



A1: Introduction and overview

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1. About us

There are more than 100,000 people with multiple sclerosis (MS) in the UK. Hundreds of thousands more have a friend or family member with the condition. We are the UK's biggest organisation dedicated to supporting people with MS and those who care about them.

We have 35,000 members and over 5,500 highly dedicated volunteers like you working in partnership with committed staff. We are governed by an elected board of voluntary trustees, many of whom are personally affected by MS.

1.1. What we are working towards

Our ultimate aim is to stop MS.

Our vision is 'a world free from the effects of MS' and our mission is 'transforming lives, stopping MS.'

Our organisational goals

These are our long-term aspirational goals, guiding everything we do.

1. Effective treatments and preventing MS
2. People living well with MS
3. Connected communities, powerful voices

We want to build on all the progress we've made so far – in MS research, through the services we provide and by continuing to campaign for change on the things that matter most to people living with MS.

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.

This handbook sets out the principles and procedures that must be followed by MS Society volunteer-led groups across the UK – to make sure we act as one organisation in working towards our goals.

1.2. How we work

There are common themes that guide the way we work and apply to everything we do – locally, nationally and internationally.

- As an organisation we work alongside people affected by MS, and ensure they are at the heart of everything we do.
- We work with other organisations and key individuals who share our goals, knowing that we can become more effective through working in partnership.
- Our resources are finite, so we prioritise our work and focus on the areas where we can have the greatest impact.
- We are clear about what we want to achieve and the difference we want to make, and seek to measure the impact our activities have.
- We are inclusive, and seek to support everyone affected by MS from all communities and walks of life, regardless of whether they are members of the MS Society.
- We are a UK-wide organisation working towards the same goals across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, but we tailor our approach to UK, national or local contexts as required.

Together, we are strong enough to stop MS

Our strength comes from:

- Our open and democratic processes, such as our Annual General Meeting (AGM) and 'one member, one vote'
- Our transparent and accountable ways of working
- Our shared core values that inform all our work
- Our staff and volunteers working alongside each other



Learn about our governance structure at [Our People](#) on the MS Society website, or ask the [Supporter Care Team](#) for help.

2. Our volunteer-led groups

Our network of volunteer-led groups is one of our major strengths. Our groups bring people affected by MS together locally, supporting them to be physically active, have access to information, get appropriate emotional support and feel part of a community.

Our volunteers also influence national and local services, and raise vital funds to support our shared goals.



See [C1: Volunteering with us](#) for guidance on recruiting, supporting and recognising your volunteers.

Our agreed local terminology

When we talk generally about our volunteer-led groups, we use the term 'MS Society groups' or 'our groups'. When we refer to a specific group, we say 'MS Society + group name'. For example, 'MS Society Anytown'.

We want you to use our agreed terminology when you talk about your own, and other MS Society groups.



See [C3: Your Coordinating Team](#) for guidance on how your group should operate.

3. Group Handbook

This handbook is for all MS Society groups that provide an opportunity to meet together every so often, help raise funds for our work, or deliver services and activities for people affected by MS.

Group Handbook contents

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- [X4: MS Society financial rules for groups](#)
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3.1. What does the Group Handbook include?

- It describes the practices and procedures your group should follow
- It distinguishes between 'must do' and 'good to' practices
- It outlines key background information
- It points to further support available to our volunteers and groups:
 - On the volunteer website
 - From a staff member or team

3.2. Volunteer website resource index

Throughout the [Group Handbook](#) you'll find links to our online tools and written resources available on the volunteer website.



[X1: Volunteer website resource index](#) lists these links in alphabetical order – click on any link to be taken to that resource.

You can also ask our [Supporter Care Team](#) to send you a printed copy of any written resource.



For more on how our [Supporter Care Team](#) can help you, see [Supporter Care Team](#) on our volunteer website.

3.3. Version control

The [Group Handbook](#) on our volunteer website will always be the current version and we'll tell you when we've made changes in [Teamspirit](#) - our bi-monthly volunteer newsletter.

[Teamspirit](#) is sent to your shared group [MS Society email](#) address and directly to members of your [Coordinating Team](#). It is available online for everyone to read.



For current and back issues, see [Teamspirit](#) on our volunteer website, or ask the [Supporter Care Team](#) to send you printed copies.

We've also added a version control box (like the one over the page) at the end of each section so you'll know when it was last reviewed, and who is responsible for the content.

Group Handbook A1: Introduction and overview v3.3	
Content Owners:	Head of Strategy and Impact Local Networks Transformation Manager
Editor:	Volunteer Resources Editor
Sign off:	Head of Local Networks
Sign off date:	October 2019
Review date:	October 2020