 20
- The grants sub-committee 21
- The role of the Support Volunteer 21
- Application forms 23
- Recording and reporting grant awards 24

B2: Funding branch grantmaking

- Funding for individual grant requests 26
- Funding your branch grantmaking programme 27
- Resources to help you make an application 27

B3: Reaching people

- Publicising MS Society financial support 30
- Representing the MS Society 31
- Resources to help you reach people 32

Part C - MS Society national grant funds**C1: The Individual Support Grant Fund**

- Aims of the fund 34
- Fund criteria 35
- Statutory funding 35
- Examples of statutory funding 36
- Grant categories 39
- The application process 40

C2: The Short Breaks and Activities Fund

- Aim of the fund 44
- Fund criteria 44
- Grant categories 45
- The application process 46
- Information and support for planning short breaks 48

C3: The Carers Grant Fund

- Aims of the fund 49
- Fund criteria 50
- Grant categories 50
- The application process 51
- Examples of Carers Grants awarded 52

Part D - Reviewing and reporting on your grantmaking**D1: Reviewing and reporting on your grantmaking**

- Reviewing your branch grantmaking policy 54
- Recording and reporting grant awards 54
- Sharing information 55
- Equality monitoring 56
- If something goes wrong 56

Templates

T1: Branch grantmaking policy	
• Guidance	58
• Template	60
T2: Grantmaking report to full committee	61
T3: Record of emergency grants and requests under £200	62
T4: Branch grantmaking pro forma	63
T5: Grantmaking letter templates	
• Application form covering letter	65
• Letter to inform applicant their request has been sent to the Grants Team	67
• Letter to inform applicant of branch grant award, with payment to a supplier	68
• Letter to inform applicant of branch grant award, with payment to the applicant	69
• Letter to inform applicant their request has been part funded	70
• Letter to inform applicant their request has been declined	71

Appendices

X1: Sources of support	73
X2: Volunteer website resource index	75
X3: Retrospective grant applications policy statement	78
X4: Grantmaking process flowchart	80
X5: Working safely	81
X6: Individual Support Grant categories and upper limits	82
X7: Requests we cannot fund	84
X8: Letters of support required	86
X9: Grantmaking frequently asked questions	89

A2: Our grantmaking principles and policies

In this section:

Principles:

- Helping everyone affected by MS
- Fairness
- Confidentiality and data protection
- Accountability
- Value for money

Policies:

- Retrospective grants
- Loans
- Financial criteria
- Statutory funding

Grantmaking principles across the MS Society

We have a responsibility to target our resources to those affected by MS who are most in need. We also need to make sure we manage our resources responsibly. To help us do this, we have developed some key principles that apply to both branch and national grantmaking.

Helping everyone affected by MS

Our **constitution** says that we will help anyone with MS, whether or not they are a member of the MS Society. Our grants are equally available to members and non-members.

Find out more

You can find our **constitution** and other important documents:

- on our **volunteer website**,
<http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/ms-society-policies-and-documents>
- by requesting a printed copy from the **Volunteering Team**

There are many reasons why someone may wish to become a member, such as to join a social or support group, to meet other people affected by MS, or raise funds for the MS Society.

However, there are also many reasons why a person may choose not to join. It may be that they are still coming to terms with their MS, they are keeping their diagnosis secret from friends and family for now, or simply that they are not the

type of person who becomes a member of a formal organisation. We must respect their choice and it must not affect their application for a grant.

You may even find that some applicants become a member of your branch after receiving a grant!

Top tip: Ensuring people beyond your membership know they can apply for support grants can be challenging. See [B3: Reaching people](#) for a range of ways to publicise MS Society financial support in your local area.

Fairness

Branches must clearly define the type of financial assistance they will provide, and make consistent decisions about requests for grants.

Setting a **branch grantmaking policy** helps to ensure fairness and clarity in your grantmaking. It must be used to assess all requests for grants and be made available to anyone that asks to see it,

Forming a **grants sub-committee** to assess grant requests will make decisions more consistent, whilst respecting confidentiality. The assessment must be based on a person's needs and circumstances. Don't be influenced by things like whether you know the applicant, or their personal lifestyle choices.

Top tip: [B1: Developing your grantmaking policy and processes](#) will give your branch the knowledge and tools to meet our grantmaking standards.

Confidentiality and data protection

Applying for financial assistance is personal and involves providing sensitive information. We have a duty to protect personal information given by applicants and to treat all applications confidentially and sensitively. All information given is subject to the **Data Protection Act** and there is a statement on all grant application forms that applicants must read and sign.

Find out more

Learn about our **data protection policy**:

- on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/data-protection>
- in our **Committee Handbook**, [B8 - Data protection](#)
- by requesting support from your **Local Networks Officer**

Your grants sub-committee must make sure only those making grant decisions have access to personal information. When grants are reported back to the full committee, they must be anonymised.

Top tip: You can find a list of all volunteer website resources referred to in the **Support Grants Handbook** in [Appendix 2: Volunteer website resource index](#)

You'll also find the answers to common queries about grants in [Appendix 9: Grantmaking frequently asked questions](#)

Accountability

As an organisation, we need to show that we have spent our resources appropriately and effectively. Local and national expenditure must be formally accounted for and reported on annually, to meet financial regulations and legislation. To do this locally, all branches must have a formal process for awarding, recording and reporting on their grantmaking. Branches must have a branch grantmaking policy, and complete and return the MS Society annual branch grantmaking pro forma.

Value for money

The MS community, including branches, works incredibly hard to raise funds to benefit people affected by MS. We therefore have a responsibility to award our grants wisely and consider value for money when assessing grant applications. We have limited resources and need to target funds towards meeting the most essential needs.

We ask for at least two quotes to make sure a competitive price has been found. Sometimes applicants ask for expensive items, and we need to consider whether this is a preference or if this meets an essential need. We ask for a letter of support to help us identify what is essential and what is an individual's preference.

Top tip: See [Appendix 8: Letters of support required](#) for more on the information required from health and social care professionals and others to support grant applications.

Grantmaking policies across the MS Society

We have developed key policies that apply to both branch and national grantmaking. This is to ensure we use our resources as effectively as possible and that we comply with relevant regulations and Charity Commission guidance.

Retrospective policy

Except in exceptional circumstances, the MS Society cannot award a grant where an applicant has already placed an order or paid money towards an item. If someone has already paid even a deposit, it suggests that either, a) they felt able

to meet the expense, or b) they may have put themselves at financial risk by committing to purchases they could not afford with the expectation of receiving a grant that may not be awarded.

It can be very difficult to have to say no to an applicant who has already made a payment, and has then found out about our grants, but this rule should still apply, other than in very exceptional circumstances. For example, an exception could be if someone has an unexpected and significant change of circumstances, such as becoming unable to work after a relapse. They may have placed a deposit on something, expecting to be able to pay the balance, only for their financial circumstances to have changed.

Top tip: You can find a full copy of this policy in [Appendix 3: Retrospective grant applications policy statement](#). You can also contact the **Grants Team** for support.

Loans

The MS Society cannot provide loans. We are not regulated to do so and do not have the resources to administer a loans system. Grants do not have to be repaid. If a person wishes to repay the grant, this should be treated as a donation to the branch, or to the MS Society through our **Supporter Services Team**.

Top tip: Contact details for staff referred to can be found in [Appendix 1: Sources of support](#). Job titles rather than names are used so that this publication doesn't date when somebody leaves their post.

Financial criteria

In order to help us to direct our resources to those most in financial need, we have savings limits in place for each of the grants we award. The majority of applicants have little or no savings, and while we acknowledge that people with savings over these limits may feel it is unfair, we need to prioritise our funds.

Our savings limits are in line with capital rules for means tested benefits and local authority charging for care homes, which is why there are different limits for Individual Support Grants and Short Breaks and Activities Grants. The limits are explained in **Part C** of this handbook.

Unless an applicant receives one of the means tested benefits listed on the application form, they are asked to provide their income and outgoings. If they receive one of these benefits, it shows they have been through a means test and are on the most basic level of income.

It is impossible to have a cut off level of income, because we look at each individual's circumstances, which can vary enormously. However, this information

gives an overall picture that we can use to prioritise requests. If an applicant has a much higher income than their outgoings, we would generally expect them to contribute towards the cost of their request.

Statutory funding

Local authorities and health services have a statutory duty to provide assistance to disabled people, and as a charity, we cannot replace this funding. The most common items that may be funded are home adaptations and wheelchairs, and sometimes equipment (through social services or health services). See [C1: The Individual Support Grant Fund](#) for more information.

Statutory funding is generally means tested, so even if a person's needs are eligible for funding, they may not meet financial criteria. In this situation, we can consider a grant.

Further information on the duties of statutory authorities can be found in the **Disability Rights Handbook** or is available from the **Grants Team**.

Disability Rights Handbook

The **Disability Rights Handbook** is updated every year and provides clearly written, in-depth, information on the entire benefits and independent living system. We recommend all MS support teams have a copy to refer to.

You can order yours from <http://disabilityrightsuk.org/> or by calling 020 7250 8191.

A3: The grantmaking process

In this section:

- The role of branches**
- The role of the Grants Team**
- The role of local staff**
- The grantmaking process flowchart**

The role of branches

We guarantee to all people affected by MS that whichever branch they approach, they will get the information and support they need. We can say this because we have eight essential standards in place for MS Society branches.

All branches must meet the eight requirements listed below for supporting people affected by MS. You are all responsible as a management committee for providing the eight essentials, with the chair having overall responsibility.

The eight essentials for MS Society branches

You must:

1. be easy to contact by phone and email
2. send out a regular newsletter
3. offer support to everyone affected by MS
4. make our publications available to all
5. keep an up-to-date list of local contacts to signpost people to
6. be contactable for newly diagnosed people
7. supply appropriate information to new contacts
8. provide necessary financial support

Top tip: Each essential activity has a list of agreed standards. These break down each requirement into smaller steps. We've developed a range of **how to guides** and other resources to help you to achieve the essentials and offer quality support to people affected by MS.

Find out more

Find out more about our **essential requirements**:

- on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/branch-and-group-basics/eight-essential-requirements>
- by requesting support from your **Local Networks Officer**

The branch grantmaking role is to:

- provide information and support on MS Society grants to people with MS and their families and carers
- provide information on MS Society grants to health and social care professionals
- assess and award grants for individuals from the Individual Support Grants Fund and forward applications to the **Grants Team** for further funding where needed
- provide information on the Short Breaks and Activities Fund and Carers Grants Fund
- signpost applicants to other sources of funding, including statutory and other charitable funders, such as local trusts and charities
- monitor, evaluate and report on grantmaking activity and impact for individuals within the branch, to support local campaigning and fundraising activities and future grantmaking

Top tip: Providing grants can be an important first contact with branches for people affected by MS, which can lead to wider forms of support or branch involvement.

The role of the Grants Team

The **Grants Team** works closely with people affected by MS, branch volunteers, health professionals, local and national staff and other charities, to support people affected by MS.

The Grants Team role is to:

- develop grantmaking policy, establish national guidelines and procedures and support branches to adapt these guidelines for local circumstances
- provide guidance on MS Society grants to people affected by MS and their families and carers
- provide assisted information to help people affected by MS to secure funding from statutory providers - we give active information and support that goes beyond signposting, but is short of casework representation
- provide information on our grants to health and social care professionals

- assess and award grants for individuals from our Individual Support Grant Fund, the Short Breaks and Activities Fund and the Carers Grant Fund
- help to develop and update the MS Support programme
- provide bespoke grants training and workshops to branch volunteers and local staff
- offer guidance to support volunteers on grantmaking
- provide information to branches and applicants on accessing funding from other sources (statutory and charitable)
- submit grant applications on behalf of people with MS to other funders, to access further funding on their behalf
- monitor, evaluate and report on grantmaking activity and impact for individuals across the MS Society, to support campaigning and fundraising activities and future grantmaking

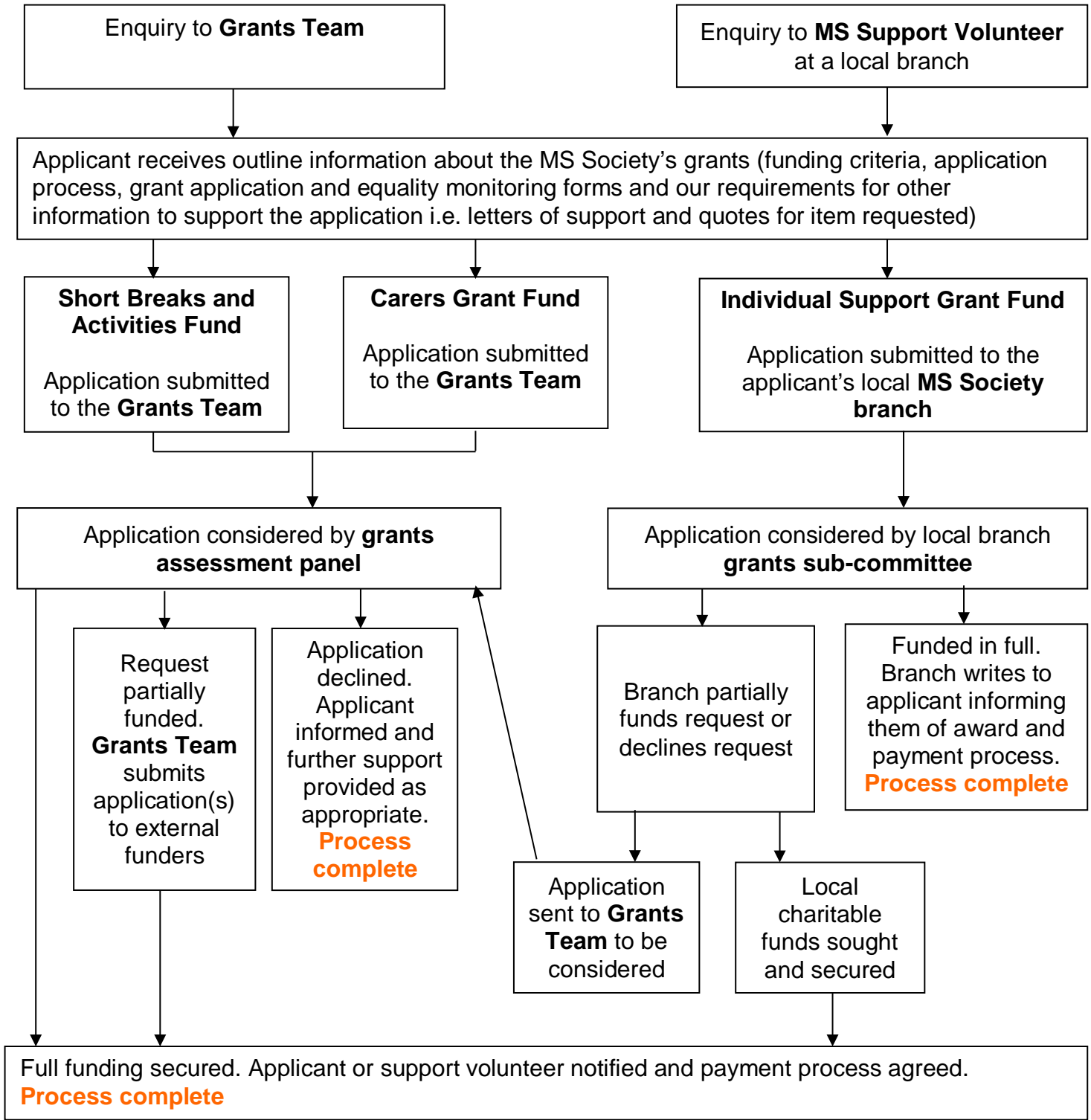
The role of local staff

Your **Local Networks Officer** is there to work alongside you, supporting the development of your branch. This includes supporting you to develop your grantmaking policy and grants sub-committee, to help people affected by MS through the provision of branch grants, and local information about grantmaking.

Your **Area Fundraiser** can support you to apply to local charitable trusts to raise funds to help you offer more support grants to local people.

Top tip: Contact details for staff referred to can be found in [Appendix 1: Sources of support](#). Job titles rather than names are used so that this publication doesn't date when somebody leaves their post.

The grantmaking process



NB: Your branch may also consider grants for short breaks and carers, but this is not a compulsory requirement. You will need to follow the same process as for **Individual Support Grants**, using **Short Breaks and Activities** and **Carers Grant Fund** application forms.

B1: Developing your branch grantmaking policy and processes

In this section:

Branch grantmaking minimum standards
Your branch grantmaking policy
Considering grants
Payment of grants
The grants sub-committee
The role of the Support Volunteer
Application forms
Recording and reporting grant awards

This section gives an overview of what you need to consider and put in place as a branch. It covers minimum standards for branches, developing grants policies and procedures, and the role of the grants sub-committee and **Support Volunteers**.

Branch grantmaking minimum standards

To help branches to meet our grantmaking principles, all branches must adhere to the minimum standards listed below:

- All branches must develop a branch grantmaking policy and review it at least once a year
- All branches must form a grants sub-committee to consider requests
- All applications must be considered within four weeks
- All requests above £200 must be submitted on an MS Society grant application form
- All applications below £200 must be formally recorded in writing
- All branch grantmaking activity must be reported back to the MS National Centre in London, annually

Your branch grantmaking policy

Your branch committee has a responsibility to ensure that branch funds are spent effectively and fairly, while respecting the confidentiality of applicants.

To do this, each branch must establish a clear and fair grants policy which can be made available to anyone who asks to see it.

Top tip: See [T1: Branch grantmaking policy guidance and template](#) for help putting your grantmaking policy together. The **Grants Team** and your **Local Networks Officer** are also available to help you develop or review your branch grants policy.

Contact details for staff referred to can be found in [Appendix 1: Sources of support](#). Job titles rather than names are used so that this publication doesn't date when somebody leaves their post.

Your branch grantmaking policy should be a shared document, developed and agreed by the full committee, for the grants sub-committee to work to. This enables the sub-committee to consider applications confidentially within an agreed framework, feeding back to the full committee anonymously. The importance of the branch policy is not solely the document which is produced, but the discussions you have had as a full branch committee to develop it.

Top tip: When developing your policy, take formal notes that you can refer to when you come to update your policy. You may have new committee members who weren't around when you drafted your policy last time.

Your policy must include:

- what your branch will and won't fund
- maximum grant limits
- how often someone can apply
- how your branch will deal with emergency grants
- how grants will be paid
- how often the sub-committee will meet
- details of how members will be elected to the grants sub-committee and how long they will stay in this role

Your committee should review your grantmaking policy on a regular basis, ideally every year. This means you will be able to react to changes in circumstances, for example receiving a large donation, or increased demand for grants beyond the branch's resources.

Top tip: The **Committee Handbook** is our key resource for branches. It includes guidance on MS Society strategy, policies and working practices as they apply to your branch. See [C3: Committee guidelines and meetings](#) for information on how to organise your branch committee and grants sub-committee.

Top tip: You can find a list of all volunteer website resources referred to in the **Support Grants Handbook** in [Appendix 2: Volunteer website resource index](#)

You'll also find the answers to common queries about grants in [Appendix 9: Grantmaking frequently asked questions](#)

National guidelines - local circumstances

The branch policy must be based on national grantmaking policies but shaped to your local circumstances.

To ensure our grantmaking is as consistent as possible for people affected by MS we have developed a national approach. This includes the key principles and policies outlined in Part A, funding criteria (see Part C) and a list of eligible categories for the Individual Support Grants Fund (see [Appendix 6](#)).

However, local factors such as the demand for grants or other forms of support, and the amount of branch funding available will influence a branch's grantmaking policy and the range of items that you are able to fund. Your branch policy should reflect these factors.

For example...

Branches in an area with a high number of people affected by MS, and therefore a high demand on branch resources, might set a policy that limits support to one grant per person every two years. This means they can offer grants to more people. But this limit may be one grant per person per year in an area with a lower number of people affected by MS, where demand is less. The national limit is one grant per applicant every two years for Individual Support Grants due to the high level of demand we receive.

Similarly, branches may use their policy to decide a set grant amount, or maximum amounts they would offer. Some branches follow the upper limits used by the **Grants Team** for their grant awards, but for a branch with low reserves, these amounts are likely to be too much and they would need to set their own reduced limits.

Considering grants

For Individual Support Grants, there is a list of broad grant categories, with upper grant limits for each, reviewed by the **Grants Team** annually. We also have guidance about requests that cannot be considered under the Individual Support Grants fund (see [Appendix 6: Individual Support Grant categories and upper limits](#) and [Appendix 7: Requests we cannot fund](#)). We suggest you use these as a basis

for your own policies, adjusting the grant limits in line with your resources. Branches have discretion to consider other requests, as long as they meet the criteria set out in [C1: The Individual Support Grant Fund](#).

Emergency grants

Although emergency grants cannot be considered from national funds, branches have the flexibility and local contacts to be able to consider grants to help prevent or deal with a crisis. This may include short term living expenses or one-off care support in an emergency, where there is a direct threat to health or safety and no statutory funding is immediately available.

Many branch committees have used their grantmaking policy to allow their **Lead Support Volunteer** to award small emergency grants to an agreed amount without the need to approach another committee member. This is only advisable for **Support Volunteers** who have plenty of experience of the type of requests for help that they receive. This could perhaps be applied after serving as **Support Volunteer** for one year and should be reviewed regularly by the full committee.

Payment of grants

Each **Branch Treasurer** must keep adequate records of payment for audit purposes and at some point will need to know the identity of the beneficiary. For more on recording grants, see [Treasurers' Handbook section 8: Accounting guidance](#).

Find out more

You can also find our full **Treasurers' Handbook**:

- on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/our-treasurers-handbook>
- by requesting a printed copy from the **Volunteering Team**

Branches should ideally make payments to the suppliers of the item or service supported through a grant. However, many suppliers have stopped accepting cheques and the best prices are often online so payments can only be made by card.

If a supplier does not accept cheques, you may be able to buy vouchers for the grant recipient to use - you will need to ask for a copy of their receipt once they have purchased the item.

In some cases the only option is to pay the applicant. Ideally in this situation the person would pay for the item themselves (after the grant has been agreed), forward a copy of their receipt and then the branch would reimburse them by cheque. If the person does not have the funds to pay and needs to be paid the grant first, you can pay the person. However you must make sure that you get receipts for the item as soon as possible. They must be told that if they do not provide receipts this may affect future applications to the MS Society.

You should never order an item directly for a grant recipient. To do this means that you enter into a contractual relationship with the provider. This could be problematic for the branch and grant recipient if the equipment should prove to be faulty. Ask the grant recipient to place the order and then pay against the order, making sure that any invoices show the grant recipient as the customer.

The grants sub-committee

For reasons of confidentiality, it is not appropriate to consider applications in full branch committee meetings. Branch committee members may know applicants and in turn, those needing help may be put off if they have to approach people they know.

Individual branch volunteers should not make decisions on grant applications alone, except in exceptional circumstances (see **Emergency grants** above). Branches need to ensure that they are paying care and attention to their duty of care over MS Society resources. Regardless of how efficient and conscientious the **Support Volunteer** may be, unless other volunteers are involved in the decision-making, the branch will not be in a position to do this effectively. Branch volunteers have a collective responsibility to account for the proper use of branch funds.

Forming a grants sub-committee allows the branch to consider applications confidentially but still collectively, in line with a grant policy which has previously been approved by the full branch committee. The grants sub-committee must report back to the full branch committee with brief anonymised details of grants made.

The membership of the grants sub-committee is at the full committee's discretion, but we suggest that it contains three people, ideally a branch **Support Volunteer**, the **Treasurer** and one other - this will therefore usually include a cheque signatory.

The sub-committee should meet to consider applications regularly or when necessary, to make sure all requests are considered within four weeks. With three people it should be fairly easy to come together at short notice or contact one another by phone or email, providing a fast service to grant applicants.

The role of the Support Volunteer

As well as providing general support for people with MS in the local area, the role of the **Support Volunteer** is essential to local grantmaking. All requests for help should be dealt with by a member of your branch support team.

Find out more

Our **Support Volunteers** provide safe, consistent, high quality support to people with and affected by MS. Find out more:

- on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/offering-support-people-affected-ms>
- by contacting your **Local Networks Officer**

The **Support Volunteer's** duties will include some or all of the following:

- Giving out grant application forms (although these may sometimes be issued by the **Grants Team** or others)
- Helping people with MS to complete their application form. Some form of contact should be made with all applicants, either by phone or in person. If you have enough **Support Volunteers** to help manage the workload, you may find it useful to split the branch into a number of areas each covered by a different volunteer. They will then be in a position to support each other's work and provide cover during times of holiday or illness.

Visiting applicants

Often **Support Volunteers** will visit applicants to help them fill in our grant application form. As well as saving time, this can ensure the necessary information is included. When meeting and visiting applicants in their homes it's really important that you consider how to keep yourself and others safe. It's unlikely that anything will happen, but taking some simple precautions is a good idea. See [Appendix 5: Working safely](#) for ways to stay safe when offering support.

- Answering questions on the application process for the applicant, including possible sources of local funding
- Telling people the outcome of the branch's decision about their application.

Sharing the outcome

Understandably, people want to know as soon as possible whether their grant has been approved, but it can be stressful for **Support Volunteers** to have to give unwelcome news. We recommend your branch only informs applicants in writing (unless in emergency situations) but even if you do call an applicant, you should always follow this up in writing.

If a request is declined, it is good practice to let the applicant know how the decision was reached. Every possible action should be taken to minimise the stress that applicants might experience, and if they can understand the reasoning behind a decision not to fund a request, they are more often able to accept it.

See [T5: Grantmaking letter templates](#) a range of templates you can personalise to keep people informed throughout the application process. Copy the appropriate letter text onto your [MS Society branch letter template](#) before sending:

- Application form covering letter
- Letter to inform applicant their request has been sent to the Grants Team
- Letter to inform applicant of branch grant award, with payment to a supplier
- Letter to inform applicant of branch grant award, with payment to the applicant
- Letter to inform applicant their request has been part funded
- Letter to inform applicant their request has been declined

Application forms

All branches should have a supply of Individual Support Grant Fund, Short Breaks and Activities Fund and Carers Grant Fund application forms to send to potential grant applicants and other enquirers.

Top tip: Copies of application forms are available from the **Grants Team** or you can download them from the **volunteer website**:

- [Individual Support Grant application form](#)
- [Short Breaks and Activities Fund application form](#)
- [Carers Grant Fund application form](#)

We are sometimes asked why we request so much information on our application form. As well as seeking specific information to assist the branch and the **Grants Team** to consider the application, the form also contains sections which may help us to find other sources of funding, enabling our resources to go further and help more people with MS

Top tip: See [B2: Funding branch grantmaking](#) for more on additional sources of funding you may be able to apply for.

Branches must ask applicants to complete application forms for all requests over £200. For requests lower than £200 (with the exception of emergency grants) the request must still be considered by the grants sub-committee and like emergency grants, the key details of the request must be recorded in writing. These are:

- name, address and contact details
- confirmation of MS diagnosis
- what the request was
- reference to any other grants made to this applicant by the branch

- confirmation that the applicant does not have savings of more than £16,000 (£23,000 for Short Breaks and Activities or adult Carers Grants)

Top tip: Use [T3: Record of emergency grants and requests under £200 template](#) to record this information.

Recording and reporting grant awards

The grants sub-committee must keep a record of all grant decisions, including grants awarded and any requests that you have turned down.

It is important that your grants sub-committee reports back to the full branch committee regularly, usually monthly, however the reports should not reveal an applicant's identity and must only outline the brief details of the request and the amount awarded. By outlining only the key information in this way only a small number of sub-committee members have access to an applicant's personal information, including their level of need and their income and expenditure and savings.

For example...

The sub-committee could report that three grants have been made in the last two months as follows:

- **Applicant 1** was awarded £500 toward a wheelchair with a total cost of £2,000. Family and friends contributed the remaining £1,500.
- **Applicant 2** was awarded £370 for a riser recliner chair costing £1,070. A supplementary Individual Support Grant from the **Grants Team** awarded £300 and the applicant was able to find the remaining £400 herself.
- **Applicant 3** was awarded £800 toward home adaptations. The national Individual Support Grant fund awarded £2,000 and the applicant was also in receipt of a Disabled Facilities Grant of £16,500.

Top tip: Use [T2: Grantmaking report to full committee template](#) to put your report together.

Storing grants paperwork

Records of grants made and any personal information regarding the applicant must be kept for six years, in case it is requested by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Following this time, all identifiable information should be destroyed in a secure way.

Branch pro forma

Branch grantmaking must be reported back to the MS National Centre annually, and we send out a simple form to collect this information, which can be completed on paper or electronically. See [T4: Branch grantmaking pro forma template](#) for a copy of this form.

By providing us with this summary of branch grantmaking, you will give us a comprehensive breakdown of how the funds raised by branches are being spent and we will be able to report on any trends that develop over the years. This information will be used to improve the support we offer for people affected by MS, including our fundraising.

Top tip: Rather than waiting until the end of January to complete this form, update it throughout the year. That way, you won't have so much to do all in one go.

B2: Funding branch grantmaking

In this section:

Funding for individual grant requests
Funding your branch grantmaking programme
Resources to help you make an application

Grantmaking trusts and foundations exist solely to make grants to meet their agreed charitable purposes - which may be general or specific. Many are charities themselves, run on a voluntary basis by a board of trustees.

As demand for financial support increases and requests become more expensive, you may find it helpful to develop relationships with local grantmakers.

There are two ways your branch can benefit from applying to appropriate local charitable sources of support:

1. You can apply for funding for individual grant requests
2. You can apply for funding for your branch grantmaking programme

Funding for individual grant requests

We are sometimes asked why we request so much information on our application form. As well as seeking specific information to assist the branch and the **Grants Team** to consider the application, the form also contains sections which may help us to find other sources of funding, enabling our resources to go further.

The **Grants Team** can assist you in looking for possible local and national funding for individual grant applications, but your committee should also consider developing relationships with local grantmakers who may be able to fund or part fund grants.

Top tip: Contact details for staff referred to can be found in [Appendix 1: Sources of support](#). Job titles rather than names are used so that this publication doesn't date when somebody leaves their post.

Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs and Round Tables are active in supporting local people and could prove a vital source of potential funding and local connections.

Local groups such as Masonic and Buffalo Lodges exist for the mutual benefit of their members, so may be relevant if the applicant is a member of such an organisation.

Top tip: Your local **Citizens Advice Bureau**, **Council for Voluntary Service** or library should have an up-to-date list of these organisations, or you should be able to find them online or in the phone book. Building up this network of connections can lead on to other helpful forms of support as these organisations can also be useful sources of information.

In addition, there are a huge number of local charities, often long established and sometimes going back hundreds of years. Generally these were originally set up to help the poor of particular parishes, and because of their history, eligibility is based on residence in often very small, particular locations. A good source for these charities is the book **A Guide to Grants for Individuals in Need**, which can be purchased through www.dsc.org.uk, or accessed in local libraries. The **Grants Team** has a copy and can look up information for you.

Armed forces

For people who have served time in the Armed Forces (including National Service and the Merchant Navy) you should make contact with the national organisation SSAFA Forces Help, who have local branches across the country. They coordinate many of the Forces' benevolent funds and are always happy to give information and advice. Visit <https://www.ssafa.org.uk> or call 0845 241 7141 to find your local branch.

Funding your branch grantmaking programme

Applying to charitable trusts and foundations is an excellent way to help fund your branch grantmaking programme. Although researching and writing grant applications may feel time consuming, the possible returns on this investment make it a worthwhile use of branch time.

Trusts tend to prefer specific projects, so you are more likely to be successful applying for funding for your grantmaking programme than for general branch running costs.

Resources to help you make an application

We've developed a range of resources your branch can use to make more and better applications to charitable trusts and foundations to help fund your branch grantmaking programme.

Finding a suitable grantmaker

Your **Area Fundraiser** maintains a database of potential funders your branch can apply to. You'll also find links to a number of external websites that can help on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/finding-grant-making-trusts>.

Coordinating your application

You can apply to any local trust or foundation where the MS Society is not able to apply nationally. It's important to coordinate your application with your **Area Fundraiser** as most trusts only consider one application from the same charity at a time and more than one branch may be eligible to apply.

Are you eligible to apply?

You'll often need to contact a grantmaker to check whether you meet their eligibility criteria. This is a good opportunity to tell them about the MS Society and let them know how their money can help us provide financial support locally.

We've created a **core script** of ways to explain MS and the effect that it has. This script is in varying lengths to ensure a version which will suit your needs, ranging from a 200 word summary to just one sentence.

Find out more

You can download our **core script**:

- on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/core-script>
- or contact the **Communications Team** for a printed copy

Important things to consider

Find out more about what to think about before you make a trust application on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/applying-local-trust/important-things-consider>

Making an application

Trusts receive many applications and trustees are often busy volunteers. They'll need to understand your application quickly and easily, which is why it's important that your application is a clear, concise and accurate description of your project and what it means to people affected by MS.

You'll find tips on writing funding applications, guidance on typical questions a trust might ask and covering letter templates on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/funding-branch-grantmaking>

Restricted funds

If your application is successful, the funds you receive are 'restricted' and cannot be used for any purpose other than for support grants.

Your **Branch Treasurer** must record them as a restricted fund and manage that fund accordingly. See [Treasurers' Handbook section 4: Raising branch funds](#).

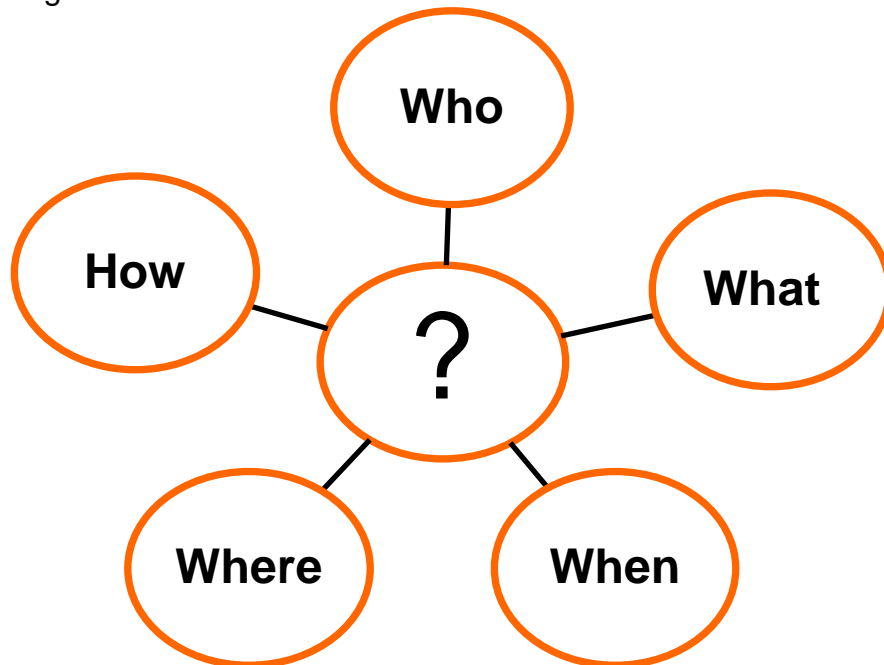
B3: Reaching people

In this section:

Publicising MS Society financial support
 Representing the MS Society
 Resources to help you reach people

Publicising MS Society financial support

The success of your branch grantmaking will depend on how well you promote it on an ongoing basis.



We recommend your branch develops a plan to ensure that grantmaking is promoted as widely as possible and that people know how to access it. You should think about:

- **Who to target** - people with MS, their families and carers, MS nurses and other health and social care professionals
- **What to tell them** - what's on offer, how to access support grants, contact details, case studies of people who have benefited from a support grant (with their permission)
- **When you'll tell them** - a regular drip-feed of information helps ensure people know about MS Society support grants when they need one

- **Where to promote support grants** - branch newsletters, web pages, information events and annual meeting, local media, social media, MS info points, MS therapy centres, GP surgeries, Citizens Advice Bureau, libraries and community centres
- **How to promote support grants** - dedicated branch support phone number and email address, articles, presentations, press releases, our **Grants from the MS Society** booklet

Representing the MS Society

Applying for a grant from your branch may be the first point of contact for people affected by MS, so using the MS Society name and brand appropriately are crucial to making a good first impression.

Using the MS Society brand in correspondence

Whenever you write to people - applicants or funders - you must use official MS Society branding and include our registration details.

Find out more

Download an **MS Society branch letter template** with our registration details:

- on our **volunteer website**,
<http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/branch-letter-template>

The MS Society written brand

It is important that the way we describe MS, and the way we write about ourselves, is consistent across all of our materials and publications. We've created a **core script** of ways to explain MS and the effect that it has. This script is in varying lengths to ensure a version which will suit your needs, ranging from a 200 word summary to just one sentence.

Find out more

You can download our **core script**:

- on our **volunteer website**,
<http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/core-script>
- or contact the **Communications Team** for a printed copy

Top tip: Contact details for staff referred to can be found in [Appendix 1: Sources of support](#). Job titles rather than names are used so that this publication doesn't date when somebody leaves their post.

Resources to help you reach people

Grants from the MS Society

This booklet provides a quick and easy guide to grants available from the MS Society.

See our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/grants-booklet> or contact the **Grants Team** for copies you can distribute.

Being easy to contact

Being easy to contact by phone and email is an essential requirement for branches.

All branches have two MS Society email addresses - one for branch contact and one for MS support - and we recommend you have a dedicated phone line.

We've developed a number of resources to help you be easy to contact, including **how to guides** for branch phones and email, and technical support information. See our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/branch-and-group-basics/being-easy-contact> or contact your **Local Networks Officer** for support.

Using our brand

As a volunteer you're a representative of the MS Society, so it's important to remember that everything you do affects our brand.

You can order publications and printed stationery from our **online shop**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/shop>, and familiarise yourself with our brand guidelines on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/branch-and-group-basics/using-our-brand>. You can also contact our **Marketing Team** for support.

Your newsletter

Sending out a regular newsletter is an important way to let people affected by MS know what your branch offers.

To support you to produce and send out your newsletter, we've put together a range of resources, including a **how to guide**, a newsletter volunteer role description and a library of images you can use. See our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/branch-and-group-basics/your-newsletter> or contact our **Communications Team** for support.

Online promotion

There are lots of ways to promote your branch's work online, in order to publicise your events and services and reach out to people affected by MS.

Our **branch website e-learning** will give your website volunteer the skills to write and add quality content to your MS Society website pages. We've also put together tips on using social media. Find out more on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/branch-websites> or contact your **Local Networks Officer** for support.

Top tip: You can find a list of all volunteer website resources referred to in the **Support Grants Handbook** in [Appendix 2: Volunteer website resource index](#)

You'll also find the answers to common queries about grants in [Appendix 9: Grantmaking frequently asked questions](#)

C1: The Individual Support Grant Fund

In this section:

Aims of the fund
Fund criteria
Statutory funding
Examples of statutory funding
Grant categories
The application process

Aims of the fund

The Individual Support Grant Fund aims to maintain or improve the quality of life of people with MS by:

- facilitating their independence
- improving their living environment
- improving their mental well-being
- reducing their isolation
- reducing their risk of harm

For branches there is an additional aim:

- to provide emergency support for people with MS to prevent or deal with a crisis

This last aim has been included to provide a safety net when there is an immediate threat to health or safety and no statutory funding is immediately available. It may typically include short-term living expenses or care or respite costs if there is an emergency.

Case study 1

A branch was able to support a young single man by providing emergency food vouchers. Since being diagnosed with MS he had been trying to stay in work but found it impossible. He applied for benefits but there was a delay in these being paid, meaning he had no money for food. The branch's grantmaking policy included provision for emergency payments up to £200. In this case the branch was able to make two payments of £50 each for Tesco vouchers, which he used at his local Tesco Express.

Fund criteria

- ✓ All grants must be for the benefit of a person with MS, for something needed as a direct result of their MS.
- ✓ The applicant must live in the UK.
- ✓ Grants cannot be awarded for long-term ongoing costs, such as household bills or maintenance costs.
- ✓ Retrospective requests will not be considered (see [Appendix 3: Retrospective grant applications policy statement](#)).
- ✓ Applications from individuals with savings above £16,000 cannot be considered.
- ✓ Applicants with savings above £8,000 will be expected to make a contribution toward the cost.
- ✓ Any statutory funding must be explored before a grant can be considered.
- ✓ All applications must be accompanied by a supporting letter from a relevant health or social care professional.
- ✓ Applicants need to provide two quotes to support their request. The cheapest quote will usually be used when calculating the cost of the request. However, we can use the higher quote if there is a specific reason why the applicant needs the more expensive item. For some specialised items, there may only be one supplier, in which case one quote is acceptable.
- ✓ The **Grants Team** will only fund an Individual Support Grant once every two years for any one applicant. However, branches can set their own limit depending on an assessment of local need and the availability of local resources, as outlined in their local grants policy.

Top tip: Contact details for staff referred to can be found in [Appendix 1: Sources of support](#). Job titles rather than names are used so that this publication doesn't date when somebody leaves their post.

Statutory funding

Statutory provision should always be looked into when applications are submitted to branches or to the **Grants Team** before awarding a grant, as we cannot replace this funding. In particular, funding may be available for home adaptations and wheelchairs - see below for more details.

Top tip: If an applicant has been declined statutory funding, ask them to ask the statutory authority to confirm this in writing. Sometimes a different decision may result. Even if the decision remains the same, it will help you to consider the application at your branch and apply to other funders, if necessary.

If you think the statutory decision is not correct or is unfair, your applicant should contact their local ward councillor (this information can be found on their council's website) or their MP, and ask them to look into the matter - again we have had decisions reversed when applicants have done so.

Further information on the duties of statutory authorities can be found in the **Disability Rights Handbook** or is available from the **Grants Team**.

Disability Rights Handbook

The **Disability Rights Handbook** is updated every year and provides clearly written, in-depth, information on the entire benefits and independent living system. We recommend all MS support teams have a copy to refer to.

You can order yours from <http://disabilityrightsuk.org/> or by calling 020 7250 8191.

Examples of statutory funding

Home adaptations

When someone in England, Northern Ireland or Wales needs home adaptations they may be eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) through their local authority. They will need to be assessed by an occupational therapist (OT) from the local authority, and if the adaptations recommended are eligible works, a grant is mandatory subject to means testing. The means test is harsh and many people are found to have a significant contribution to any work. However, the input from the OT is valuable even if no funding is available as it identifies the person's needs and the adaptations necessary to meet their needs.

In Scotland, adaptations are carried out under the Scheme of Assistance. Applicants should either be fully funded, or required to pay 20% of the cost.

Where applicants have been found to have a contribution to the cost of adaptations, we can consider a grant towards this.

Top tip: The MS Society booklet **Adaptations and Your Home** provides further information on local authority grants, as well as grants for more minor home adaptations under £1,000, which should always be provided by the local authority. Download a copy from our **website**, <http://www.mssociety.org.uk/ms-resources/adaptations-and-your-home-booklet> or contact the **MS Helpline**.

Wheelchairs

Wheelchairs, both manual and indoor and outdoor powered models, can potentially be provided by the NHS. The applicant's GP, physiotherapist, occupational therapist or MS nurse will need to make a referral to the local NHS wheelchair service for an assessment to be carried out. However, many wheelchair services have a waiting list for assessment appointments.

In general, wheelchair services are available to people of all ages who have a long-term need for mobility help. The specific criteria for whether someone is eligible are decided locally and will vary depending on where they live. Usually the NHS does not provide powered wheelchairs if they are only needed for outdoor use.

An assessment will determine if the applicant is eligible and, if so, what type of mobility equipment is most appropriate, which can then be provided from the NHS-approved range. Alternatively, they may give a voucher to the value of the chair that would have been offered, which can be put towards the cost of a chair bought privately or in partnership with the NHS. Not all NHS wheelchair services offer the voucher scheme. Services decide locally whether to have a scheme and how that scheme is applied.

Case study 2

A branch received an application for a mobility scooter, at £669. The request had all relevant supporting documents including a letter of support from an occupational therapist confirming the scooter was suitable. The branch was able to consider the request at their sub-committee meeting within three weeks and awarded a grant for the full cost. They paid the supplier and the applicant was able to order and receive their scooter within a month of making their application.

Social Fund and local welfare assistance schemes

Since 2013 local authorities have had responsibility for grants and loans to help with independent living or in crisis situations, which would previously have been within the Social Fund. The schemes vary across the nations and within England, so **Support Volunteers** should check the provision for their area. There may be help available for essential household items to help with independent living, or expenses in an emergency situation.

In England each local authority manages its own scheme (often called local welfare assistance or discretionary assistance). In Wales, it is known as the Discretionary Assistance Fund and in Scotland as the Scottish Welfare Fund. In Northern Ireland, the Welfare Reform Bill will create the Discretionary Support Service (pending at time of publication).

The Social Fund now only includes payments for very specific costs - Sure Start maternity grants, funeral payments, cold weather payments and winter fuel payments. The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) still administers budgeting loans for people on income related benefits (budgeting advances for universal credit), but as these have to be paid back from weekly benefits, they may cause financial difficulties.

Top tip: These schemes are subject to frequent changes, so contact your local authority on a regular basis to ensure you have the most up to date information.

Letters of support and assessments

All applications need to be supported by a relevant health or social care professional such as an occupational therapist (OT), social worker or MS nurse. The letter of support should confirm the need for and suitability of the item requested, as well as whether there is any statutory funding available.

Case study 3

The **Grants Team** received an application from a man with MS, requesting help for a riser recliner chair. He had no savings and was on income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Although he included a brief letter of support from his occupational therapist, this was not specific about the type of chair needed and the quotes were for a very low-cost basic chair. We followed up with his occupational therapist to make sure the chair would be suitable, and she was able to send a quotation for a more specialised chair that would meet his needs. Once we had all the relevant information, we forwarded the application to the local branch, which was able to award £598 of the total cost of £1,098. The branch notified the **Grants Team** of the shortfall needed. The grants officer then took the application to the **grants assessment panel**, which awarded £500 for the balance. This was transferred to the branch account so they could pay the total to the supplier.

For some requests, we need to know that an assessment has been carried out by a relevant professional, such as an OT or physiotherapist. This is because they are the professional experts in these areas and will be able to confirm whether an item is safe and suitable for an applicant.

Top tip: See [Appendix 8: Letters of support required](#) for further information on the suitability of health or social care professionals to provide a letter of support and/ or assessment.

Grant categories

See [Appendix 6: Individual Support Grant categories and upper grant limits](#) and [Appendix 7: Requests we cannot fund](#).

Individual Support Grant categories and limits are reviewed annually by the **Grants Team** based on applications received in the previous year and an assessment of statutory funding. An updated list is published in **Teamspirit** at the beginning of each calendar year and available on the **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/offering-support/information-and-financial-assistance/providing-financial-assistance>.

Find out more

See current and back issues of **Teamspirit**:

- on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/teamspirit>
- by requesting printed copies from the **Communications Team**

The **Grants Team** uses these categories when considering a grant request where branch funding is not possible or appropriate. They provide an overall framework for a branch to base its local grantmaking policy on. The branch has discretion to vary these categories, and maximum amounts need to reflect the available resources, but they should be broadly in line with those established nationally. Please contact the **Grants Team** if you wish to discuss these.

For example...

In the past, the **Grants Team** has been able to consider requests for personal development, such as course costs. Due to increased demand on our funds, we had to remove this category (other than the Carers Grant Fund, where specific funds are set aside for personal development). However, branches may wish to consider this type of request, if local funds and demand allow it.

The application process

Branches and the **Grants Team** work together to provide Individual Support Grants to people with MS.

Find out more

For copies of the **Individual Support Grant application form**:

- go to our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/offering-support/information-and-financial-assistance/providing-financial-assistance>.
- request printed copies from the **Grants Team**

- ✓ In the first instance a person with MS should send their application to their local branch for consideration.
- ✓ The branch should check to see that all statutory sources of funding have been explored by the applicant before considering their request.
- ✓ The branch's grants sub-committee should then formally consider the application for funding.
- ✓ If the branch is unable to meet the request in full the branch should look into whether other local sources of charitable funding are available.
- ✓ If not, or if there is a significant amount to be raised, the **branch** section of the form should be completed and the application sent to the **Grants Team** to assess.

The **Grants Team** can also consider requests that have not been first considered by a local branch. This is usually where:

- there is no local branch in their area
- a branch may be temporarily unable to award a grant
- the applicant is personally known by the branch and does not want to share personal information with them
- a branch volunteer is personally applying for a grant. Where a branch volunteer is involved, they often feel more comfortable if their application is considered by the **Grants Team**, who they don't know. This also protects branches from any allegations of bias.

Top tip: See [Appendix 4: Grantmaking process flowchart](#) for a summary of this process.

Requests for less than £200 will only be considered by the **Grants Team** in exceptional circumstances, as such small requests like these are considered to be the responsibility of a branch.

It is important to note that if a branch does not support an application, it should not be restricted from being considered by the **Grants Team** for help from our national funds, so the application should be forwarded on.

If a branch has healthy reserves but is not meeting the full cost from its own funds, the **Grants Team** will ask why this is not possible, and then consider the application further if necessary. Branch funds vary enormously and it is vital that we are able to assist less financially successful branches.

If your branch has already committed some of its reserves for a particular reason (for example, to provide a service over the year), you should let the **Grants Team** know using the **branch** section of the application form, as we will take this into account.

For example...

We receive two applications for help toward the cost of a wheelchair from two different branches.

Branch A has £15,000 in reserves; Branch B has £2,000 in reserves.

In this instance we would consider the application from Branch B as a higher priority, as it appears that Branch A has sufficient funds to increase its contribution.

However, if Branch A had committed £13,000 of its reserves to providing an exercise class, then the two applications would be of equal priority.

Individual Support Grants scoring

There is increasing demand on national funds, and the **Grants Team** uses a scoring system to assess applications. This was developed in 2014 and will be reviewed regularly.

The scoring looks at various factors including how well a grant would meet the aims of the fund based on a number of outcome criteria, the financial situation and savings of the applicant, and whether there may be other funders to work with in meeting the need. The score gives a maximum grant amount within five levels:

- No grant
- Maximum grant of 50% of the upper limit for the grant category
- Maximum grant of 75% of the upper limit for the grant category
- Maximum grant of 85% of the upper limit for the grant category
- Maximum grant of 100% of the upper limit for the grant category

Once the application has been considered by the **grants assessment panel**, the branch will be informed of one of the following outcomes:

Met in full - the request has been met in full and payment will be made to the branch in due course. The **Finance Team** will credit the branch account within four weeks.

Partially met - a contribution towards the request is offered. The branch is asked to either contribute further due to acceptable levels of branch reserves, or to look for further funding from other charities. The **Grants Team** can offer help to look for alternative sources of funding.

Declined - this may be:

- because the **Grants Team** has insufficient funds (this is a real possibility as we have seen demand increase by twice to three times more than the funds we have available)
- due to high levels of branch reserves
- because the request is outside the range of items the **Grants Team** can fund, or does not meet MS Society grantmaking policy

Case study 4

The **Grants Team** received an application for hand controls on a car. However, the document that was sent as a quote was actually an order confirmation showing payment had been made. The **Grants Team** had to turn down the application, as it did not meet our funding criteria on retrospective requests.

Appeals

There is no automatic right of appeal when an application has been declined as all our grants are discretionary. When a grant cannot be awarded the applicant will be informed of the reasons why. If an applicant is unhappy with this explanation they are entitled to write to the **Head of Governance** at the MS Society. They will be issued with the MS Society's [Complaints, compliments and comments policy and procedure](#) to complete. Appeals against branch decisions should be dealt with by the branch concerned but the **Grants Team** is happy to provide guidance in such circumstances.

Grants from other charities

There are many other charities that may assist individuals that apply to the MS Society. Alongside local charities outlined in [B2: Funding branch grantmaking](#), there are health and disability related funders (e.g. The MS Research and Relief Fund, the ACT Foundation and Independence at Home), and charities that help people who have worked in particular job roles or industries (e.g. The Firefighters Charity, Hospitality Action, the Bank Workers Charity).

Case study 5

A branch received an application from a woman for a powered wheelchair. The applicant has severe back pain, and an assessment found that only one chair with specialist suspension was suitable, with a total cost of £7,000. The branch **Support Volunteer** received confirmation that the woman did not meet the local wheelchair service's criteria. The branch awarded £2,000 and forwarded the application to the **Grants Team**, as well as applying to other local charities. The **grants assessment panel** awarded £2,000, and the **Grants Team** secured a further £1,500 from the **MS Research and Relief Fund**.

The branch was able to raise £1,000 from local charities. As there were a number of charities involved, the process did take a few months in total, and the applicant was able to save up to meet the £500 shortfall. The branch sent a cheque to the **Grants Team** for their £2,000 contribution. Some charities made cheques payable to the supplier, with the remainder paying the MS National Centre, and the **Grants Team** paid the supplier these contributions alongside our grant.

The **Grants Team** can help **Support Volunteers** and individuals to identify alternative sources of funding wherever possible. We use various directories and electronic resources to help with this. The first of these is **The Guide to Grants for Individuals in Need**. If you wish to purchase a copy, it can be found on the **Directory of Social Change** website, www.dsc.org.uk. If your branch cannot purchase a copy, your local libraries or Citizens Advice Bureau hold copies, or you can contact the **Grants Team** and ask us to look something up for you.

You can also use the website www.turn2us.org.uk to search for other charities. Detailed searches can be carried out by entering in particular details relating to an individual such as past employment, age, and place of birth (most of this information can be found if the applicant has completed the section of the application form about grants from other charities). Together, these resources help us raise funds which can be used alongside, or instead of, our funds. Please contact the **Grants Team** if you would like more information, or a search carried out on a particular application.

C2: The Short Breaks and Activities Fund

In this section:

Aim of the fund
Fund criteria
Grant categories
The application process
Information and support for planning short breaks

Aim of the fund

The Short Breaks and Activities Fund was established in 2011 to provide grants to people with MS and their carers and families, towards the cost of short breaks (respite care and holidays) and other activities.

The fund aims to enable people with MS and their carers to access the sort of short break they choose, whatever that may be.

Fund criteria

- ✓ All grants must be for the benefit of a person with MS, for a short break (respite care, holiday or activity) that is needed as a direct result of their MS.
- ✓ The applicant must live in the UK.
- ✓ Retrospective requests will not be considered (see [Appendix 3: Retrospective grant applications policy statement](#)).
- ✓ Applications from individuals with savings above £23,000 cannot be considered.
- ✓ Applicants with savings above £10,000 will be expected to make a contribution toward the cost.
- ✓ We will only fund one grant within a 12-month period, but that grant may be for more than one break.
- ✓ Grants cannot be awarded for long-term ongoing costs.
- ✓ All applications must be accompanied by a supporting letter from a relevant health or social care professional.
- ✓ All requests must be supported by a quote or other written confirmation of the costs involved.

- ✓ The break must not be within six to eight weeks of the date of applying, except in emergency situations such as emergency respite care.

Case study 1

Susan is 54 and lives with her husband, who works full time, but cares for Susan through the night and at weekends. Although Susan has carers in the day, they are both very much in need of a break. Her local authority provides some funding for respite breaks but their standard rate only covers the cost of a care home. However Susan's preference was a centre that caters for younger people, which costs more than this. We were able to award a grant to help with the difference in cost, so that Susan could access the type of break that would be more suitable for her.

Grant categories

We can consider help with:

- Planned and emergency respite care or short breaks
- Holidays for a person with MS and their families and carers
- An activity or experience for someone with MS and their families and carers
- Additional costs of equipment hire, accessible accommodation or transport needed to enable a holiday or short break
- Salary costs for a professional carer needed to help someone with MS or their carer have a break, either in the home or elsewhere
- Some alternative or complementary therapies, if part of a short break

Case study 2

We helped Lisa with the cost of a year's membership to a leisure centre. Her physiotherapist explained that this would mean Lisa could carry on with some water based exercises and gym sessions following some rehabilitation. We could help with this for a year to give Lisa the chance to try out the gym and continue to build strength, although we can't commit to this type of cost on an ongoing basis. We awarded this grant under the Short Breaks and Activities Fund as it enabled Lisa to socialise with others on a regular basis, essentially giving her the opportunity to have frequent short breaks.

The application process

Applications to the Short Breaks and Activities Fund are considered by the **Grants Team**. However, branches have traditionally helped towards the cost of short breaks, holidays and respite care and if a branch would like to contribute towards the cost of a request, they are very welcome to do so. However, unlike applications to the Individual Support Grants Fund, applications to the Short Breaks and Activities Fund do not need to go through the branch and there is currently no obligation for branches to contribute to requests. If, in time, the fund becomes over-subscribed we may ask branches to contribute more often towards the cost of requests.

Find out more

For copies of the **Short Breaks and Activities Fund application form**:

- go to our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/offering-support/information-and-financial-assistance/providing-financial-assistance>.
- request printed copies from the **Grants Team**

Top tip: See [Appendix 4: Grantmaking process flowchart](#) for a summary of this process.

Currently we are able to assess grant applications at our fortnightly **grants assessment panel**. If we receive a completed application and all the necessary supporting information, we should be able to let the applicant know the outcome within a maximum of four weeks. Once the grant has been awarded, our **Finance Team** will make the payment within four weeks.

With the application form we need a letter from a health or social care professional supporting the need for a break, and confirming any statutory funding that may be available (for example, a person applying for a grant towards respite care will need to have approached social services in the first instance). We also need quotes for the cost of the break or activity, a copy of a recent bank statement and evidence of any income related benefits the applicant receives.

The amount of grant awarded depends on what the request is for and how much it costs, as well as a number of other factors including the person's level of care need, financial need and emotional need.

Case study 3

We awarded a grant to Jane for the cost of hiring a portable hoist, shower chair and adjustable bed for three weeks, booked with a company that deliver and collect the items as needed. This meant that she could visit her family in another part of the country, staying with them for a few weeks to spend time together and go to a family event.

Short Breaks and Activities grant scoring

We use a scoring system to assess applications and a person could come out at low, medium or high level. The upper limits for these categories are currently as follows:

Low level: £600

Medium level: £1200

High level: £1800

If you would like any more information about the Short Breaks and Activities Fund or you'd like us to send you some application forms, please do not hesitate to contact the **Grants Team**.

Case study 4

We awarded a grant to Atish and his wife and 2 children towards the cost of a holiday in Turkey. In the last three years Atish's condition has deteriorated and he now has problems with mobility, continence, and cognitive function. He also experiences neuropathic pain and at times gets very depressed due to the worsening of his symptoms. This can place a strain on family life. Atish's wife Parminder has the challenge of providing care for Atish and looking after the children and working part-time. Atish and his family have not had a holiday in several years and are unable to afford one as Atish has had to give up work due to his condition. The holiday was all-inclusive to give Parminder a much needed break from the cooking and cleaning. It enabled them to spend quality time together as a family and to avoid any additional or hidden costs.

Information and support for planning short breaks

The MS Society has published a **Short Breaks Guide** available to download on the website, or order from the online shop or **MS Helpline**.

**Find out
more**

Find the **Short Breaks Guide**:

- on the **MS Society website**, <http://www.mssociety.org.uk/ms-resources/short-breaks-guide-booklet>
- by ordering printed copies from our **online shop**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/shop>

You can also contact our **Short Breaks Information Officer** who can provide details of specialist companies, accessible accommodation and respite care providers.

Top tip: Contact details for staff referred to can be found in [Appendix 1: Sources of support](#). Job titles rather than names are used so that this publication doesn't date when somebody leaves their post.

We also work in partnership with other organisations to help improve access to short breaks, holidays and respite care for people with MS. These organisations support people to organise a break, and allow people to purchase flexible care and support while they are away. Information about current partnerships can be found on the **MS Society website**, <http://www.mssociety.org.uk/ms-support/practical-and-financial-help/holidays-short-breaks-respite-care>.

C3: The Carers Grant Fund

In this section:

Aims of the fund
Fund criteria
Grant categories
The application process
Examples of Carers Grants awarded

Aims of the fund

The Carers Grant Fund was developed in 2013 with the aim of creating a flexible and practical fund for carers of people with MS. It replaced the Young Carers Fund and the Carers Opportunities Fund.

The Carers Grant Fund has two main aims:

1. To recognise the valuable role carers play in the lives of people with MS
2. To enable carers to:
 - develop new skills
 - have a new experience
 - have some time for themselves
 - have some fun
 - improve their confidence
 - have an opportunity to meet new people and/or catch up with existing friends and acquaintances
 - improve their educational, training and employment opportunities

The fund is available to carers of people with MS of all ages who can demonstrate their caring role.

We know that many people may not define themselves as a formal carer - they may think of themselves simply as supporting a family member or friend, or helping out. For the purposes of the support and information the MS Society provides we define a carer as someone who, without payment, provides help and support to a partner, child, relative, friend or neighbour with MS, who could not manage fully without their help.

Carers can apply at various points throughout their lives. The fund encompasses three different age groups:

- Young carers (15 years and under)
- Transitional carers (16-24)
- Adult carers (25 years and above)

Carers in the first two age groups are able to apply once while they are in that age group and again when they move up to the next age group. Adult carers can apply once every five years to the fund as their needs, and the needs of the person they care for, change.

Sources of support for carers

Carers are entitled to ask for an assessment of their needs from social services, to see what support may be available.

You can signpost carers to their local **Carers Centre** to find out about local sources of support for carers. Details can be found on the **Carers Trust website**, www.carers.org

They can also contact **Carers Direct**, who hold details of a range of local carer support groups and organisations in the UK on 0808 802 0202.

Fund criteria

- ✓ The applicant must live within the UK.
- ✓ Retrospective requests will not be considered (see [Appendix 3: Retrospective grant applications policy statement](#)).
- ✓ Applications from carers 25 years and over with savings above £23,000 cannot be considered. Applications for carers 24 and under are not means tested.
- ✓ Grants cannot be awarded for long-term ongoing costs.
- ✓ All applications must be accompanied by a supporting letter confirming the caring role (see [Appendix 8: Letters of support required](#)).
- ✓ All requests must be supported by written confirmation of the costs.

Grant categories

We are flexible in what we can help with within two broad categories - personal development and leisure. We encourage carers to apply for the things they think will benefit them.

Personal development

This includes courses (or associated costs, e.g. course materials, computers or transport) to enable carers to get back into work or to embark on a new career to fit in with their caring role.

It could be personal development in an educational, vocational or practical sense. Driving lessons and courses to enable the learning of other 'life skills' are included within this category.

Leisure

This includes recreational activities (or associated costs, e.g. equipment or transport) which carers see as being beneficial to them in some way, whether that is because it gives them a chance to socialise, reduces isolation, or enables them to do something they would not have been able to afford to do otherwise because of the financial implications of MS on the family. This could include a school trip for a young carer, sports equipment, music lessons, gardening equipment or a laptop computer.

Summary of grant application age eligibility and funding levels

Carers Grant category	Age eligibility	Application frequency	Maximum grant award	
			Leisure	Personal development
Young carers	15 years and under	Once	£300	£300
Transitional carers	16-24	Once	£300	£1,000
Adult carers	25 years and above	Every five years from previous grant award	£300	£1,000

The application process

Applications to the Carers Grant Fund are considered by the **Grants Team**. However, if your branch would like to contribute towards the cost of a request, you are very welcome to do so.

Find out more

For copies of the **Carers Grant Fund application form**:

- go to our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/offering-support/information-and-financial-assistance/providing-financial-assistance>.
- request printed copies from the **Grants Team**

We assess grant applications at our fortnightly **grants assessment panel**. If we receive a completed application with all the necessary supporting information, we should be able to let the applicant know the outcome within a maximum of four weeks. Once the grant has been awarded, our **Finance Team** will make the payment within four weeks.

Top tip: Contact details for staff referred to can be found in [Appendix 1: Sources of support](#). Job titles rather than names are used so that this publication doesn't date when somebody leaves their post.

With the application form, we need a supporting letter to confirm the person's caring role. This can come from a health or social care professional, a carer's centre worker, a teacher, or an MS Society branch volunteer. This list is not exclusive and we will try to be flexible about who can provide the letter, as we know that not all carers have someone supporting them. We need confirmation of the costs of the item or activity being applied for.

If you would like more information about the Carers Grant Fund, contact the **Grants Team**.

Top tip: See [Appendix 4: Grantmaking process flowchart](#) for a summary of this process.

Examples of Carers Grants awarded

Here are some examples of applications we've been able to support from the Carers Grant Fund.

- A sewing machine for someone who enjoyed quilting as a hobby, and who also felt it offered a longer term investment as they could potentially earn money from sewing if they had to give up full time work to care full time in the future.
- Driving lessons for a 17 year old carer to give her more freedom and flexibility in her caring role. We were informed that she had passed her driving test first time!
- Kickboxing equipment for a young carer, who cares for her mother without the support of an adult. Kickboxing is an activity she enjoys and which gives her time to just be herself.
- A greenhouse for someone who enjoyed gardening, which meant they got a break from caring but were still nearby in case they were needed.
- Transport costs for someone to get to a training course so they could retrain in work that fits with their caring role.
- A cinema pass for a young carer to take regular breaks.
- Garden furniture, so the carer could spend time relaxing in the garden and sitting with family in the summer.

- A bike for an adult carer to get out and about for local bike rides, benefitting them physically and emotionally.
- A day trip to a football match including a stadium tour.

D1: Reviewing and reporting on your grantmaking

In this section:

Reviewing your branch grantmaking policy
Recording and reporting grant awards
Sharing information
Equality monitoring
If something goes wrong

Reviewing your branch grantmaking policy

Your branch grantmaking policy must include:

- what your branch will and won't fund
- maximum grant limits
- how often someone can apply
- how your branch will deal with emergency grants
- how grants will be paid
- how often the sub-committee will meet
- details of how members will be elected to the grants sub-committee and how long they will stay in this role

Your committee should review your grantmaking policy on a regular basis, ideally every year. This means you will be able to react to changes in circumstances, for example receiving a large donation, or increased demand for grants beyond the branch's resources.

Top tip: See [B1: Developing your branch grantmaking policy and processes](#) for more on this.

Recording and reporting grant awards

The grants sub-committee must keep a record of all grant decisions, including grants awarded and any requests that you have turned down.

It is important that your grants sub-committee reports back to the full branch committee regularly, usually monthly, however the reports should not reveal an applicant's identity and must only outline the brief details of the request and the amount awarded.

The grants sub-committee must also keep a record of emergency grants and requests under £200.

Useful grants sub-committee templates

- [T2: Grantmaking report to full committee](#)
- [T3: Record of emergency grants and requests under £200](#)

Branch pro forma

Branch grantmaking must be reported back to the MS National Centre annually, and we send out a simple form to collect this information, which can be completed on paper or electronically. See [T4: Branch grantmaking pro forma template](#) for a copy of this form.

By providing us with this summary of branch grantmaking, you will give us a comprehensive breakdown of how the funds raised by branches are being spent and we will be able to report on any trends that develop over the years. This information will be used to improve the support we offer for people affected by MS, including our fundraising.

Storing grants paperwork

Records of grants made and any personal information regarding the applicant must be kept for six years, in case it is requested by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Following this time, all identifiable information should be destroyed in a secure way.

Sharing information

Evaluating your branch grantmaking can provide your committee and other branches with a wealth of useful information. Effective evaluation can help to:

- identify effective ways to reach out to people who may need a grant
- produce a report for members to review at your branch annual meeting
- demonstrate to health and social care professionals or potential funding sources how you support your MS community
- inspire other branches and groups by sharing your success at forums or meetings organised by your **Local Networks Officer**

Find out more

Find out when your next local forum is planned:

- on our **volunteer website**, <http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/events>
- by requesting support from your **Local Networks Officer**

Top tip: Contact details for staff referred to can be found in [Appendix 1: Sources of support](#). Job titles rather than names are used so that this publication doesn't date when somebody leaves their post.

Equality monitoring

The **equality monitoring form** enables the **Grants Team** to collect equality data to help us to understand who uses our grants and who does not. This will help us to improve our services and make them relevant to as many people with MS as possible. This will also help us to promote our grants, so we can provide more grants to people affected by MS, especially those that are hard to reach.

Please send out an equality monitoring form with each grant application form. All equality monitoring forms received by a branch should be separated from any other paperwork on receipt and sent to the **Grants Team**. The equality monitoring form can be sent directly to the **Grants Team** at MS National Centre if the applicant prefers.

Find out more

You can find our **equality monitoring form**:

- on our **volunteer website**,
<http://volunteers.mssociety.org.uk/equality-monitoring-form>
- by requesting printed copies from the **Grants Team**

The equality monitoring form **must not** be used as part of your assessment of an application. They are not compulsory and branches and the **Grants Team** will consider an application if an equality monitoring form has not been submitted.

All forms received will be recorded by the **Grants Team** separately to the grant application process.

If something goes wrong

Most people find dealing with the MS Society to be a positive experience. If concerns or problems do arise they are usually dealt with informally, with local staff and volunteers working through concerns together.

On the rare occasion that a complaint or concern needs to be dealt with formally, you must follow the appropriate policy and procedure.

Top tip: The **Committee Handbook** is our key resource for branches. It includes guidance on MS Society strategy, policies and working practices as they apply to your branch. See [A2: Our values and how we deal with problems](#) for information on our policies and procedures that apply when something goes wrong.

Appeals

There is no automatic right of appeal when an application has been declined as all our grants are discretionary. When a grant cannot be awarded the applicant will be informed of the reasons why.

If an applicant is unhappy with this explanation they are entitled to write to the **Head of Governance** at the MS Society. They will be issued with the MS Society's [Complaints, compliments and comments policy and procedure](#) to complete. Appeals against branch decisions should be dealt with by the branch concerned but the **Grants Team** is happy to provide guidance in such circumstances.

Resolving volunteer issues and concerns

Our [Resolving volunteer issues and concerns policy](#) should be followed if a volunteer has concerns about their volunteer experience. It also applies when the MS Society has concerns about a volunteer or a volunteer has concerns about MS Society staff.

Your **Local Networks Officer** will support you throughout this process.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding means making sure that people at risk in contact with the MS Society are protected from abuse. Abuse can mean being physically or sexually harmed, being frightened or neglected. **Although encountering abuse is rare, it is important that it is never ignored.**

You may become aware of abuse if you:

- witness a form of abuse
- suspect someone is being abused
- are told about abuse by a person with MS or someone they know

Our [Safeguarding policies and guidance](#) set out what you must do if you witness, suspect or are told that a person in contact with the MS Society has been abused.

Template 1a: Branch grantmaking policy guidance

This guidance will help you to set out your branch grantmaking policy and tells you about what you need to cover in each section, with suggested wording.

Our approach to grantmaking

This section should contain a paragraph outlining your branch's approach to grantmaking.

For example: "(Name) MS Society branch provides financial assistance in the form of grants to people with MS and their carers to support them to meet MS related needs. We will aim to always put people affected by MS at the centre of our decision making. We will consider applications where no statutory funding is available, or to top-up statutory funding. We will not consider grants for items that have already been purchased. We will consider grants according to this policy in a fair and transparent way. We appreciate that some requests will not be specifically listed in this policy, in such cases we will consider the merits of each request and formally record our decision. When the policy is due for renewal we will consider adding these additional requests for inclusion in the revised policy."

Grants sub-committee membership and meetings

This section should include:

- how your sub-committee members are elected
- the numbers and make-up of the sub-committee (e.g. branch **Support Volunteer, Treasurer**, etc.). The actual names of these members should be recorded in formal branch committee minutes when the members are elected
- how long the sub-committee members will serve for
- the procedure you would use to remove someone from membership
- how you will run your meetings
- how often the sub-committee will meet to consider grants

Grant categories and maximum grant limits

This section should outline the broad categories you will provide grant for. Keep this broad enough for you to include unexpected applications. For specific categories you should consider maximum grant limits. If you have specific things you won't fund, outline your reasoning.

For example: "(Name) branch will consider grants for mobility equipment, personal development, home and car adaptations, essential housing repairs, domestic appliances etc. We will not fund x, y and z, because...."

Category	Maximum branch limit*
Home adaptations	£2,000
Wheelchairs	£1,000

* For illustrative purposes only - your list should be much longer than this

Emergency grants

This section should contain a statement outlining your approach to emergency grants

For example: “Emergency grants of up to £ [amount] can be agreed by the **Lead Support Volunteer** in exceptional circumstances. These payments must be formally recorded in grant sub-committee documentation and the **Treasurer’s** reports.”

Grant payments

This section should contain a statement about how payments will be made once a grant has been awarded

For example: “Payments will only be made to the supplier, other than in exceptional circumstances. If we cannot pay the supplier, the grant applicant can be reimbursed if they provide a receipt. Very exceptionally, we may pay a grant applicant in order for them to purchase online, and they must send their receipt within 7 days.”

Repeat grant awards

This section should contain a statement about how often someone can apply to the branch for a grant.

For example: “(Name) branch will not consider a request from the same applicant with 12 months of a grant award.”

Policy review

This section should contain a statement about when the policy runs from and when it will be reviewed

For example: “This policy was passed on (date) and will be reviewed on (date)”

Template 1b: Branch grantmaking policy

MS Society (Name) branch grants policy
Our approach to grantmaking
Grants sub-committee membership and meetings
Grant categories and maximum grant limits
Emergency grants
Grant payments
Repeat grant awards
Policy review

Template 2: Grantmaking report to full committee

GRANTS AWARDED					
Date	Applicant number	Item requested	Total cost	Amount awarded	Balance/other details

TOTAL: [NUMBER] GRANTS AWARDED [MONTH/YEAR]	£
--	----------

Template 3: Record of emergency grants and requests under £200

EMERGENCY GRANTS AWARDED YEAR						
Date	Name, address, contact	Confirmation of diagnosis of MS	Confirmation of savings	Other requests from applicant	Item requested and cost	Amount awarded
01/09/14	Mr John Example 1 Example Street Egtown 01234 567 890	Yes (copy of letter held)	Yes - bank statement seen, no savings	None	Food Vouchers	£100 Sainsbury vouchers

GRANTS UNDER £200 AWARDED YEAR						
DATE	Name, address, contact	Confirmation of diagnosis of MS	Confirmation of savings	Other requests from applicant	Item requested and cost	Amount awarded
01/09/14	Ms Sue Example 1 Eg Close Exampleton 01234 098 765	Yes (MS nurse confirmed)	Yes - bank statement on file, £300 savings	2010 help for scooter	Fridge £199	£199

Template 4: Grantmaking pro forma

Grants awarded [year]		
Name of branch		
<p>Grant categories - Please help us by using the following 10 categories where possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car adaptations/Motability deposits • Furnishings/domestic appliances • Home adaptations • Personal development • Profiling bed • Riser-recliner chair • Scooter • Short break (please state if a holiday or respite care or activity) • Wheelchair • Other - please specify: e.g. wheelchair batteries/service, driving lessons, debt/financial assistance, essential home repairs, computer 		
Month grant was awarded	Grant category (please choose from above)	Amount awarded (£)
<i>March</i>	<i>Scooter</i>	<i>£900</i>
TOTAL		£

No grants awarded

If no grants have been awarded, please state reason (e.g. lack of funds, no applications received).

Grant requests not awarded

This year we are also gathering details of grant requests that have been declined by the branch.

Request for help with	Reason declined by branch	Forwarded to MS National Centre?
<i>Scooter</i>	<i>e.g. lack of funds, outside funding criteria etc.</i>	Yes
Total number of grants declined by branch		

We are also trying to find out how branches promote their grants. How does your branch promote its grants?

Thank you for completing this pro forma. Please return it to the Grants Team at MS National Centre or email to grants@mssociety.org.uk

Template 5a: Application form covering letter

Copy this text onto your [MS Society branch letter template](#)

Date

Name

Address

Dear (Name),

Thank you for your enquiry about the MS Society's Individual Support Grant Fund.

Please find enclosed a grant application form and a copy of our equality monitoring form. Completion of the equality monitoring form is entirely voluntary. It does not form part of the assessment process, but enables us to obtain some basic data so we can see if our grants are reaching out across the MS community

Your application will need to be supported by the following information:

- A letter of support from a relevant health or social care professional, confirming the need for and suitability of the item and whether health or social services funding has been explored.
- Confirmation of your MS diagnosis from a health professional (this may be included in your letter of support).
- 2 quotes for the cost of the item that you are applying for. If there is only one supplier of the item, please let us know.
- Confirmation of any means tested benefits you receive, if applicable.

Please note that we are unable to consider a grant for retrospective requests, for example, where the item has been paid for, or a deposit placed. We are also unable to consider a grant for those with above £16,000 in household savings.

Please read the guidance notes at the front of the application form before completing the form. Return the completed form and supporting information to me at the address on the form. If you have any queries, or need help completing the form, please contact me on the number below.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Branch Name

Telephone number

Template 5b: Letter to inform applicant their request has been sent to the Grants Team

Copy this text onto your [MS Society branch letter template](#)

Date

Name

Address

Dear (Name),

Thank you for your grant application. I have now forwarded your application form to our Grants Team at the MS National Centre to be considered from national funds.

To follow the progress of your request, you should contact the Grants Team whose details are as follows:

Grants Team

020 8438 0700

grants@mssociety.org.uk

MS National Centre, 372 Edgware Road, London, NW2 6ND

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries about this.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Branch Name

Telephone number

Template 5c: Letter to inform applicant of branch grant award, with payment to a supplier

Copy this text onto your [MS Society branch letter template](#)

Date

Name

Address

Dear (Name),

MS Society Individual Support Grant Fund

We have now considered your request and are pleased to inform you that a grant of £ [amount] for [item] has been approved.

As discussed, payment will be made directly to the supplier by cheque or bank transfer.

This grant offer will be held open for a period of one year from the date of this letter. If the grant has not been taken up by this date, the offer will be withdrawn and you will need to submit a new application.

Please note that we cannot consider any future applications to the above fund within [number] months of this grant award.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Branch Name

Template 5d: Letter to inform applicant of branch grant award, with payment to the applicant

Copy this text onto your [MS Society branch letter template](#)

Date

Name

Address

Dear (Name),

MS Society Individual Support Grant Fund

We have now considered your request and are pleased to inform you that a grant of £ [amount] for [item] has been approved.

As discussed, payment will be made directly to you. Once you have paid for the item, please send a copy of the receipt to us at the address above. Please note that if you don't send us a receipt we may not be able to consider future grant applications you make to the MS Society.

This grant offer will be held open for a period of one year from the date of this letter. If the grant has not been taken up by this date, the offer will be withdrawn and you will need to submit a new application.

Please note that we cannot consider any future applications to the above fund within [number] months of this grant award.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Branch Name

Template 5e: Letter to inform applicant their request has been part funded

Copy this text onto your [MS Society branch letter template](#)

Date

Name

Address

Dear (Name),

MS Society Individual Support Grant Fund

We have now considered your request and are pleased to inform you that a grant of £ [amount] for [item] has been approved.

This does however leave a shortfall of £ [amount] to be found.

I have now forwarded your application form to our Grants Team at the MS National Centre to be considered from national funds.

Once the shortfall has been found, we will contact you to discuss payment.

This grant offer will be held open for a period of one year from the date of this letter. If the grant has not been taken up by this date, the offer will be withdrawn and you will need to submit a new application.

Please note that we cannot consider any future applications to the above fund within [number] months of this grant award.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Branch Name

Template 5f: Letter to inform applicant their request has been declined

Copy this text onto your [MS Society branch letter template](#)

Date

Name

Address

Dear (Name),

MS Society Individual Support Grant Fund

Thank you for your application. I am sorry but we will not be able to award you a grant on this occasion.

Follow with reason why application is declined, which could be:

(delete and amend as necessary)

- The item requested is not something we can help with, according to the (Name) branch grant making policy.
- Based on the information you have given, the application does not meet the criteria set by the MS Society grant making policy. Possible reasons:
(delete and amend as necessary)
 - We are unable to consider applications for those with over £16,000 in household savings.
 - We are unable to consider retrospective requests.
 - Your income is significantly higher than your expenditure, and we have to prioritise those most in financial need.
- There may be statutory funding available for the item requested (e.g., Disabled Facilities Grant for home adaptations, or wheelchair vouchers for a wheelchair).
(Signpost the applicant to the health or social care professional they should speak to about possible funding)
- You were awarded a grant from the Individual Support Grant Fund within the last [number] years.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this decision or any future applications.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Branch Name

Appendix 1: Sources of support

Contact names are not given so that this handbook remains as up to date as possible. However, if you know the name of the person you need to contact it is easy to contact them by email. Almost all email addresses for MS Society staff follow this format - a person's first name, a full stop, their surname, then @mssociety.org.uk. For example, Joe Bloggs would be joe.bloggs@mssociety.org.uk.

MS Society teams

Communications Team

comms@mssociety.org.uk

Tel: 020 8438 0741

Finance Team

financesupport@mssociety.org.uk

Tel: 020 8438 0709 or 020 8438 0785

Governance Team

governance@mssociety.org.uk

Tel: 020 8438 0700

Grants Team

grants@mssociety.org.uk

Tel: 020 8438 0700

Information Team

information@mssociety.org.uk

Tel: 020 8438 0799

Information Team (Scotland)

enquiries@mssocietyscotland.org.uk

Tel: 0131 335 4050

Short Breaks Information Officer

via helpline@mssociety.org.uk

Tel: 0808 800 8000

Supporter Services Team

supporter.services@mssociety.org.uk

Tel: 020 8438 0889

Volunteering Team

volunteering@mssociety.org.uk

Tel: 020 8438 0944

Your local staff members

Your **Local Networks Officer** is there to work alongside you, supporting your branch or group to offer safe, effective services and support to people affected by MS.

Your **Area Fundraiser** works with you to develop fundraising activities and projects to increase your branch or group income.

If you need contact details for your **Local Networks Officer** or **Area Fundraiser**, contact the **Volunteering Team**.

UK and national MS Society offices

MS National Centre

372 Edgware Road, London NW2 6ND

info@mssociety.org.uk

Tel: 020 8438 0700

MS Society Scotland

Ratho Park, 88 Glasgow Road, Ratho Station, Newbridge, EH28 8PP

enquiries@mssocietyscotland.org.uk

Tel: 0131 335 4050

MS Society Cymru

Temple Court, Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9HA

mscymru@mssociety.org.uk

Tel: 029 20 786676

MS Society Northern Ireland

The Resource Centre, 34 Annadale Avenue, Belfast, BT7 3JJ

info@mssocietyni.co.uk

Tel: 028 9080 2802

The MS Helpline

The **MS Helpline** offers emotional support and information to anyone affected by MS in the UK. You should give the helpline contact details to anyone you think could benefit:

- Freephone helpline: 0808 800 8000
- Helpline email service: helpline@mssociety.org.uk

Appendix 2: Volunteer website resource index

This index includes all **volunteer website** resources referred to in the **Support Grants Handbook**, sorted alphabetically. Click on any **resource** in the index to be taken to that web resource or click on the **reference** to be taken to that section of the handbook.

Resource	Reference
Applying to a local trust	B2 - Funding branch grantmaking
Being easy to contact	B3 - Reaching people
Branch web editors' guide	B3 - Reaching people
Carers Grant Fund application form	B1 - Developing your grantmaking policy and processes C3 - The Carers Grant Fund
Comments, compliments and complaints policy and procedure	C1 - The Individual Support Grant Fund D1 - Reviewing and reporting on your grantmaking
Committee Handbook	A2 - Our grantmaking principles B1 - Developing your grantmaking policy and processes D1 - Reviewing and reporting on your grantmaking
Data protection	A2 - Our grantmaking principles
Equality monitoring form	D1 - Reviewing and reporting on your grantmaking
Essential requirements	A3 - The grantmaking process
Grants from the MS Society booklet	B3 - Reaching people
Individual Support Grant application form	B1 - Developing your grantmaking policy and processes C1 - The Individual Support Grant Fund
MS Society branch letter template	B3 - Reaching people

Resource	Reference
MS Society core script	B2 - Funding branch grantmaking B3 - Reaching people
MS Society policies and documents	A2 - Our grantmaking principles
MS support training	A1 - Introduction, overview and contents
MS support update	B1 - Developing your grantmaking policy and processes
Offering support to people affected by MS	B1 - Developing your grantmaking policy and processes
Online promotion	B3 - Reaching people
Our online shop	B3 - Reaching people
Providing financial assistance	C1 - The Individual Support Grant Fund C2 - The Short Breaks and Activities Fund C3 - The Carers Grant Fund
Resolving volunteer issues and concerns policy and procedure	D1 - Reviewing and reporting on your grantmaking
Safeguarding	D1 - Reviewing and reporting on your grantmaking
Short Breaks and Activities Fund application form	B1 - Developing your grantmaking policy and processes C2 - The Short Breaks and Activities Fund
Teamspirit	A1 - Introduction, overview and contents C1 - The Individual Support Grant Fund
Treasurers' Handbook	B1 - Developing your grantmaking policy and processes B2 - Funding branch grantmaking
Using our brand	B3 - Reaching people
Volunteer events & training	D1 - Reviewing and reporting on your grantmaking

Resource	Reference
Your newsletter	B3 - Reaching people

Appendix 3: Retrospective grant applications policy statement

Policy position

The MS Society will not award grants retrospectively, subject to the one exception below. This means that we will not consider grant requests for purchases already made, in full or in part, or for which a deposit has been paid or an order placed.

Short breaks exception

The only exception to this policy is where the supply of suitable short break facilities are limited and the applicant either needs to make a booking, or place a deposit quickly to reserve it. Suitable in this context means facilities that meet the additional needs a person may have as a result of their MS.

This may include:

- the need to have a wheelchair accessible room, or inter-connecting rooms for a carer
- the availability of on-site care provision
- the need to book at a specific time (e.g. to accommodate a carer's needs)
- the need to take a break at very short notice

In this situation an individual should contact a member of the **Grants Team** to secure written authorisation before making a booking. Securing that written agreement does not mean that we are agreeing to make a grant, but we will assess the application for the grant in the usual way and would not decline the application solely because a booking had already been made.

Policy rationale

We are dependent on the generosity of our donors to fund our activities. We undertake an ambitious programme of work across the MS Society with many competing demands for limited resources. All grant applications are assessed against a needs criteria so we can ensure that our limited funds reach those people with MS, their families and carers who are most in need and would benefit from a grant.

If we were to fund grants retrospectively:

- it would be difficult to target our grant funding effectively and meet the needs of people with MS, their families and carers as their needs arose.
- we could be encouraging people to put themselves at financial risk by committing to purchases without knowing whether they would be reimbursed by a grant.

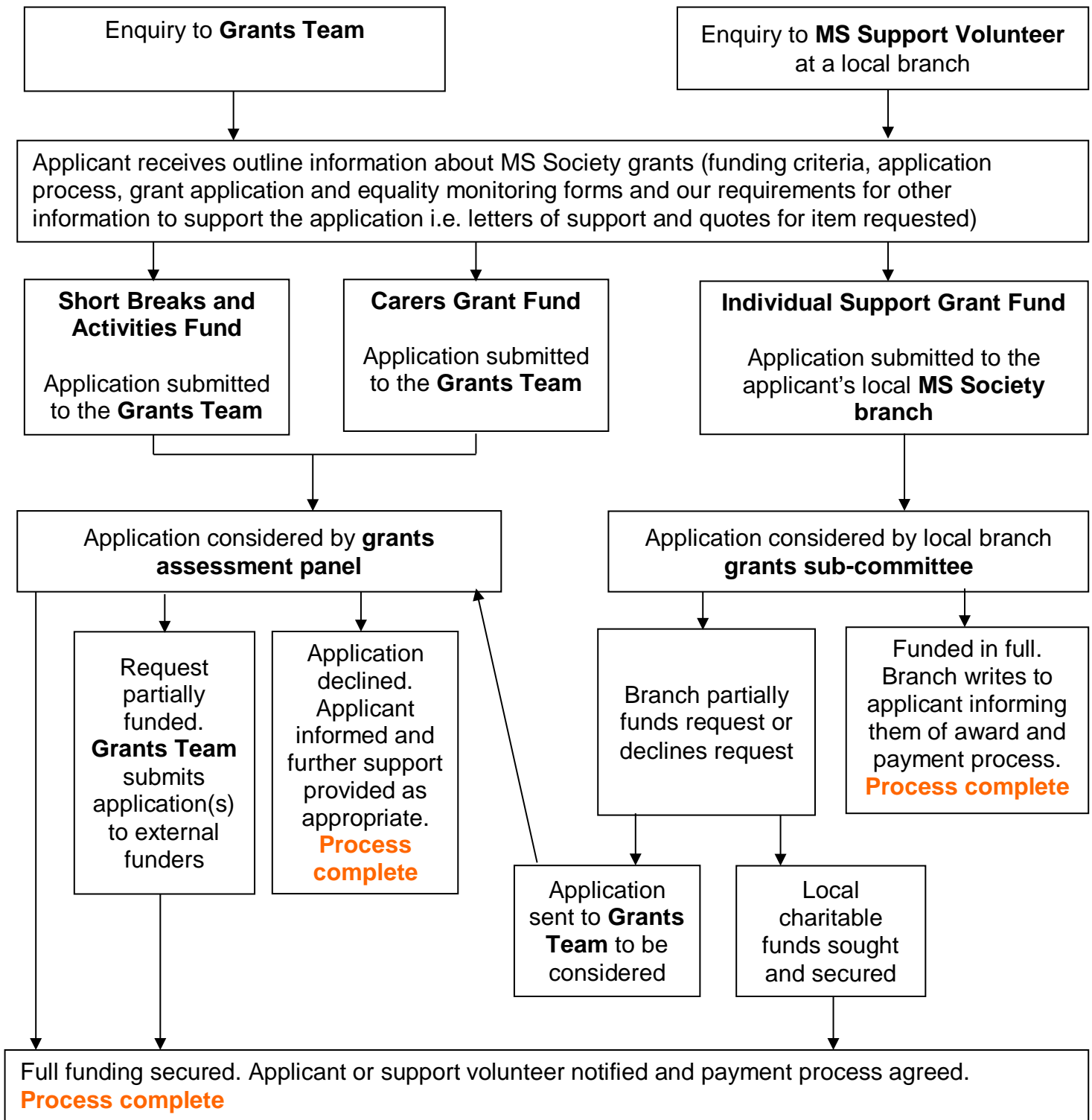
Exception authorisation

If an exception as outlined above should occur, applicants must obtain written authorisation from a member of the **Grants Team** before making a booking, or placing a deposit or any other payment; to do so without written authorisation would make the application ineligible.

Financial risk

If an applicant places a deposit to secure a booking, even when they have secured written authorisation from the **Grants Team**, they do so entirely at their own financial risk, as a grant application to the MS Society does not mean that a grant will be awarded.

Appendix 4: The grantmaking process



NB: Your branch may also consider grants for short breaks and carers. You will need to follow the same process as for **Individual Support Grants**, using **Short Breaks and Activities** and **Carers Grant Fund** application forms.

Appendix 5: Working safely

As a **Support Volunteer** you'll be meeting people out in your community - it's really important that you consider how to keep yourself and others safe. It's unlikely that anything will happen, but taking some simple precautions is a good idea.

- If you're meeting somebody for the first time, it's sensible to go with another **Support Volunteer**
- Always make a specific appointment time, decide on a venue and confirm who will be there
- Let someone in your team know the details of the appointment
- If you can, and the person needing support is able, meet at a neutral venue, in a public place and in daylight hours
- Always take a mobile phone with you so you can easily contact help in an emergency or difficult situation - know who and how to contact the relevant person or emergency service
- When visiting a person in their home consider what you need to know before arriving to make your meeting safe
- Make an assessment of the situation before you visit. Ask some questions - where do they live, who else may be in the house when you visit, are there any pets, what's the reason for the home visit?
- Work out your route and how you plan to get there and home in advance
- When visiting alone ensure you have a system in place to let someone know you have arrived, when the visit has finished and when you are likely to arrive home
- When you get there, follow your instincts. If anything makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe just leave and rearrange something more suitable
- Think about where the meeting takes place in the house - ensure you have a clear exit route if you need it
- Think about your emotional well being and boundaries. Remember that you're not a friend - you're offering support. If discussions become uncomfortable you may have to refer the person on to another member of your team, or the national **MS Helpline**.

Appendix 6: Individual Support Grant (ISG) categories and upper limits

Category	ISG maximum limit (£) 2015	Branch maximum limit (£) 2015
Home adaptations/driveways/hard standings ^a	3,150	
Wheelchairs ^b	2,500	
Scooters	1,500	
Special equipment - beds	1,500	
Special equipment - chairs	1,500	
Motability advance payments ^c	1,000	
Car adaptations ^c	1,000	
Driving lessons	500	
Furnishings, flooring & domestic appliances	600	
Post-adaptations remedial work	600	
Essential home repairs	600	
Replacement boilers ^d	2,000	
Removal costs	500	
Clinical aids/equipment (e.g. FES/TENS machines, Lycra orthoses)	1,000	
Communication aids	500	
Computers ^e	500	
Bankruptcy or Debt Relief Order fees ^f	700	
Exercise equipment (including standing/walking frames)	2,000	
Miscellaneous ^g	500	

Please note these limits are the maximum grants available, not necessarily what will be awarded in every case.

- a) Where over £10,000 is being requested the applicant will need to show how the shortfall will be secured before we can consider a grant, to prevent the ring fencing of funds long term that could be helping others in the present. If home adaptations are needed, the applicant must have checked whether they are eligible for funding from their council.
- b) The applicant will need to check whether the wheelchair service can provide a wheelchair or vouchers towards a wheelchair.
- c) The applicant will need to show that there are no vehicles that do not require an advance payment that would meet their essential needs. They will also need to check whether funding is available from Motability towards an advance payment or adaptations to a Motability vehicle.
- d) The applicant must check whether they are eligible for any government funding - we suggest they contact a specialist advice agency as eligibility is complicated.
- e) Grants will be considered for standard computers, laptops and tablet computers, such as iPads, where the need is directly related to the applicant's MS. The MS Society will not help towards any additional costs of owning a computer (e.g. internet costs, printer costs, insurance) as limited funding prevents any long-term or ongoing funding.
- f) The applicant must be able to show they have taken specialist debt advice and that bankruptcy has been recommended.
- g) Other items that relate to the applicant's MS and meet Individual Support Grant criteria but do not fit other categories.

Appendix 7: Requests we cannot fund

1. Items where we would be replacing statutory funding

This includes:

- Home adaptations if the applicant has not completed either the local authority Disabled Facilities Grants process (England, Northern Ireland and Wales) or Scheme of Assistance (Scotland).
- Grab rails and similar small works as these should be provided through social services occupational therapy (OT) department.
- Items such as eating and drinking devices, pressure mattresses and walking frames if these should be provided through the NHS to meet an essential health need. Statutory funding is becoming increasingly limited for such items, and we can consider requests if a relevant person at the health authority confirms the lack of funding in writing.
- Respite care costs if the applicant has not contacted their local authority about help first.

2. Items that are not supported by a relevant health professional

- For example, exercise equipment that is not supported by a physiotherapist, as we need to know the item will be safe and suitable for the person to use.

3. Items which have already been paid for, or a deposit placed

4. Any ongoing or long term costs, or everyday living costs

We do not have the resources to commit to any long term costs. This includes:

- Emergency phone lines and panic alarms.
- Regular care (including child care) costs - however specific care hours may be considered under the Short Breaks and Activities Fund to help a carer take a break from their role.
- Regular travel costs.
- Utility bills, food (as an exception, a branch may consider one off assistance in an emergency situation - for example food vouchers where there has been a problem with benefits payments, or help for heating oil if this has run out completely and the person is at risk as a result).

- Repairs and replacement batteries for wheelchairs and scooters (as an exception, a branch may consider this as a one off in an emergency situation such as a person becoming unable to leave their home. You would need to explain that this help could not be repeated and that the person needs to budget for future upkeep).

5. Items where there is no link to a person's MS

- For example, general household repairs or household items. However in exceptional cases, where the impact of not having the repair or item could impact on their health or well-being, and their income is low due to their MS a grant may be considered.

6. Legal costs or insurance

7. Debts

- Other than bankruptcy or debt relief order fees following specialist debt advice.

8. Treatments

Appendix 8: Letters of support required

Individual Support Grants

All applications need to be supported by a letter from a relevant professional. This should:

- confirm the diagnosis of MS
- outline the need for the item requested
- confirm that the item is safe and suitable for the applicant
- give details of any relevant statutory funding

Sometimes applicants will have a copy of an assessment from a relevant professional that can be accepted as the letter of support, for example for home adaptations, wheelchairs, specialist chairs or beds, and exercise equipment.

Please contact the **Grants Team** if you are unsure about who should provide a letter of support. The following gives some guidance.

Home adaptations

- Occupational therapist - if the request is for an assessed contribution to a Disabled Facilities Grant or Home Adaptations Grant, we also need confirmation of the contribution. If the applicant is not eligible for this funding, we need this confirmed in writing.

Wheelchairs

- Occupational therapist, or an assessment from the wheelchair service - we need to know whether the applicant is eligible for a wheelchair or wheelchair vouchers through the wheelchair service.

Riser-recliner chairs

- Occupational therapist

Double profiling beds

- Occupational therapist or district nurse - some local authorities will provide the cost of a single bed towards a double, so we need to know whether this applies.

Mobility scooters

- Occupational therapist or MS nurse - the letter must confirm the scooter requested is safe and suitable for the applicant.

Car adaptations, such as hoists or hand controls

- Occupational therapist, MS nurse, or the applicant may have a copy of a driving assessment outlining the adaptations recommended - we also need to know whether they have applied to Motability for a grant.

Motability advance payments

- Occupational therapist or MS nurse - we also need confirmation from Motability or the car dealership that there are no vehicles with nil advance payments that will meet their essential needs. We also need to know whether they have applied to Motability for a grant.

Driving lessons for the person with MS or their carer

- Occupational therapist, MS nurse, GP or social worker

Decorating work needed following adaptations

- Occupational therapist, MS nurse or social worker

Clinical and communication aids

- Specialist in that area (e.g. speech and language therapist, sometimes an occupational therapist, MS nurse or social worker) - we also need confirmation that the item cannot be funded by the NHS or social services.

Bankruptcy and debt relief order fees

- Social worker, Citizens Advice Bureau worker, other debt advice worker (from not-for-profit debt advice agency). The applicant must be able to show that they have taken advice about their debts.

Removal costs, for moving to more accessible accommodation

- Occupational therapist, MS nurse, GP or social worker

Furnishings, flooring and domestic appliances/ essential home repairs

- MS nurse or social worker

Laptops, as a way of communicating or to reduce social isolation

- Occupational therapist, social worker or MS nurse

Exercise equipment

- Physiotherapist

Short Breaks and Activities Fund

All applications need to be supported by a health or social care professional. They need to confirm the diagnosis of MS (or that the applicant is a carer for someone with MS). They also need to outline the need for the break requested and how the applicant will benefit from it, any care or support needs that the applicant has, and give any other general background information.

For requests for respite care, we also need confirmation of whether any funding is available towards this from the local authority (usually from a social worker or care manager).

For requests for complementary therapies, the letter of support should:

- confirm that no harm will come to the applicant as a result of the treatments
- confirm how the treatments will benefit the applicant, either physically, emotionally or socially
- highlight any care needs that will need to be met to allow the applicant to undertake the treatments
- confirm that the treatments provide the applicant with a short break

Carers Grant Fund

All applications need a letter of support from someone who is able to confirm that the applicant is a carer of someone with MS and who can describe what their caring role involves on a daily or regular basis. This could be a teacher, carer's support worker, social worker, health professional or an MS Society support volunteer. The list is not exhaustive and we try to be flexible about who can provide the letter, as we know that not all carers have someone supporting them.

Appendix 9: Grantmaking frequently asked questions

Q: Someone has asked for a grant but they're not a member of the MS Society. Can they apply?

A: Absolutely. Our constitution says that we will help anyone with MS, whether or not they are a member of the MS Society. Our grants are equally available to members and non-members.

Q: Someone bought a new scooter recently and has just asked if we can help with the cost. Can we?

A: No. The MS Society can't help with anything that an applicant has already paid money towards, or placed an order for, other than in very exceptional circumstances. This policy has been set to enable us to target our resources at those most in financial need.

Q: Why does the application form ask about what work the person has done?

A: This information helps us look for other funding, from charities that help people who have worked in particular job roles or industries (e.g. the Firefighters Charity, Hospitality Action, and the Bank Workers Charity).

Q: Someone has asked about help for a stair lift (or other home adaptation). Shouldn't the council help them? Do they have to ask the council to help them? What if the council has turned them down for funding?

A: They may be eligible for help from the council and need to ask, as councils have a statutory duty to provide assistance (subject to financial eligibility) and we cannot replace this. We can consider a grant if they are not eligible for funding, but we need confirmation from the council of this.

Q: Who is the best person to ask for a letter of support?

A: It varies depending on the request - see [Appendix 8: Letters of support required](#) for guidance.

Q: Why is the applicant asked for a bank statement for their Short Breaks and Activities Fund application?

A: We need a bank statement on file to meet financial audit requirements. As short breaks are often best value when booked online, or may have petrol costs that can't be paid directly, we may pay these grants directly to the applicant's account.

Q: If we give £ [amount] from branch funds, will the Grants Team match what we give?

A: We don't have a policy whereby we match fund branch grants. We fund as much as we are able to based on our upper limits and scoring system.

Q: Why does the applicant need an assessment for a mobility scooter - they could just go and buy one?

A: If MS Society funds are being used, we have a responsibility to make sure that items provided are safe and suitable for the applicant to use. There have been occasions where applicants have bought a scooter without an assessment and then found it either unsuitable, or caused an injury.

Support Grants Handbook v1	
Content owner:	Grants Manager
Editor:	Projects Officer (Services and Support)
Signed off:	July 2015
Review date:	July 2016
Multiple Sclerosis Society Registered charity numbers 1139257/SCO41990. Registered as a limited company in England and Wales 07451571.	