

Guidance Notes to help you apply for a Health and Wellbeing Grant (2023)



Changes to MS Society Grants

Our national grants programme was paused from April 2020 for two to three years, and we can no longer accept applications for national grants.

MS Society local groups are run by our volunteers, and each group offers a range of support depending on local needs and circumstances.

Some local groups consider grant applications for people in their area, if they have grant funds. Not all of our groups can consider grants at the moment, so please **make sure you contact your local group to find out if they can consider your application before you fill in an application form.**

You can find your local group on our website <https://www.mssociety.org.uk/care-and-support/local-support>.

If you have been in touch with your local group and they have confirmed that they can accept your grant application, these notes are to help you complete the application process.

What is a Health and Wellbeing Grant?

These grants are to help you pay for an item which will have a significant positive impact on your health and wellbeing.

In the application form and this guidance, we will always refer to any item, service, or respite break that you are requesting funding for, as the 'item'.

Who can apply for a Health and Wellbeing Grant?

You can apply for a Health and Wellbeing Grant if:

- you have MS
- you live in the UK
- you have less than £6,000 in accessible household savings (we may make an exception if your savings are over £6,000 and you need a high cost item that you will pay towards from savings)
- there is no statutory or other funding available to help you meet your need
- you haven't already paid for the item, or placed an order for it

How often can I apply for a grant?

You can apply for a Health and Wellbeing Grant if you have not had a grant from the MS Society in the last 12 months. When we award grants, priority is given to people who haven't had a grant before.

How do I apply?

Contact your MS Society local group to find out whether they are accepting grant applications. If they are, they will send you an application form to complete and return to them. You will need to provide a **letter of support** (see pages 4 – 5 for more information) and **two quotes** for the item you are requesting (see below for more information).

When will I know the outcome of my application?

Once you have sent a fully completed form, letter of support and two quotes, your group will make a decision and let you know as soon as possible. Our groups are run by volunteers and some are able to meet more often than others to discuss grants, so timeframes can vary. Please check with your group for details, make sure you allow time and bear in mind there could be delays.

Quotes

Your application must include **two** quotes for the item you are requesting, unless it is a specialist item (including respite) where there is only one supplier of the option that meets your needs. Please make this clear in Part 2 of your application form.

The quotes must show the total cost of the item you are looking to fund, and be the best value options you can find. Please check the grant category maximums on page 3 as a guide to average costs.

The quotes can be:

- on headed paper from a supplier or contractor
- pages from catalogues with the items clearly marked
- website addresses for product pages

We cannot consider applications for items that have already been ordered or paid for, including if a deposit has already been paid. This includes respite breaks.

Do not make any payments before we have considered your application.

What can a Health and Wellbeing Grant help with?

The list below shows items we can consider a grant for, and how much the maximum grant is for each type of item. The amounts are for guidance, and should help you when you look for quotes – for most items we expect that you can find a reasonable quality item within the maximum amount.

Your local group may award much smaller grants depending on their budget.

Health and Wellbeing Grant category	Maximum grant (£)
Home adaptations	2,500
Wheelchairs	2,000
Scooters	1,500
Standard profiling adjustable beds / standard riser recliner chairs	1,000
Specialised profiling beds (for example height adjustable or turning beds) / specialised seating (for example lateral supports or pressure relief) – where specific features are essential to meet need	1,500
Specialist equipment (for example FES, portable hoists, sleep systems, specialist exercise machines, eye recognition systems)	1,000
Furnishings (including standard beds), domestic appliances, removal costs, flooring, essential home repairs	600
Computers/tablets/laptops	350
Bankruptcy or DRO fees *not all groups can offer grants for this, so check before applying	680
Vocational training (accredited courses to develop or change career)	800
Physical activity (for example one-off or taster gym membership / one off block of sessions, exercise equipment)	300
Breaks at respite centres (or breaks where specialist care needs are met), paid care hours and equipment hire on breaks - one week maximum	1,200
Other items that support health & wellbeing (on a case by case basis – must not be on the list of items we will not consider)	500

What a Health and Wellbeing Grant won't cover

We will not award grants for:

- ✘ items that have already been ordered or purchased. Do not order or pay for your item before we have considered your application
- ✘ items that statutory services must provide or pay for
- ✘ ongoing costs, such as daily living costs, travel costs, care home fees, and servicing costs for equipment
- ✘ debt repayments, legal fees, university fees, funeral costs, boilers, holidays, medical treatment, travel costs for treatment in another country, complementary therapies, private cars, car adaptations, Motability advance payments, driving lessons

Letter of support

Whatever item (this includes respite breaks) you are requesting, you will need a letter of support. It is a key part of your application and helps us understand your need for the specific item you are requesting.

You will need to ask a health or social care professional to write your letter of support – check the chart below for details of who to ask. They can give you a letter on headed paper, or can email it from a work account.

What should my letter of support include?

- 1) Confirmation of your diagnosis of MS (but you can provide this separately)
- 2) Tell us how the item will benefit your health and wellbeing (your mental and physical wellbeing, your independence, your ability to socialise and be part of your community)
- 3) Tell us if you're eligible for any statutory funding (particularly for home adaptations, wheelchairs and respite breaks)
- 4) Confirm that the item you are requesting is appropriate for you: that **you will be safe** to use the item you are requesting, and that **it is suitable for your needs**. This is particularly important for items such as home adaptations, wheelchairs, mobility scooters, and specialist equipment. Check the chart below for more details about what the letter should include.

If we do not receive a letter of support we won't be able to process your application.

Item	<p>Who should write a letter of support and what they must include</p> <p>The letter can confirm your diagnosis of MS, or you can send this separately (eg copy of an appointment letter with MS professional)</p>
Adaptations to your home	<p>Occupational therapist (OT)</p> <p>Confirm they have assessed you, and what adaptations you need. Tell us whether or not you can get a Disabled Facilities Grant, or help via the Scheme of Assistance. If you don't have an OT, contact your local social services team and ask for an occupational therapy assessment</p>
Wheelchairs	<p>Occupational therapist or Wheelchair Service</p> <p>Confirm they have assessed you, what wheelchair you need, and whether or not you qualify for help from the Wheelchair Service (this may be a voucher for part of the cost)</p>
Mobility scooters	<p>Occupational therapist or other suitably qualified professional</p> <p>Confirm that you need a scooter and that the type you're asking for is right for you</p>
Riser-recliner chairs and profiling beds	<p>Occupational therapist or other suitably qualified professional such as a district nurse</p> <p>Confirm which chair or bed you need and whether any money is available from the NHS or social services</p>
Bankruptcy or debt relief order fees	<p>Free, independent debt advice service (eg CAB, StepChange) - letter or report from a debt advisor or an online service</p> <p>Confirm that they've given you debt advice, recommend bankruptcy or a debt relief order, and what this will cost</p>
Exercise equipment	<p>Physiotherapist</p> <p>Confirm what equipment you need, and whether you can get any health funding for it</p>
Specialist equipment	<p>Relevant specialist (such as occupational therapist, speech therapist, physiotherapist etc)</p> <p>Confirm what equipment you need, and whether you can get any funding for it</p>
Respite breaks	<p>A health or social care professional (such as an MS nurse, GP, social worker or occupational therapist)</p> <p>Explain your need for the respite break, how it will help you, and details of any care and support needs that we should take into account. Confirm if there's any money from statutory services</p>
Other items	<p>A health or social care professional (such as an MS nurse, GP, social worker or occupational therapist)</p> <p>Confirm your need for the item and how it will help you</p>

Notes to help you understand and complete the Health and Wellbeing Grant application form

Data protection statement

Page two of the application form explains how we will use and look after your data. Please make sure you read this carefully. You will need to tick the box to show you give consent for us to process your data. **If you have not ticked the box, we will not be able to process your application and it will be returned to you.**

Part 1. About you

If you are applying on behalf of someone, please fill in their details throughout the form and provide your contact details in Part 7, Section B.

a) Contact information.

Please only provide an email address **if you have one that you check regularly**. This will allow us to contact you more quickly regarding your grant application, and will reduce postage costs for the MS Society

c) Your household

This information helps us to better understand your income and your living and housing situation.

- Dependent children are those **under the age of 18 or those in full time further education (not university)**.
- If you have working age children living at home who are **contributing to your household income** (i.e. towards bills, rent, mortgage etc.), please list this on the income table on page 7 of the application form.

Part 2. Your grant request

Please tell us what item you are requesting money for. If you need a specific model or type of item, let us know and explain why. This information helps us to understand how the item meets your needs.

Help us to understand how the item you're requesting will make a significant improvement to your life by **providing as much detail as you can** about how it will impact on your:

- mental and physical wellbeing – for example, improve your comfort, safety or confidence, reduce your stress or anxiety
- independence – for example, improve your mobility, help you to do practical tasks, improve your financial situation
- ability to socialise and be part of your community – at home or in the community

Part 3. Costs and contributions

- a) The full amount of the item: check the maximum grant amounts on page 3 of these notes as a guide to the cost for a reasonable quality item. For most items your quotes must be within these limits, although we understand that items like home adaptations will vary.
- b) Statutory funding: this comes from the local authority, health services or NHS towards items like home adaptations, wheelchairs, respite breaks and some equipment. Funding is often means tested, and you could get part funding.

Before you apply for a grant from the MS Society you will need to have applied for any statutory funding. You should receive a letter which tells you whether you have been awarded funding, and if so how much. Or if you haven't been awarded statutory funding it will explain why. You will need to provide a copy of this letter with your MS Society grant application.

- For equipment and home adaptations – contact social services for an occupational therapy assessment. Some equipment can be provided for free. If you need major adaptations you will be referred for a Disabled Facilities Grant, or adaptation grant through the Scheme of Assistance in Scotland
 - For respite care, contact your social worker
 - For wheelchairs, ask your GP, MS nurse or other health professional to refer you to the local NHS wheelchair service (or you may be able to self refer)
- c) We aim to help as many people as possible by sharing costs with other charities, particularly for high cost items. We may ask you for some more information to help look for other funding if needed.
 - d) We ask all applicants to make a contribution where possible.

Part 4. Your savings information

Accessible savings are things like money in the bank and savings accounts, and include your partner's savings if you have a partner. This doesn't include money you'd get if you sold something (like a house or a car).

You must have less than £6,000 in accessible savings to apply for a grant.

We may consider requests if you have over £6,000 and you need a high-cost item, such as a significant home adaptation or a specialised wheelchair. A relevant health or social care professional must confirm that the item is necessary to meet your needs, and that it's the best value option available to you.

You'll need to contribute an amount towards the cost of the item that will take your savings below £6,000.

Part 5. Your household income and outgoings

We use the income information you provide to prioritise applicants in the greatest financial need.

- ✓ If you, or your partner, receive DLA, PIP or Attendance Allowance, please tick to show the rates received. These will not be counted as part of your income.
- ✓ Please clearly mark if you are using weekly or monthly figures. If you use any other figures (such as fortnightly), please indicate that clearly on the form.
- ✓ Include all income that you, and your partner if you live with them, receive. Please include any contributions towards household costs from non-dependants (like an adult son or daughter) that live with you.
- ✓ We only ask about your outgoings for housing costs – please state the amounts that you have to pay after any benefits towards these. We do not ask for any other outgoings as we use standard sets of amounts based on the Minimum Income Standard.
- ✓ If you live in someone else's home, for example with parents, show any contribution you make towards housing costs. If you live in a care home, please show any contribution you pay towards fees.

Part 6. Declaration

All applicants must complete and sign Section A. If you are applying for someone else you must complete and sign Section B. ALL unsigned forms will be returned without being processed.

Part 7. Your checklist

We can't process forms that have not been signed or if you have not ticked to give consent for us to process your data.

If you are applying for a grant to help with the cost of adaptations to your home, you will need to have been assessed for **either**:

1. A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)
or
2. if you are in Scotland, a Home Adaptation Grant, (through the Scheme of Assistance).

We will need to see confirmation of the outcome of this assessment, confirming whether you are eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant or Home Adaptation Grant, and confirming your personal contribution amount (if applicable). This will usually be a letter - please send a copy.