



Service Level Agreements: FAQs

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What is a Service Level Agreement?

A Service Level Agreement (SLA) is normally a two-way written agreement which defines the service(s) your group will receive from a Service Provider, and the quality you can expect.

SLAs can vary from being a broad description of areas of responsibility to detailed task lists with specific response times for each. Too little detail (such as stating that service delivery will be provided within 'reasonable' timescales) can result in unclear expectations and be difficult to monitor and evaluate. Equally, too much detail can result in a confusing, overly complicated agreement.

Both the MS Society group and Service Provider will need to show commitment to reviewing service provision with a view to improving it (eg being open to feedback, discussing service issues and being willing to challenge traditional or established ways of working) in order for the SLA to work effectively.



What does an SLA usually include?

An SLA will normally include:

- Description of the services and who they're aimed at
- Brief outline of roles/responsibilities within the team, and contact details
- Availability of the service
- Expected service standards (and delivery time frames, where appropriate)
- What the Service Provider needs from your group to enable them to deliver an effective service
- Fees and costings, where appropriate.
- Legal or other regulations which must be complied with
- How you will measure, monitor and evaluate service performance
- How complaints or conflicts will be dealt with
- How the agreement will be reviewed and updated

Why do we need SLAs?

- SLAs provide a clear framework for service delivery, so that performance and service quality can be monitored.
- The MS Society group has an assurance that they are covered in case of an emergency.
- The Service Provider has a contract that demonstrates what's expected of them.
- The burden of health & safety responsibility falls on the Service Provider, rather than on volunteers.
- SLAs, once uploaded to the Portal, are an important central record of all aspects of services, which can be accessed even if volunteers change.

Does my service need an SLA?

As a general rule, whenever a group is receiving a service from a Service Provider (whether this is an individual or organisation) it's good practice to have a written agreement which sets out the expectations of everyone involved. Exceptions to this rule may be one-off information events or social events (where the MS Society group is responsible for the majority of the organisation – booking the venue, arranging catering, etc). And an SLA isn't necessary when a group is delivering services that are entirely



run by MS Society staff and volunteers (eg MS Support, peer-support groups and signposting to information).

What support is there for me if I've never negotiated an SLA before?

If this is your first experience of working with a Service Provider to develop a service, your Regional Development Officer will be able to help you. You can contact them via the Volunteer Support Team by emailing volunteersupport@mssociety.org.uk, or calling 0300 500 8084 (#3).

How do I use the SLA template?

The template is in two parts:

Part 1: The Particulars – This has editable sections so you can enter details of the group, Service Provider, type of service, period over which the service will operate, location of delivery and cost. The expiry date entered on your SLA should not be more than 2 years ahead

Part 2: The Terms & Conditions – None of these are editable. When completing the SLA, don't make any hand written changes to the 'locked' text in either Part 1 or Part 2.

When you've completed the SLA with the necessary details, it must be signed on behalf of the group and the Service Provider. Electronic signatures are permitted, but it must be a proper copy of your signature added electronically to the document (not just your name typed in a different font).

If you're not able to provide an electronic signature, then a typed name in the signature box is sufficient, **so long as** there is also an email from the Service Provider stating that:

'the particulars, terms and conditions of the agreement are as discussed and negotiated'

You'll need to retain this email from the Service Provider for the period of the agreement.

By signing the document, both you and the Service Provider are confirming agreement to the Terms & Conditions detailed in Part 2 of the



document and that they haven't been added to, deleted or amended in any way.

I've completed SLAs in the past for my group's services, and some are still current. Why do I have to start again?

As groups restart services following the easing of lockdown restrictions, it's important that all services are operated in a COVID-safe environment. We want to ensure that the responsibility for meeting the necessary COVID-secure measures become the responsibility of the Service Provider and the owner of any premises that the service takes place in.

The new SLA template contains clauses that emphasise where these responsibilities lie.

What is a managed venue?

A premises that has an employee available on site who is responsible for setting up and managing the venue, and for managing all aspects of making the premises COVID safe, in line with up-to-date government requirements.

This will include things such as ensuring that hand sanitiser is available, social distancing signage is available and suitably positioned, and all areas are cleaned before and after use (this list is not exhaustive). This person will also be responsible for emergency arrangements and will have sufficient training, knowledge, experience and other qualities that allow them to manage the event and any emergency situation that might occur.

NOTE: The venue must accept responsibility for all COVID safety and not pass any element of it on to the group. If the group hire the venue, the Service Provider must check it is appropriate for the service they will be providing.

What is an unmanaged venue?

A premises where there is not an employee who takes on responsibility for setting up and managing the venue, and all aspects of making the premises COVID-safe, in line with up-to-date government requirements.

An unmanaged venue expects the hirer of that venue to make it COVID safe by making things like hand-sanitiser available and cleaning the



venue after use. An unmanaged venue is also one that doesn't have an employee on site who is trained and experienced to manage an event and any emergency situation that might occur.

NOTE: The group must not offer to help make the venue COVID safe in any way.

How do I upload an SLA to the Portal?

We've created a short video with simple instructions on how to do this. [Click here to watch it.](#)

What if I still can't upload an SLA to the Portal?

If, after watching the video, you're still having difficulties uploading an SLA, you (or your Service Provider) can email it to the Volunteer Support Team on volunteersupport@mssociety.org.uk.

What happens when I've added my SLA to the Portal or sent it to the Volunteer Support Team?

A member of the team will check that you've completed all the right areas and that no amendments have been made by you or the Service Provider. When the check has been completed, you'll receive an email confirming your service can restart. If we have any concerns over how the SLA has been completed, we'll be in touch instead to discuss. **Please note that you cannot restart your service until you receive the confirmation email.**

Who should I contact with a question about an SLA?

We hope this FAQ list, which we'll keep updating, will answer the most common questions groups. But if there's something we haven't yet covered, please email volunteersupport@mssociety.org.uk, or call 0300 500 8084 (#3).