

Volunteering Agreement

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This agreement applies to volunteers who have been recruited and selected into a specific role. Employees who support volunteers should understand this agreement and know how to apply it in their roles. It outlines our approach to volunteering across the organisation and the key principles that guide our work.

2 What is volunteering?

- 2.1 At the MS Society, volunteering is the relationship between us and a volunteer. A volunteer is anyone aged 18 or over 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. A volunteer can be taking part in anything from a one-off activity to an established role.
- 2.2 Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. There is no obligation, contractual or otherwise, to volunteer, and volunteering will never be a substitute for paid employment.

3 Why we involve volunteers

- 3.1 Volunteers are at the heart of the MS Society. They are part of a powerful community of people living with MS, scientists, campaigners, listeners, organisers, ambassadors and fundraisers. Our volunteers make an incredible difference to the lives of people affected by MS and are crucial in helping us work towards our vision of a world free of the effects of MS.
- 3.2 Volunteers, in all their diversity, are involved in helping us deliver our [Strategy](#) at all levels of skill and decision making. They help us by:
- supporting people affected by MS in their journeys supporting programmes, projects and core activities across the organisation
 - using their personal experience and support for the cause to influence policy makers and service providers
 - supporting our fundraising activity
 - using their personal experience of MS to inform our work and to ensure people affected by MS are at the heart of what we do
 - using their personal skills, knowledge and networks in a targeted way to enhance our ability to meet our objectives
 - telling their stories to support our media, communications and fundraising activity.

4 Our commitment to volunteers

- 4.1 We want to make sure volunteers get the most out of the time they give and that they are able to make a valuable contribution to our work. We understand that our volunteers' time is precious and want to make sure the experience we provide is proportionate to the roles and the needs of our volunteers.
- 4.2 Our volunteering vision from the [Volunteering Strategy](#) is 'to create a strong and diverse community of volunteers in flexible roles, transforming the lives of people affected by MS.'
- 4.3 To help us achieve this, we have set out our commitments, so everyone knows what to expect when volunteering.
- 4.4 **We promise to:**
- create accessible, flexible, impactful and fulfilling roles for volunteers – and offer roles that fit with volunteers' lives
 - recruit and select our volunteers fairly
 - welcome our volunteers into the MS Society and help them to feel settled and safe
 - provide appropriate and ongoing learning and development opportunities
 - offer ongoing support, including:
 - a. reimbursing out-of-pocket [expenses](#)
 - b. listening to and encouraging feedback
 - c. responding to any concerns fairly and consistently in line with our [Resolving Volunteer Issues Policy](#)
 - d. making sure that volunteers are not subject to discrimination, prejudice or oppression in terms of their protected characteristics, such as age, gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, nationality or belief
 - e. keeping volunteers connected through organisational communications
 - make sure volunteers feel valued and recognised across the MS Society for what they do and the difference they make
 - support volunteers to pause or leave their volunteering at any time that suits them
 - meet best practice standards across all our volunteering policies and processes, and make these available to our volunteers.
- 4.5 For our volunteering to be the best it can be, we want our relationships with volunteers to be two-way.

4.6 **So, in return, we ask volunteers to:**

- perform their volunteer role to the best of their ability
- respect the boundaries of their role
- strive to achieve – and remain committed to – our [values](#), aims, strategies and goals
- keep themselves and others safe
- complete all 'must-do' and role-specific learning and refresher training as described in their role description
- express their ideas
- provide constructive feedback on how we can improve our work
- act as an ambassador and contribute positively to our story
- adhere to our [Code of Conduct](#)
- value the contribution of others and welcome the differences between us, in line with our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Strategy](#) and [EDI Policy](#)
- stay connected with us and hear what is going on
- share their successes and learning with us and with each other
- seek personal support and growth whenever needed, so that we can provide support
- remain up to date in their role.

5 Recruitment and selection

- 5.1 All employees and volunteers are encouraged to think about meaningful and productive ways that volunteers can engage with us, and to assist in the recruitment and support of volunteers when appropriate.

Equality in our recruitment

- 5.2 We welcome and celebrate the diversity of all our volunteers, and are strongly committed to promoting equal opportunities for all people in society.
- 5.3 We are committed to a fair, honest and inclusive recruitment process that supports volunteers to find a role that is right for them, and supports our work and aims. Our recruitment and selection processes take into account the particular skills, experience and availability of prospective volunteers. This helps us to select the most suitable volunteers to support people affected by MS.

Our recruitment process

- 5.4 Our recruitment process is outlined below:

- Our volunteers have a clear role description outlining what the role involves, any skills or experience required and our mutual commitments
- Every potential volunteer is required to complete an application form. This is so that we can support volunteers properly by recognising them on our systems
- We would also appreciate every volunteer filling out an equal opportunities form. We are committed to building a more diverse and inclusive volunteering experience. By having volunteers' equal opportunities information, we can make sure we are living up to our commitments in our [EDI Strategy](#)
- Recruitment to a role may require a phone/online call, face-to-face interview or discussion with an employee or another volunteer, and in some cases a group training day
- Once a volunteer has completed all must-do training for the role, and reference checks have been completed for some roles, the recruiter will make a final decision as to whether the role is right for the person applying
- For some roles, prospective volunteers will need to supply references or have a criminal records check before they begin volunteering.

6 Welcome and induction

- 6.1 We make sure that all volunteers are confident and fully prepared for their role, and understand how it fits into our wider work.
- 6.2 Our volunteer roles vary in time commitment, complexity and skills required. This means that the welcome and induction can look quite different from role to role. All volunteers will receive an induction specific to the role from their point of contact.
- 6.3 All our volunteers will receive an email welcoming them to the MS Society. This will include:
 - A [Welcome Pack](#) containing information about the MS Society
 - Signposts to any relevant policies (see section 12)
 - An invitation to our volunteer Welcome Event, which is an opportunity to meet other volunteers and learn more about us
 - A signpost to your role description which includes all must do and role specific training needed for the role

7 Learning and development

- 7.1 Learning and development comes in various shapes and forms (for example: webinars, written guidance, face-to-face training and e-learning modules). This is because we all learn in different ways.

7.2 We make sure that all volunteers are given appropriate training, guidance and support so that everyone can:

- perform their role to their best ability
- feel happy and confident in their role
- keep themselves and others safe
- comply with any legal responsibilities.

7.3 Volunteers will be given three months to complete new or updated must-do training for their role and we will support them to do this. If training is not completed in this time, the point of contact will work with the volunteer to find a more suitable role, where available.

7.4 We will provide support to enable volunteers to overcome any barriers that they face to completing training. This may include training support sessions with our Learning and Development Officer over the phone, by email or online.

7.5 We are committed to providing any additional resources, training and learning opportunities that are appropriate to the role. Where possible, we will offer further training opportunities so volunteers can increase and develop their skills and knowledge and progress onto other roles in their team or group.

7.6 Relevant training will be provided to volunteers to ensure that they are able to keep themselves and others safe.

8 Ongoing support

8.1 We want to make sure every volunteer feels included in their volunteering role, in line with our [EDI Strategy](#).

8.2 We are committed to providing every volunteer with continued support during their time with us so that they feel engaged and part of the MS Society.

8.3 The level of support a volunteer receives is tailored to, and dependent on, the volunteer role, as well as the volunteer.

8.4 For all our volunteering opportunities, we commit to:

- giving our volunteers a named point of contact at the MS Society
- ensuring that the named point of contact keeps in touch and is available for ongoing support as needed (and proportionate to the role)
- developing opportunities for networking and peer learning
- keeping volunteers updated with information about their role, other volunteering roles and relevant information about us through our volunteer communications

- asking for and responding to volunteers' feedback and suggestions
- ensuring that best practice in volunteer management is adhered to by people who work with volunteers, as well as volunteers themselves
- recognising any additional challenges volunteers face and supporting reasonable adjustments they might need
- reimbursing reasonable, out-of-pocket expenses in a timely manner, in line with our [Expenses Guidance](#).

Conflicts of interest

- 8.5 Any conflicts of interest (for example personal or financial) should be declared and managed. A volunteer may be required to step away from a role and/or activity if there is a conflict of interest. For example, if a member of a grants sub-group is due to assess an application for a family member. For more information, please read our [Conflicts of Interest Policy](#).

Resolving volunteer issues

- 8.6 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. The [Resolving Volunteer Issues 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.
- 8.7 The Resolving Volunteer Issues Policy is underpinned by the [Resolving Volunteer Issues \(RVI\) Procedure](#) and these documents should be read together.

Social media

- 8.8 We use social media across all of our work. We use it to advertise our services, campaign, raise awareness, ask people to support our events and fundraise. It is a great way of reaching out to people, and a lot of volunteers, supporters and employees use it to share information about the MS Society, as well as their personal lives.
- 8.9 To help us all do this safely, we have a [Social Media Policy](#) that aims to protect anyone volunteering with us and to encourage volunteers to use social media platforms safely and responsibly.

Confidentiality

- 8.10 We ask that every individual acting on our behalf fully understands and supports the need for confidentiality throughout their association with the MS Society and afterwards.
- 8.11 Every individual connected with, or acting on behalf of, the MS Society must take personal responsibility for not breaching confidentiality. Confidential information is information about individuals, or their ideas, which is personal to them, and through which they can be identified. For more information, visit our [Confidentiality Statement](#).

Taking a break

- 8.12 We understand that lives and priorities change all the time, so volunteers can pause or end (see section 11 'Moving On') their volunteering at any time and for whatever reason.
- 8.13 We will always support any volunteer who wishes to step away from their role for an agreed period of time. To help us be flexible and supportive, we ask that volunteers discuss their needs with their volunteer point of contact. This will allow us to work out how long the volunteer would like to take off, agree how best to stay in touch, and assess what training they may need to remain up to date on, or complete upon their return.

9 Keeping safe with us

Safeguarding

- 9.1 At the MS Society, we can work with adults at risk and children, so safeguarding is an essential part of what we do. Safeguarding means protecting an adult or child's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect, and understanding what we need to do if we're worried about someone's safety or wellbeing.
- 9.2 We tell every volunteer how safeguarding relates to their role during their induction. Further training will also be provided to volunteers who either will, or are most likely to, come into contact with adults at risk.
- 9.3 For more information, see our [Safeguarding Policies](#).

Data protection

- 9.4 We have clear expectations of anyone who handles records of personal or sensitive information, which is guided by law. People trust

us to store and use their information properly and all our volunteers and employees are expected to follow the principles and guidance set out in our [Data Protection Policy](#).

Health and Safety

- 9.6 As a charity, we have responsibilities for the health and safety of people when they are volunteering with us, and for any other attendees or guests who may be affected by our work. We will assess the hazards and risks faced by volunteers in the course of their activities and act to control those risks to an acceptable level.
- 9.7 Volunteers may be required to use equipment provided to them by the MS Society (for example a Helpline volunteer taking calls on an MS Society phone system). If volunteers need extra support, they can request access to our Occupational Health resource through their volunteer point of contact.
- 9.8 To keep everyone safe, our volunteers must meet their duties under health and safety legislation while volunteering. We also ask volunteers to take reasonable care of themselves and others who might be affected by their activities. For more information, please refer to our [Health and Safety Policy](#).

Volunteering alone

- 9.9 There will be times when people volunteer alone. Volunteering alone refers to volunteering without close or direct supervision.
- 9.10 To make sure they're safe, we expect volunteers to follow important guidance and procedures that are outlined in our [Lone Working and Volunteering Policy](#). Included in this policy are the responsibilities of a lone volunteer, including:
- Taking reasonable care of their own safety and that of others
 - Following any guidance outlined in our Lone Working and Volunteering Policy
 - Reporting any concerns or incidents to their volunteer point of contact.

Whistleblowing

- 9.11 It is important that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by anyone acting on behalf of the charity that might be of public interest is

reported and properly dealt with. We ask all volunteers (as well as employees) to raise any concerns they may have about:

- the conduct of others in the charity
- the way in which the organisation is run.

9.12 Our Whistleblowing Policy protects individuals who disclose, in good faith, information about alleged wrongdoing at the MS Society. It sets out the way in which individuals may raise any concerns they have and how those concerns will be dealt with. For more information, please refer to our Whistleblowing Policy.

10 Reward and recognition

10.1 Volunteers are a vital part of the MS Society team and this is reflected in our day-to-day approach to managing volunteers and the support we provide. We proactively recognise the contribution of volunteers, say thank you and report back on the difference volunteering makes.

10.2 We encourage all volunteers, employees and service users to recognise and highlight acts of volunteer contribution, impact, commitment and dedication via our Volunteer Impact Awards.

11 Moving on

11.1 Volunteering should always suit people's lives and we understand that circumstances can change. A volunteer can stop volunteering with us at any time and for any reason.

11.2 All we ask is that notice of such a decision is communicated as soon as possible to the volunteer's point of contact. This means we can thank volunteers, offer support on other relevant opportunities and provide references for future employers or volunteer placements. We will also provide opportunities for volunteers to feed back on their experience (such as in the Leaver's Survey and, where relevant, an exit chat) so that we can keep improving our support for volunteers.

11.3 We may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the individual volunteering relationship with us, for example due to failure to complete training or because a volunteer is no longer fulfilling a recognised volunteering role. The process for deciding that someone can no longer volunteer in a particular role will be fair and transparent.

12 Our volunteering policies and resources

- 12.1 Policies relating to volunteers can be found [here](#). We have recommended below the policies all volunteers must read. As relevant policies will vary depending on the volunteer role, this list is not exhaustive:

Name of policy/resource	Must read	Should read
Code of Conduct	✓	
Confidentiality Statement	✓	
Conflicts of Interest Policy		✓
Data Protection Policy	✓	
Disclosure Policies		✓
EDI Strategy		✓
Equal Opportunities and Inclusion Policy		✓
Expenses Guidance	✓	
Health and Safety Policy	✓	
Lone Working and Volunteering Policy	✓	
Resolving Volunteer Issues Policy		✓
Safeguarding policies	✓	
Social Media Policy		✓
Whistleblowing Policy		✓

Thank you for reading this agreement. We hope you enjoy volunteering with us!

Owner	Volunteering Transformation Manager
Accountable to	Head of Volunteering and Community Networks
Approved by	Executive Group
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