



## Planning your end-of-year events or similar

With the festive season on the horizon, our Volunteer Support Team have started getting queries from groups who are planning celebratory activities and events. So, we've put together some guidance to answer the main queries which keep coming up. It's been written with end-of-year meals and parties in mind, but equally applies to similar events at any time of year.



### Who can attend?

In line with our charitable objectives, your event should be open to all people affected by MS in your local area. It's a great opportunity to reach out to the wider MS community, so you should publicise it as widely as possible.

Here are some things to consider:

- Your event must be available to anyone in your local MS community, not just group contacts.
- You must add your event to the Portal, so it's listed on our main website. This is a way of advertising it beyond the group's usual contacts.
- You should advertise your event using the channels that you use to advertise your other services and activities.
- Where capacity is limited, places should be allocated on a first come, first served basis.



### Financing your event

Group fundraising has been very challenging in the last couple of years, and we're in a cost-of-living crisis. Some groups may want to support people financially to attend their end-of-year event. Others may not, or may not be able to. This is a decision for each Coordinating Team to make.

Here are some things to consider:

- We strongly recommend that you don't fully fund your event. Experience tells us that asking attendees to contribute to the cost minimises the number of no-shows.

- As a minimum, ask for donations and publicise the cost per head for the event, so people know what to donate. If your group will struggle to provide support to those who can't pay some or all of the amount, then make that known and ask for donations for that too.
- Any financial support you decide to make must be equally available to all members of the MS community - not just the people known to your group. In line with our charitable objectives, someone doesn't have to be an MS Society member to access our services. And group contacts can't be given benefits that aren't available to members of the MS community not known to the group
- Make the event as affordable as you can, so that as many people as possible can attend. Some pubs and hotels will give you a room for free if you're eating there.
- The amount your group spends on the event should be 'reasonable'. A good way to judge whether a spend feels reasonable is whether you'd be comfortable sharing it with a donor. Would they consider it good use of the money they've donated?
- It's helpful to think about your spend in 'per head' terms. £1,000 spent on 25 people feels a lot less reasonable than £1,000 spent on 40 people, for example.



## Fundraising

If you're thinking about raising group funds at your event by running something like a raffle or tombola, here are some things to consider:

- The simplest way to run a raffle or tombola is to sell tickets to attendees on the day. Raffles and tombolas run this way are called 'incidental lotteries' and don't require any kind of licence (although you should seek permission from the venue owner prior to your event).
- To sell raffle/tombola tickets outside of the event, and to people not attending, you will need a licence. You can [find information and guidance about regulations for more complex prize competitions here](#).
- The best way to gather raffle/tombola prizes is through donations from local businesses. You can [find some tips on approaching them here](#).
- Groups can purchase raffle/tombola prizes, but costs for prizes and expenses can only be claimed back up to the value of 80% of ticket sales. Drawing on past experience of ticket sales, you may therefore want to have a team discussion about the size of the prizes. If it's likely that the group will be spending 80% of the expected proceeds on costs, it may not be worth the effort.

- Groups can accept donated bottles of alcohol for raffles/tombola prizes, but not purchase them, as MS Society policy states that the purchase of alcohol cannot be claimed as expenses. Groups can only pay for alcohol using MS Society funds when it's to complement a meal (such as a glass of wine with Christmas dinner).

For more guidance about planning a fundraising activity as part of an event, contact [fundraising@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@mssociety.org.uk).



## Gifts

Under charity law, a charity can't give out a 'general distribution of funds'. This means we can't give gifts to people without considering need.

If you'd like to recognise volunteers for their service, or thank contractors/firms who have provided the group with free support, then you can give them small gifts at your event.

But groups must not give out general gifts to contacts or event attendees, or offer any financial benefits.



## Health and Safety

Keeping everyone safe while they enjoy your Christmas event is a key consideration. So you must use our risk management system to ensure that your event meets our legal obligations and standards.

- **Managed venues**

We strongly advise that (if possible) you arrange your meal and/or party in a managed venue such as a pub or hotel. There are far fewer risk management requirements for volunteers where a managed venue organises everything. You'll need to [use the guidance form here](#).

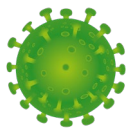
If the managed venue is arranging entertainment (such as a DJ or band) for you, you'll need to [use the guidance form here](#).

If you're using a managed venue, but arranging the entertainment yourself, you'll need to [complete the risk assessment here](#).

- **Unmanaged venues**

If you have no choice but to use an unmanaged venue (such as an unstaffed community centre) for a meal and/or party, you'll need to [complete the risk assessment here](#).

You can [read more about how to run your event safely and in line with our risk management processes here](#).



## COVID-19

Government data suggests that COVID-19 cases are decreasing. But the pandemic isn't over, so you should:

- Monitor the situation in the local area, and bear in mind that things can change rapidly.
- Decide what type of event (face-to-face or online) is more appropriate for your MS community.
- If possible, choose a venue with a flexible cancellation policy, so you won't lose your deposit or incur charges if the COVID-19 situation worsens and you need to cancel your event.



We hope this information has been useful, and that your group volunteers, service users, contacts and the wider MS community in your area can enjoy coming together to celebrate the festive season.