



Welcome

Key information for you

Welcome to the MS Society



Thank you for joining us to help stop MS.

You have joined a team of thousands of volunteers giving the MS community hundreds of thousands of hours each year. Volunteers are a vital part of our community who day in day out make life better for people affected by MS.

Your skills, experience, energy and commitment are invaluable to us. Whether you are delivering services, campaigning for change, fundraising or being a Trustee, we couldn't do it without you.

We know our volunteers come to us for lots of reasons and from a variety of backgrounds. You may have a connection to MS, you may not.

Whatever your motivation for volunteering with us, we want to meet your expectations and support you as a valued volunteer.

Whether you're with us for many years or join us for a short and specific project, whatever your contribution is during your time with us, be sure it is valued.

We simply couldn't achieve everything we do without you!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M. Mitchell".

Michelle Mitchell
Chief Executive

MS Society

I joined the organisation in 2015 because, having personally witnessed the effects of MS, I wanted to do something positive to help others. I believed that joining the UK's leading charity for people with MS was the best way to do this.

Since then, I've been honoured and humbled to work alongside thousands of volunteers who willingly devote time and energy to supporting people with MS.

I hope you'll be encouraged to know that the MS Society is funding important research which we believe will ultimately result in significant advances in MS treatments.

Thank you for wanting to be part of our work. I hope your experience of volunteering with the MS Society is as rewarding as mine.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nick Winser".

Nick Winser
Chair of Trustees



Let's get you started on your volunteer journey with us...

About this booklet

This booklet is for volunteers joining us.

It forms part of your welcome and induction which will help you find out about what we do, what volunteering with us is like and point you to useful and important resources so that you can settle into, and enjoy, your role.

In this booklet, we cover:

- ▶ About us
- ▶ Our volunteering opportunities
- ▶ Our commitment, Your commitment
- ▶ How we support you along the way
- ▶ Keeping in touch
- ▶ Further information: our key documents

This booklet was developed with input, photos and quotes from volunteers. A big thank you to everyone for their contributions.

“Within the MS community, there is a strong sense of unity and feelings of all being in this together, so by volunteering I am also able to give back by helping others on our journey with MS.”

Janice, Research Network Volunteer



About us

We're the MS Society – a community of people living with MS, scientists, campaigners, listeners, organisers, ambassadors and fundraisers. Together we take action to achieve our goals. Your support is vital. Thank you for joining us.

We are the UK's leading MS charity, with national offices in London, Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh.

We involve volunteers in everything we do.

You shape who we are and the decisions we make.

We use our experience, expertise and voices to drive change and help people live well with MS. By coming together, we can provide care, share support, collectively campaign and commission life-changing research – all of which help us face the future with confidence.

We're excited about the future and what we can achieve together.



“I meet people with the best of attitudes and the worst of symptoms.”

Tina, Support Volunteer

▶ **We know that, together, we're strong enough to stop MS.**



Our values

Our values help define who we are, and what's important to us. As a volunteer, you stand with us to represent these values. They're in the way we talk, and the things we do. You can find out more in [Using our brand](#) on our volunteer website.

► Bold

We are brave and innovative. We are not afraid to take risks and speak out, even when it is not easy. We are pioneering and dynamic in our approach to achieving our goals. We will campaign and push boundaries, and will not give up until we have stopped MS.

► Expert

As a community, we understand MS better than anyone else. Our work is built on the rich and varied expertise and experience of people affected by MS; our staff, volunteers, professionals and scientists to improve the lives of people affected by MS.

► Ambitious

We do not accept the status quo. We set high standards and work hard to reach them, driving real change. We push the boundaries and are positive about stopping MS.

► Together

We achieve success by working with the whole MS community and others who can help us achieve our goals. We are collaborative and inclusive in our approach to succeed in delivering our goals. Everything we do shows we support and care about each other.



Our volunteering opportunities

We know volunteers get involved for lots of different reasons, at different stages in their lives and in very different circumstances. We want to make sure you can volunteer with us in a way that suits you.

We offer lots of ways to be involved to suit our volunteers' skills, experience, interests and time. Some of our volunteers take on more than one role. Others may change roles over time.

Helping local communities

Volunteers in our hundreds of local groups are vital to make sure services, information and support are available to MS communities throughout the UK.

Shaping our work

Our volunteers with MS are involved in all our work to make sure we always meet the needs of our MS communities.

Leading us

We are led by volunteers who ensure we strive to improve the lives of people affected by MS through our strategy and goals.

Sharing skills

We involve volunteers to help us achieve our organisational goals, while offering individuals opportunities to develop skills and experience in people and project management.

Raising vital funds

Our fundraising volunteers support us to raise vital funds for research and local services across the UK.

Making sure no one faces MS alone

Volunteers offer support on the telephone, face to face and online to make sure no one has to face MS alone.

Getting loud about MS

Our volunteers campaign, engage, coordinate activities and communications to raise our profile and influence change.





“When you see where the money you’ve raised has gone it is very gratifying.”

Yolanda, Group Coordinator and Communications Volunteer

Our commitment

We promise to

Offer you a role that fits with your life



Your commitment

We ask you to

Respect the boundaries of your role and our Code of Conduct

Volunteering with us is a two way relationship. When you take on a role, let us know how and when you want to volunteer. Find out what your role entails. This is so you get the most of your volunteering experience, while also being clear on the expectations of the role. Keeping within the expectations we’ve set together means we can offer you appropriate guidance and support.

Our **Code of Conduct** is for every member of staff, volunteer and member. It underpins who we are and how we represent our community.

Keep you and everyone safe

Keep yourself and others safe

We each have a personal responsibility to keep ourselves and the people around us safe. We provide guidance and support to apply our policies and processes, from health and safety, disclosure and data protection to lone volunteering, personal care and safeguarding.

Welcome you as an individual

Value the contribution of others and welcome the differences between us

We value who you are as an individual. Differences are welcomed. So whatever community you represent, we have a home for you here. We embrace our commitment to provide a supportive and inclusive environment and offer equal access to our information and services.

Our commitment



Your commitment

We promise to

We ask you to

Reimburse your out of pocket expenses

Recognise the limits of your experience and expertise

We care about your wellbeing, so you shouldn't be out of pocket and or carry out any tasks that make you feel uncomfortable. You'll be supported by a key contact (see the section on ongoing support for more information). They'll help you process any expenses claims. They'll also make sure the role you are doing fits with your skills and are here to support you.

Help you learn your role and support you to learn as you go

Complete the necessary learning for your role

We'll direct you to the relevant guidance and support needed for your particular role. This will vary. For some of you, this might be showing you what to do on the day. For others there will be a programme of learning activities. We want you to feel happy and confident to do your role.



"I've personally gotten so much out of the MS group, I really just wanted to give something back. Through volunteering, I've also made many friends that have become very important in my life."

Barbara, Activities Volunteer

Listen to your feedback and welcome your ideas

Express your ideas

We wouldn't be the organisation we are without our volunteers. We'll treat your feedback and ideas seriously. So it's vital that you complete consultations and share your thoughts about your area of volunteering. That includes any areas you think we could improve on.

Value your personal contribution

Contribute positively to our story

Everyone is different and we all have something unique to give. We wouldn't be able to achieve our goals without your unique effort.

Be part of our community. You can help raise awareness of who we are and our achievements. You can inspire others to help fund our services and influence change. This could be by sharing what we do on social media, by being a case study or telling people about what we do.

Keep you connected and up to date

Stay connected and up to date

Watch out for updates relevant to your role. There are lots of ways to stay in the loop, from following us on [Facebook](#), or [Twitter](#), to checking our [volunteer website](#) for updates. You can also sign up to receive our magazines MS Matters and Research Matters, our publications and our e-newsletters.

Let us know if your contact details change so we can make sure our updates reach you.

Thank you for the impact you deliver

Share your successes and learning

We have different ways to say thank you and to value and recognise each other for our contributions. Your experience can help others, giving them ideas and inspiring them. Tell other volunteers what you've done well and learnt along the way. We share good practice, learnings and examples of successes on our [volunteer website](#).

How we'll support you along the way

Welcome and induction

Every volunteer role has a tailored welcome and induction checklist, with a set of relevant resources, contacts and activities. This is to help you get to know us and your role.

To help you settle in, we ask you to work through your welcome and induction checklist within your first few months. How long it takes to complete will depend on the nature of your role and your availability.

For roles that carry greater responsibility, the role induction might include more formal training. Most often this is because the activities you do are governed by legal requirements. For example, you'll need health and safety training if you're running events and meetings.

As part of your development, keep note of any questions you have as you go through the checklist. And let us know if you feel you need or would like to develop particular skills.



Ongoing support

You'll be offered ongoing support from your key contact. They're here to answer your questions and help you settle into your role.

Your key contact will generally be the staff member who is responsible for your area of activity. Or they might be a local volunteer who, as part of their role, coordinates other volunteers.

It's important to us you can strike a good balance between your volunteering and other commitments you have. Let us know if your circumstances change and this affects your volunteering.

The **Supporter Care Team** is another source of support and a point of contact. They can signpost you to the right person and help with enquiries about our Online Shop, organising street collections, available training and using our systems.

Some roles may need further training. This could be to keep your skills and knowledge up to date or to share good practice.

Top tip

Your welcome and induction checklist will tell you who your key contact is in the 'Sources of support' section.

Top tip

See **Staff support** on our volunteer website for more information and contact details of other people who might be able to help, including the Supporter Care Team.

Learn as you go

Learning happens in everything we do, often by simply turning up or talking to someone.

After your induction, we'll provide more guidance, support and learning experiences for you to dip in and out of. Check out our [volunteer website](#) or speak to your key contact.

We'll also offer learning and development opportunities to enhance your knowledge, confidence and skills.

You might also become interested in another role that complements or is quite different to the role you first took on. Speak to your key contact about it. There might be opportunities you haven't considered:

“ I just never thought that my background would fit with being a Council Member but I'm thriving in this role.”

“ I would encourage everyone to have a go at something different!”

Helen, Helpline Volunteer and Council Member



Our online tools

Our [volunteer website](#) is where you can access our latest news, and a range of resources to support you in your role and your learning.

[Web to Print](#) is our online tool to help you design and produce quality newsletters, posters and stationery. Each local group has a Web to Print log in. Individual volunteers involved in promoting events and activities can also have their own log in. The Supporter Care Team or Brand Team can help you access Web to Print.

You can order promotional materials and publications through our [Online Shop](#).

Local groups and some volunteer roles are provided with an '@mssociety' [email address](#). It's easy to access and it includes our distinctive branding. Inboxes can be accessed by more than one volunteer, ensuring enquiries are dealt with quickly. You must use an MS Society email address when you send, receive and store emails on our behalf to ensure that we keep people's personal information safe.

The [Portal](#) is our online platform for volunteers in a local setting to access membership data, coordinate volunteers and share information about the services and activities they deliver. While all group volunteers can access services and activities on the Portal, only certain roles can see and use personal data about our members and volunteers.

[Accounting Online](#) is our easy to use web-based accounting system for groups. It enables local groups to record accounting transactions and produce financial reports.

Top tip

For more information, visit [Online tools](#) on our volunteer website.



“The most rewarding part of my role is when I receive positive feedback from people who have attended the group, who feel that they have been helped and supported by a meeting.”
“It makes it all worthwhile.”

Asma, Group Coordinator

“I enjoy street collecting as it gets me out of the house to meet people. Sometimes you feel like there’s people who want to talk someone and I can help.”

Geraldine, Fundraising Volunteer



Staying in touch

Keeping us up to date

Please make sure you let us know if your contact details change so we can update our records. This way, we can make sure you get all our communications.

Up to date contact details are also crucial to help us support you to the best of our ability.

Please update your contact details with your key contact or the Supporter Care Team.

Recognising each other

Recognition means different things for our volunteers, from a simple ‘thank you’ to a national award. We want to make sure we acknowledge the impact, contribution and achievements made by you, our volunteers, and that you feel valued for what you do.

Everyone can get involved to make this happen. Find out all the ways we recognise your achievements and forward nominees for our own MS Awards or external recognition.

Top tip

For more information, visit [Thanking volunteers](#) on our volunteer website.

Moving on

We want volunteering with us to feel rewarding and right for you. If your role isn't what you expected or no longer suits you, please let your key contact know.

It might be that the role you chose isn't what you thought. We might be able to find other opportunities that you'd like better or that fit better with what you're trying to achieve.

It might be that you need more support from us, in developing a skill for example.

Or it might be that your time with us really has come to an end. Please let us know so that we can thank you and update our records. We'd like to hear about your experience with us and learn if there are ways we might improve it for others.

THANK YOU

However much time you give us as a volunteer, **thank you.**

Every minute given is a minute that will help someone in the MS community.

Further information: our key documents

Our policies are official documents that support our ways of working. We also have official statements on important issues.

We've included a short description of some documents we think will be useful for you below. Please take a few minutes to familiarise yourself with them. Our full [policies and related guidance](#) are accessible from our volunteer website.

Expenses:

You'll be reimbursed for all reasonable out of pocket expenses.

Code of Conduct:

Our Code of Conduct is a statement of the values we uphold in all our activities. We all take personal responsibility for following this code, as does everyone connected with us or acting on our behalf.

Comments, compliments and complaints:

We take feedback seriously. This policy sets out how we respond to comments, compliments and complaints across all departments and groups.

Confidentiality:

You might be given or told sensitive information, for example details about a person's health or financial situation. It's important you understand and accept the responsibility to keep this information private.

Data protection:

We are legally required to apply the Data Protection Act in the way we process and handle data. This policy sets out your responsibilities in ensuring personal information we hold and have access to is kept safely, securely and only used for the intended purpose(s).

Dignity at work:

We promote a culture of mutual respect between all our volunteers and staff. This policy sets out how we deal with harassment and bullying.

Disclosure:

Depending on your role, you may be required to undergo a disclosure check before you start in your role.

Having a conviction doesn't necessarily prevent you from volunteering. Each volunteer's circumstances will be taken into consideration and a risk assessment will need to be completed.

This policy explains why a disclosure check might be needed and the process involved.

Equal opportunities and inclusion:

We're committed to treating everyone involved with us fairly and to providing an inclusive environment. This policy ensures we reflect the community we serve and everyone has the support they need for equal access.

Health and safety:

We're committed to ensure the wellbeing of everyone involved with us. This policy sets out how we ensure the wellbeing of our volunteers, staff and people who receive our services or enter our premises.

Lone volunteering:

We want to ensure the safety of anyone who's working or volunteering on their own. This policy sets out how to identify, eliminate, minimise and manage the risks that arise from lone volunteering. It also specifies when lone volunteering should not be undertaken.

Personal care:

Personal care is helping an adult with eating and drinking, moving and handling, toileting, washing, dressing, bathing or showering, communicating and taking medication.

We want to make sure people with MS can fully participate in our activities and have access to the personal care they need while ensuring volunteers do not feel pressured into giving personal care. This policy explains what to do to meet these demands.

Safeguarding:

We're committed to safeguarding and protecting the welfare of everyone who uses our services. This policy explains what to do if you suspect or are informed of abuse.

Volunteer involvement:

We want you to find your volunteering exciting and rewarding. This policy is about how we engage, support and recognise our volunteers.

Whistleblowing:

What to do if you need to raise a concern about malpractice, such as health and safety, fraud or mismanagement.

Top tip

For some roles, reading, understanding and discussing some of these policies will be part of the learning we ask you to complete.



Key contact

My key contact is:.....

Email:.....

Phone number:.....

Contact us

MS National Centre

020 8438 0700
info@mssociety.org.uk

MS Helpline Freephone

0808 800 8000
(weekdays 9am-7pm)
helpline@mssociety.org.uk

Online

mssociety.org.uk
facebook.com/MSSociety
twitter.com/mssocietyuk

MS Society Scotland

0131 335 4050
msscotland@mssociety.org.uk

MS Society Northern Ireland

028 9080 2802
nireception@mssociety.org.uk

MS Society Cymru

020 8438 0700
mscymru@mssociety.org.uk