

# MS Society Resolving Volunteer Issues Policy

Policy Name:	Resolving Volunteer Issues Policy (RVI Policy)
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To provide a fair, transparent and swift process through which individuals can raise concerns/ complaints relating to volunteers, or the volunteering experience</li> <li>- To ensure that effective arrangements exist for dealing with any issues in relation to the conduct/ behaviour of volunteers</li> <li>- To ensure that everyone is treated fairly, consistently and in a timely manner when issues are raised</li> </ul>
Region	UK
Scope	This policy is relevant to all staff and volunteers
Responsibilities	<p>Volunteer Managers are responsible for operating within this policy, and for ensuring volunteers they manage are aware of and understand the policy</p> <p>All staff members and volunteers are responsible for operating within this policy when resolving a volunteer issue</p>
Lead Officer	Head of Volunteering
Responsible Directors	Executive Director of Digital and Services
Key Consultation	<p>Volunteers from local groups (including 10 Group Coordinators located across all nations); Helpline; Research Network; Volunteering Strategy Group</p> <p>Head of Community Networks; Head of Helpline and team; Head of Governance; Head of Finance; Assistant Director of HR; Regional Development Team</p>
Approver	Executive Group
Last review	July 2021
Review cycle	Every three years
Key words	Volunteer, Issues, RVI
Definitions	<p>“Volunteer”: A volunteer is anyone who, without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond reimbursement of out of pocket expenses, performs a role at the direction of and on behalf of the MS Society</p> <p>“Volunteer Manager”: a volunteer or staff member responsible for recruiting and/ or acting as the key contact for a volunteer, providing day-to-day support and ensuring the volunteer understands and acts/ does their best within their role. For Trustees and Council Chairs, the</p>

	<p>Volunteer Manager is the Chair of the Board, and for National Council members, it is the Council Chair.</p> <p>Volunteering Team: led by the Head of Volunteering, responsible for support to volunteers outside of Community Networks (local groups)</p> <p>Community Networks Team: led by the Head of Community Networks, responsible for support to volunteers within Community Networks (local groups)</p>
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## Introduction

The involvement of volunteers should be a positive experience for everyone, but there may be times when an issue about volunteering, or a volunteer's behaviour, needs to be addressed. This policy provides a quick and fair process for doing so, and (as much as possible) empowers individuals to take action and resolve issues for themselves.

It is hoped that this policy will enable most issues to be resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the MS Society and volunteers. However, as set out in the [Volunteer Involvement Policy](#), it is recognised that a volunteer can withdraw their offer to help at any time, and that the MS Society is similarly not obliged to continue offering the opportunity to volunteer.

Should a volunteer wish to raise other issues about our functions, services, policies or a member of staff, this may be more appropriately done through our Complaints Policy.

This policy is underpinned by the [Resolving Volunteer Issues \(RVI\) Procedure](#) and should be read in conjunction with that.

### 1. Policy scope

- 1.1 The RVI Policy applies to all MS Society volunteers, but the procedure will be slightly different for Trustees and members of our National Councils.
- 1.1** The policy does not apply where an issue relates to criminal behaviour/ activity which needs to be reported to the police. Only after the police have investigated the crime, or once the police have given permission, can the RVI Policy be followed. Volunteers suspected as being involved in a criminal act may be temporarily removed from role pending police investigation and RVI investigation, if applicable.
- 1.2** If an RVI investigation uncovers criminal activity then the RVI process is suspended while the police carry out an investigation.

- 1.3** Issues raised under this policy may also require other policies to be used, and may require the suspension of investigations under this policy. For example:
- Where an issue raised about a volunteer relates to harm of a vulnerable/protected adult or child, the relevant Safeguarding Policy and Procedure will also be applied.
  - In cases where a financial crime may have been committed then the Financial Crime Policy will be followed.
  - See Section 3 for other relevant policies.
- 1.4** Where issues relate to more than one policy, then as appropriate, the relevant Heads or Leads of service areas (eg Heads of Volunteering, Finance and Governance) will liaise and decide which procedures should be used.
- 1.5** There are some requirements relating to our volunteers, imposed by other policies, which may result in the removal of a volunteer without recourse to this policy. A breach of our disclosure policies would be an example of this.
- 1.6** Outcomes of investigations from following this policy could lead to additional steps being taken (eg removal of access to MS Society services). However, these are separate issues and are not covered by this policy.

## **2. Policy principles:**

- 2.1** The majority of issues should be resolved informally and directly by the volunteers and/ or staff members involved.
- 2.2** Anyone raising a genuine complaint, issue or concern in good faith will not suffer any detrimental effects and will receive an appropriate response.
- 2.3** The wellbeing of individuals going through any part of this process is of utmost importance. Support is available for those who may wish to seek help in understanding the process, or for anyone who finds the process stressful. Contact the Volunteering Team for further details.
- 2.4** Issues should be raised as soon as possible after the problem occurs, and (in most cases) no longer than three months after, as any delay may hinder effective resolution.
- 2.5** Issues will be dealt with as quickly and fairly as possible, taking relevant circumstances into account.
- 2.6** A volunteer with an issue raised about them should be offered the opportunity to explain the situation from their perspective.

- 2.7** All those directly involved in the process should be kept informed in a timely and appropriate manner.
- 2.8** Confidentiality is important, and no one should know more than they need to know for the issue to be resolved.
- 2.9** Investigating Officers can decide not to pursue an issue if they consider it unreasonable or frivolous.
- 2.10** Failure to comply with reasonable requests in relation to the Resolving Volunteer Issues (RVI) process may be seen as a failure to operate within the policies and practices of the MS Society.
- 2.11** Failure to adhere to decisions and action plans arising through the process may lead to the opportunity to volunteer being withdrawn.
- 2.12** There is a right of appeal.

### **3. Other relevant policies/ documents**

- 3.1** Policies relating to volunteers can be found on our [Volunteer Website policies page](#). Policies relating to staff can be found on our intranet.
- 3.2** Relevant policies/ documentation includes:
- [Code of Conduct](#)
  - [Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy](#)
  - [Data Protection Policy](#)
  - Disciplinary Policy (applies to employees only)
  - Grievance Policy (applies to employees only)
  - Safeguarding Adults Policies and Procedures ([England and Wales](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#))
  - Safeguarding Children and Young People Policies ([England](#), [Northern Ireland and Wales](#), [Scotland](#))
  - [Volunteer Involvement Policy](#)
  - [Whistleblowing Policy](#)
  - Board Rules and Standard Operating Procedures
  - Financial Crime Policy