

Comments, compliments and complaints policy

1. Purpose and scope

The MS Society operates across the UK. It is made up of members, volunteers, supporters and paid staff.

We are committed to providing high quality services. We want our services to achieve the highest standards in all that we do, no matter what the service is or where it takes place. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve is by listening and responding to feedback.

This policy outlines how we deal with feedback (including comments, compliments and complaints) about any of our functions or services made by people with or affected by MS, the public or members.

We also have separate policies and procedures for issues or concerns about someone's experience or activities as a volunteer or which we may use in relation to HR matters (for example grievance or disciplinary issues). We will advise you if a different policy or procedure is appropriate instead of this policy. We might also choose ourselves to apply one of those other policies or procedures if we believe that is appropriate in light of the feedback you have given. That is not automatic and is a decision we would take in a particular case; if we do then that is likely to be confidential between us and the member of staff or volunteer and you would not necessarily know.

2. What is a comment, compliment or complaint?

We value comments and suggestions so that we can improve what we do, and where you think we have done particularly well we would be delighted to hear from you.

If you have a concern or you are dissatisfied with any aspect of the MS Society's services or activities, we also want to hear from you so that we can respond to your concern and learn from it.

3. Policy Principles

We want you to be satisfied with the MS Society. We welcome positive feedback so that if something has gone well we can continue and repeat it. If something has gone wrong we would like to know so that we can prevent it happening again.

The principles of this policy are therefore that we want to ensure that:

- commenting is as easy as possible
- we always respond and treat your comments seriously
- our communications with you about your feedback are prompt and polite
- we learn from comments and use your feedback to improve our services
- we respond to you in the right way, for example with an apology where things have gone wrong; a gracious thank you where you have complimented us; or with an explanation or information as appropriate.

We will always try to respond positively and effectively to complaints and to put right any shortcomings that are within our control, so that any complaint is resolved satisfactorily and speedily.

4. How to submit feedback to the MS Society

It is usually best to contact the person who is providing the service, whether at local or national level, as they are best placed to respond to comments.

If you have a concern or problem you should similarly try, in the first instance, to resolve the problem with the service or person concerned. They will often be able to put things right very quickly and simply. If you do not know who to contact or do not feel comfortable raising it in way suggested then please phone us on 0300 500 8084, send an email to supportercare@mssociety.org.uk or write to Supporter Care at:

Supporter Care
MS Society

MS National Centre
372 Edgware Road
London
NW2 6ND

In relation to any complaint or compliment, whomever it is sent to, it would be helpful if you could state clearly and briefly:

- what went wrong or what went well
- when and where it happened
- who was involved
- what you want from your feedback
- your name, address and contact details (telephone and/or email).

5. Response to your feedback

The way in which we respond to your feedback will vary according to its nature – for example a compliment might not need a written response.

Where contact is through Supporter Care we will log the communication and pass it to the most appropriate person to respond.

If you make a complaint, we will send you a receipt within seven days, which will give you the name of the person who will be responding more fully.

It may be necessary for that person to contact you for further information.

All complaints will be treated with an appropriate degree of confidentiality, and information will only be shared with staff and volunteers as necessary to assist in understanding what has happened and to respond.

We will reply to your complaint as soon as we are able to and our aim is to gather any further information which is needed and to respond to you within 14 days of telling you who is dealing with it. Where this is not possible, we will let you know when you will receive a full response.

6. If you wish to take the matter further

If, after you have received this response, you still think that the matter has not been resolved, you should contact the Head of Governance. Your comments will then be passed to a senior manager (who has had no previous dealings with the issue) and they will look at the issue further.

You will be informed in writing within seven days of who that person is and when they will respond to you. You will receive a response, in writing, giving you the findings and recommendations in answer to your comments within a further twenty one days.

This is the final stage of the MS Society's response.

7. Reporting on feedback

An annual report is submitted to the Board of Trustees, which summarises the comments, compliments and complaints received during the year.

8. How to make a complaint about the MS Society to an external regulator

If you feel that you should be complaining to an external body, you can ask the Head of Governance for information.

It's entirely up to those individual external bodies whether or not they choose to look into a complaint and this will depend on their own criteria and procedures – which vary from regulator to regulator. Generally they will only look into more serious issues. Even where they will look into issues they will often, though not always, expect you to have contacted us first.

The main bodies which regulate us are the UK's three charity regulators (the Charity Commission for England and Wales is our lead charity regulator) and the Fundraising Standards Board.

Charity regulators

England and Wales: The Charity Commission can be contacted via an online form on its website. Direct, PO Box 1227, Liverpool, L69 3UG or by e-mail via the Charity Commission website. If you want to see the Charity Commission's publication about complaints (*CC47 – Complaints about charities*) this is available on their website www.charity-commission.gov.uk.

Scotland: The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) encourages people to contact it via an online form on its website. They can also be contacted by writing to OSCR, 2nd Floor, Quadrant House, 9 Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY, telephoning 01382 220446 or sending an e-mail to info@oscr.org.uk.

Northern Ireland: The Charity Commission of Northern Ireland can be contacted via an online form on its website.

Fundraising

If your complaint concerns fundraising, you will need to contact the Fundraising Regulator. Their details and an explanation of how they work with other organisations across the UK to regulate fundraising can be found at www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk.