



# Part A: The Local Networks Programme

## The case for change

Our network of MS Society groups is one of our major strengths. Through this network, MS Society volunteers bring people affected by MS together locally, provide information and support, influence national and local services, and raise vital funds to support our shared goals.



Learn about our shared goals in [Together to beat MS: Our strategy 2015 to 2019](#) or contact the **Supporter Care Team** to request a printed copy.

But essential changes are needed to renew our local network of MS Society groups. We know that volunteer numbers are in decline, and locally raised income is falling. And you have told us that you want simpler administration processes.

We need to work together to attract new volunteers, and increase our support and impact for people affected by MS. We want the Local Networks Programme to offer MS Society groups the greater flexibility and focus they need to grow the strength of our local MS communities across the UK.

## The decision making process

In 2012-2013, we asked you what you thought the future of MS Society groups should look like in the 'Working Locally' consultation.

The findings formed the bedrock of the Local Networks Programme proposals that were launched at volunteer forums throughout the UK in November 2015. The extensive feedback you gave us informed the final plan that was agreed by the **Board of Trustees** in March 2016.

We will continue to involve you throughout the implementation of these proposals through volunteer forums and regular updates. We have also put together a **Reference Group** of volunteers from across our four nations who are helping steer the delivery and engagement of the programme.



Check when your next local **volunteer forum** is due to take place at [Events and training](#) on our **volunteer website** or contact the **Supporter Care Team** for assistance.

## What we will deliver

- ✓ We will provide our volunteers with new and more effective tools to support them to deliver MS Society group activities.
- ✓ We will simplify our governance processes and administration systems to make it easier to run a group, so that our volunteers can focus on supporting people affected by MS.
- ✓ We will concentrate on a narrower range of high quality and impactful services that clearly improve the health and wellbeing of people affected by MS.

## The implementation plan

The Local Networks Programme will take three years to implement. We will support you through all the key changes, with staff expertise, new guidance, and increased opportunities to meet and network locally.

### 2016

In 2016, we will introduce new tools to reduce MS Society group administration, and develop a simpler health and safety system for low risk activities. We will roll out a menu of free fundraising materials, and improve MS Society email functionality. The first Quality Standards will be available and we will encourage MS Society groups to tell us about the services and events they run.

### 2017

In 2017, we will introduce our new MS Society group requirements, and remove the need for annual meetings. We will develop new volunteering roles, and better support for our volunteers through learning and development. We will roll out guidance and processes to make it easier to recruit volunteers.

We will also refresh MS Support so that this important service delivers even greater support to people affected by MS. We will improve our organisational resources for MS Support volunteers, and clarify the remit of this role.

## 2018

As we approach 2018, we will move towards a prioritised set of services, with Quality Standards, risk management, and impact measurements specific to each. We will ensure MS Society groups have the resources to deliver excellent services and will involve you in the development of innovative new ways of working, if you wish.

### Local Networks Programme on the volunteer website

Our **volunteer website** is the key source of information for your MS Society group, guidance on your volunteer role, news about volunteering matters, and forthcoming events and training opportunities.

For all the latest news and updates, visit the [Local Networks Programme](#) web section regularly.



Find out  
more

See [Appendix 1: Volunteer website resource index](#) for an alphabetical list of all online resources referred to in this guide - click on any link to be taken to that resource. You can also contact the **Supporter Care Team** to request a printed copy of any resource.

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