



Social Media Guide

This guide highlights what local groups are doing to build a positive, active and safe online community. It contains information relating to our [Social Media Policy](#) and guidance you must follow as an MS Society volunteer. This guide applies to all social media spaces.

Key



Links to information



Top tips



Learning activity



Important information relating to MS Society policies or requirements

[Link](#)

If there's a word or phrase written in blue and underlined, you can click to open the new webpage. 'Right click' to open in new window and not lose what you were looking at.

Must

Where we use the word 'must', it means a specific rule that you must comply with.

Should

Where we use the words 'should' or 'we recommend', these indicate our suggested best approach.

Table of Contents

1. Why use social media?	3	
2. What is social media?	3	
3. When am I part of our online community?	6	
Personal accounts		6
Group accounts		6
4. Representing us	7	
Online behaviour		7
Data protection		9
Supporting others		9
What to include in your personal account?		10
What to include in your group account?		11
Using our branding		11
5. Staying safe	13	
Safeguarding concerns		13
6. How to get in touch	14	
Any questions?		15

1. Why use social media?

Social media can help inspire people to take action.

We're a thriving community of people living with MS, volunteers, staff, family and friends – offline and online. We share helpful tips on living with MS, make each other aware of events, fundraise for the MS Society, campaign together for change and connect with people new to MS.

By using social media we can:

- provide and share quality information
- thank supporters and members
- increase the number of people that join us
- raise awareness of everything we achieve

All interactions, no matter how big or small, help us connect with more people and support each other. Get involved in social media so that together we can stop MS.

2. What is social media?

'Social media' is a term to describe all the online spaces that facilitate conversations between family, friends, businesses, organisations and the wider online world. Most of these spaces mean we can share our thoughts and stories in photos, videos or other ways.

Some spaces have more privacy settings for use with family and friends e.g. Facebook, whereas other spaces are used to find new people and get messages out to a broader audience e.g. Twitter.

Look out for their icons



[Twitter](#)



[WhatsApp](#)



[Facebook](#)



[LinkedIn](#)



[Instagram](#)



[Google Plus](#)



[YouTube](#)



[MS Society Forum](#)



Click on the links above to find out more about each space. Do you already use any of these?

Social media spaces can be accessed on nearly all devices including your computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone... as long as you are connected to the internet or have a mobile data service.

Popular spaces we use for national campaigns and information are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and Google Plus.

There are also some spaces that will help find people or events in your local area which you can find out about by using a search engine, like Google or Bing.

Take a look at this story from a volunteer in the Sutton group:



Alistair in the Sutton group has used social media to help promote his group's events locally and connect with other local organisations.

His group has a Facebook page where they advertise all their events and share news about MS. They post pictures of themselves at the events to help keep everyone informed even if they couldn't attend.

He also uses his personal account on Nextdoor, a social media space that helps neighbours connect online, to ask for raffle prizes and announce the group events. This has helped his group to connect with other local organisations which now promote their events as well.



How does your group promote its events?
Could social media help broaden your network?



Here are a few tips to get you started:

- Sign up to a social media space that you know your friends and contacts use
- Start a conversation by sharing tweets and posts that your followers might want to share and reply to.
- Include visuals (photos and videos) – people typically notice images first then read text second
- Post content at key times of the day when people are most likely to be online – early morning, lunch time and evenings
- Tailor your content for the space you're using – for example:
 - Instagram for visual/story based content
 - Facebook for longer pieces
 - Twitter for short and concise messages
- Learn from others – Explore your social media space to find out what others are doing.

3. When am I part of our online community?

At the beginning of 2018, 83% of the adult population was using one or more social media space. It offers us a lot of potential to get the MS message understood.

Our growing online community is a safe place where people can find out more about MS and connect with others. We're trusted by the wider online world to provide reliable and up to date information about MS.

To show that you're part of this trusted online community, make sure that your personal account or your group account represents us appropriately.

Personal accounts

In all social media spaces, your personal account represents us if you state that you volunteer with us. This could be written in:

- Your description or biography
- Post or tweets
- Comments or replies to other people's posts or tweets



Identify the pros and cons of using your personal account.

- Are there things about you that you'd prefer to keep private?
- Or do you want to share your volunteering achievements and news with your contacts freely?



It's entirely up to you how much you share – just be aware that any information you post is public and permanent.

Group accounts

MS Society groups play a vital role in our community and represent us. Others will know that yours is an MS Society group account if you:

- include 'MS Society' in the name (example: MS Society Barnsley)
- say that the account is managed by a local MS Society group in the description or biography
- Posts, tweets and/or comments that mention the account is managed by a local MS Society group

- Volunteering with us or available services and support is mentioned in posts and tweets online
- the profile photo is our official logo (see below)

Our official MS Society logo:

The official MS Society logo is orange with a white background.



Download our [logo](#) from the volunteer website.



If you manage a group social media account, you're carrying out tasks listed on the [Communications Volunteer role](#). Have a look at the [Welcome and induction checklist](#) for this role to find out about other support and guidance available.

4. Representing us

Our community needs to work together to ensure that everyone feels welcomed and safe. To make this a reality across the UK, we all need to follow the same rules.

The [Code of Conduct](#) helps make sure we all represent our shared values and standards.



Learn about our goals, values and standards at [Representing the MS Society](#) on our volunteer website.

Online behaviour

Always err on the side of caution if you're posting an item that you think might have an adverse reaction from those that view it.



If unsure, don't post.

Top tips:

1. So that the information we share with our supporters is reliable, we need to make sure anything we share or repost comes from a trusted source and is backed up with scientific evidence.



You must not share facts, stories or views about MS that aren't confirmed on any of the MS Society's social media accounts, the [official website](#), or by an official MS Society spokesperson

2. Help our members avoid misleading information in posts or on websites and think twice before sharing a post that isn't backed up. Sometimes, this misinformation (e.g. click here to win an iPad) is set up purely to steal personal data or to sell something. These are known as phishing scams.



You must not post, share or forward spam, junk or phishing scams.

3. To demonstrate that we're trustworthy, we should always be kind to one another, even if we don't have the same opinions. Talking badly about other people doesn't make anyone look good and if it's shared online, it's permanent.



Writing or sharing messages that damage the reputation of the MS Society, any member of staff or volunteer, or group must not be posted.

4. To grow our community and support more people living with MS, we need to make sure that anything we say or write is inclusive.



Only engage in activities and post content that:

- won't offend someone on the basis of race, religion, age, sex, politics, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, gender or any other characteristic protected by law
- are legal



Find out more about our commitment to diversity by reading our [diversity position statement](#) on the volunteer website.



Remember, if you're unsure, don't post. Be sure you're happy for any personal information you post to be made public.

Data protection

We're all responsible for protecting the privacy of individuals and their right to control the ways we use their personal information. This helps everyone to stay safe online.



You must obtain written consent before posting any form of personal information, such as a person's name, quotes, story and images.



Visit our volunteer website for [social media images](#) with consent forms already on file. You can use these images with confidence that they meet our legal requirements.

Posting photos on social media spaces is a great way to show others what we're doing. If you've taken your own photos, make sure that everyone in them has given you permission to use them before they're posted.



Use our [consent forms](#) to obtain someone's written consent to publish their personal information.



Read our [data protection requirements](#) and our [data rules](#) on the volunteer website

Keeping your data safe online

Your online security is your responsibility. We strongly recommend that you don't share your personal information – e.g. home addresses and phone numbers – anywhere online.

Supporting others

If your account represents us, you could be contacted at any time by someone looking for help and support.

Our MS Helpline staff and volunteers and local Support Volunteers are trained and supported to provide a listening ear to those who need it.



As a volunteer, it's not your role to give advice or online support. Always signpost the person to a staff or volunteer who's trained to help.

Refer the person to our MS Helpline by telephone on 0808 800 8000 or by email at helpline@mssociety.org.uk.

For local support, please check in with your local group to see if they offer MS Support and have a Support Volunteer available.

Look after yourself too. If you need support, contact our MS Helpline.

What to include in your personal account?

If you already use a personal account, it's likely you share a range of information about what you get up to with your followers. Hopefully, you share your experiences and involvement in our MS community.

- ! To make sure your personal account doesn't get confused with a local group account you must not use our official MS Society logo as your personal account profile photo.

When using your personal account, you're likely to share personal news and information that doesn't relate to your involvement in the MS community and may not reflect the views of the MS Society.

- ! We all have our own opinions and feelings to share. You must add the statement 'Views are my own' at the end of your biography. This means you don't have to worry about sharing information that isn't related to the MS Society which could be inadvertently associated to your involvement with us.

Examples:



I'm a volunteer for the [@mssocietyuk](#) group in #Manchester. Views are my own.



I'm a volunteer for the [MS Society](#) group in Manchester. Views are my own.



I'm a volunteer for the [@mssocietyuk](#) group in Manchester. Views are my own.

What to include in your group account?

Having an active group account offers a powerful opportunity to stay in touch with the local MS community, share vital information and promote events.

To use this opportunity fully, group accounts should be clear about who we are with anyone who comes across or proactively searches for the page.

- ! The description, biography or 'about us' section must state that the account is run by a local group of volunteers and be kept up to date.

We're one community of individuals and groups and we're all different. Acknowledge that we all have our own personal views and opinions on a wide variety of topics by adding the simple line below.

- ! You must add the statements 'Views are our own' at the end of your biography.

Examples:



We're volunteers and run the local [@mssociety](#) group in Bromsley. Views are our own.



We're volunteers and run the local [MS Society](#) group in Bromsley. Views are our own.



We're volunteers and run the local [@mssocietyuk](#) group in Bromsley. Views are our own.

Using our branding

To stand out on any social media space and be recognised by people who may want to support us or are looking for a trusted source of support and information, use our fonts and colours consistently.



For our full range of brand resources, see [Using our brand](#) on the volunteer website, or ask the [Brand Centre](#) for help.

Take a look at our Surrey group Twitter biography:



How do they make it clear that they represent us?



What do they use to help others recognise us?

MS Society Surrey

@Surrey_MS Follows you

We're @mssocietyuk's local volunteer network in Surrey. Follow us for local news, info, events and support in your area. Views are our own.

📍 Surrey, England

📅 Joined January 2017

🕒 Born on January 16

Logos play an important role in helping people to recognise brands - we all reach for our favourite logos when we go shopping and it's the same online. Show you're part of the MS community and use the same branding so people know to reach for us.

! Group accounts must use the orange on white version of our logo.

Take a look at our Croydon group Facebook account:



What do they use to help others recognise us?



Download the up to date [logo](#) on the volunteer website.



Use our branding to show that you're part of our community and that you have our support.



MS Society
Croydon Group

@mscroydon

Home

About

Events

Photos



Online discussions can develop quickly. To keep an active presence in your online community, have someone check the account 3-4 times a week. Or think about [recruiting](#) a [Communications Volunteer](#).

5. Staying safe

Be safe - if you receive an abusive or inappropriate message that is threatening, aggressive or rude, don't reply to the person.

Look out for others - abuse can happen online as well as offline. In the unfortunate instance that you suspect or witness abuse or someone discloses it online, you should report it just as you would offline.

In both case mentioned above, contact webteam@mssociety.org.uk with as much detail about the message and the account, and our Digital and Content Team will take care of it.

Useful information for the team includes:

- The user name
- Twitter @handle
- Link to the Twitter, Facebook or Instagram profile page of the individual conducting the abuse and screenshots of the abusive tweets, posts or private messages.



As we can't see everything that might happen on our social media every day, make sure your membership and volunteers are empowered to speak up if they're experiencing abuse or harassment. Also encourage others to look out for each other.

Safeguarding concerns

If someone who accesses help to manage their day to day life encounters abuse, it's likely to be a safeguarding matter. We have a legal responsibility to make sure that vulnerable people are protected from abuse or neglect.



See our [Safeguarding](#) online presentation on the volunteer website.

Safeguarding concerns must be reported in order to ensure that everyone in our community is safe and supported.



You must not offer advice when seeing a post, tweet or comment online from someone in need. If you become aware of abuse, or suspect it, report your concerns to the Safeguarding Responders Group as soon as possible, by

emailing the [Record of safeguarding concern and actions form](#) to safeguarding@mssociety.org.uk



Download the [Record of safeguarding concern and actions form](#) to record your concern. Our [Safeguarding Responders Group](#) will take it from there.

6. How to get in touch

Social media spaces are constantly changing and new spaces are launched all the time - take part in any that you feel comfortable with and think will help grow our community. Share your success stories so that we can all learn from one another.

A great way to expand your network is by connecting with as many parts of our community as possible.



Post something now in your preferred social media space to spread the word about MS.

If you aren't sure what to write stay in touch with our community news by following the national MS Society pages and share or re-tweet information and events from there.



Facebook: www.facebook.com/MSSociety/
Twitter: www.twitter.com/mssocietyuk
Instagram: www.instagram.com/mssocietyuk

Follow other local groups to find out about what they get up to, to ask for or offer help, and share your successes and learning.

All accounts have a username. When a username has an '@' sign at the beginning it is called a handle. A handle is a direct link to the associated account which makes the account easier to find.



Include our official handles in your Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram biography and posts/ tweets so that your post is connected to the whole community and anyone reading can click through to other sources of information and support.

National MS Society handles



[@msssocietyuk](https://twitter.com/msssocietyuk)



[MS Society](https://www.facebook.com/MS.Society)



[@msssocietyuk](https://www.instagram.com/msssocietyuk)

Any questions?

If you have questions that aren't covered in this guide, please email webteam@mssociety.org.uk and our Digital and Content Team will help.

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