



Volunteer Problem Solving Policy

Policy name	Volunteer Problem Solving Policy
Policy summary	<p>To provide a fair, transparent and swift process through which individuals can raise concerns or complaints relating to volunteers</p> <p>To ensure that effective arrangements exist for dealing with any issues in relation to the conduct of volunteers</p> <p>To ensure that everyone is treated fairly, consistently and in a timely manner when issues are raised</p>
Policy owner/ Responsible Director	Executive Director of Services and Support, Gavin Atkins Head of Volunteering and Community Network, Emily Perriam
Policy lead	Performance and Policy Manager, Annabel Theaker
Audience	All staff and volunteers
Key Consultation:	<i>Safeguarding Lead</i> <i>EEDI Lead</i> <i>Volunteer Support Manager</i> <i>Volunteers Manager representation</i> <i>Volunteer representation</i>
Approver	Executive Group
Approval/effective date	August 2025
Approval Cycle	3 years
Next review	August 2028

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Volunteering at the MS Society should be a positive experience for everyone, but sometimes there are problems that need addressing.
- 1.2. This policy is to address concerns raised about a volunteer by other volunteers, staff or supporters. It includes all volunteers, including trustees and those volunteering with groups.
- 1.3. The policy seeks to resolve most problems, however, as per the Volunteering Policy, volunteers can stop volunteering with us at any time and for any reason, and the MS Society is similarly not obliged to continue offering the opportunity to volunteer.
- 1.4. 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.

- 1.5. This Volunteer Problem Solving Policy should be read in conjunction with the Volunteering Policy.

Definitions

- 1.6. **Volunteer:** An MS Society volunteer is someone who freely gives their time, skills, or energy to support the mission of the MS Society, without being paid. They do this with the intention of contributing to the well-being of people affected by MS and the wider community.
- 1.7. **Volunteer Managers:** We recognise all staff, and in some cases other volunteers, who involve volunteers, make decisions or facilitate processes which will affect volunteers or support them at one or more stages of the volunteer journey as 'Volunteer Managers'. We expect everyone carrying out one of these tasks to adhere to good practice in volunteer management policies and procedures, which the Volunteering team will support and are outlined in this document.
- 1.8. **Investigating Officer:** A member of staff that has been appointed by the Volunteering and Community Networks team to explore any problems that arise in line with the problem-solving policy and procedure. This may be the Volunteer Manager but may be escalated to another colleague who hasn't had any involvement with the volunteer in the context of the problem where appropriate.

2. Policy statement

- 2.1. The MS Society is committed to providing the best possible support to people living with MS and volunteering is one way in which we can achieve this. The aim of this document is to ensure that where there are problems with volunteers undertaking their role, the MS Society takes a consistent approach to addressing these.

Purpose and aims

- 2.2. The MS Society acknowledges the significant role that volunteers play both in supporting service delivery and in other ways across the organisation. But it's important that we're always working in a united way to meet the aims of the Charity. Therefore, we need to address problems that may arise with volunteers, which may include, but is not limited to:

VOLUNTEER PROBLEM SOLVING POLICY

- Not following our policies and processes
- Working outside of the scope of their agreed role
- Unsatisfactory performance or engagement of a volunteer
- Putting the charity's finances or reputation at risk
- Any criminal behaviour
- Not working in a way that is in line with our Code of Conduct

Scope

- 2.3. The Volunteer Problem Solving Policy applies to all MS Society volunteers.
- 2.4. Criminal behaviour or activity needs to be reported to the police. Only after the police have investigated the crime, or once the police have given permission, can the problem-solving policy be followed or resumed. Volunteers suspected of being involved in a criminal act may be temporarily removed from their role pending both the police investigation and the problem-solving investigation, if applicable.
- 2.5. Where extreme unacceptable behaviour is reported or suspected, the MS Society would suspend the volunteer immediately while the allegations are investigated. This shouldn't be considered as confirmation of any wrong-doing.
- 2.6. 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:
 - 2.6.1. Where an issue raised about a volunteer relates to harm of a vulnerable/protected adult or child, the relevant Safeguarding Policy and Procedure will be applied.
 - 2.6.2. In cases where a financial crime may have been committed, then the Financial Crime Policy will be followed.
- 2.7. Where issues relate to more than one policy, the relevant Heads or Leads of service areas (e.g. Heads of Volunteering, Finance and Governance) will agree an appropriate way forward within 10 working days of the request from the Investigating Officer.
- 2.8. Where issues raised against a volunteer is in relation to a safeguarding concern, our internal investigations wouldn't be to prove the safeguarding concern happened or who perpetrated it but rather if the information constituted a breach of our Code of Conduct. In such cases, the Investigating Officer must be a Lead or Head of Department or higher, and they will need to have attended relevant training.

VOLUNTEER PROBLEM SOLVING POLICY

- 2.9. In some cases, the removal of volunteers may take place without recourse to this policy. For example, where a volunteer has breached the requirements of another policy or where the Investigating Officer deems it a risk to colleagues to continue with an Investigation.
- 2.10. Outcomes of investigations following this policy could lead to additional steps being taken (e.g. removal of access to MS Society services). However, these are separate issues and are not covered by this policy.
- 2.11. This policy doesn't address problems with staff, which will be dealt with using our grievance policy.

Standards

- 2.12. Problems that arise should be resolved informally where possible and directly by the volunteers and/ or staff members involved with support from the volunteer manager if required.
- 2.13. Anyone raising a genuine complaint, issue or concern in good faith will not suffer any detrimental effects and will receive an appropriate response.
- 2.14. 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 Volunteer Support Team for further details.
- 2.15. 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.
- 2.16. Issues will be dealt with as quickly and fairly as possible, taking relevant circumstances into account.
- 2.17. A volunteer with an issue raised about them should be offered the opportunity to explain the situation from their perspective, unless it is deemed a risk to colleagues.
- 2.18. All those directly involved in the process should be kept informed in a timely and appropriate manner.
- 2.19. Confidentiality is important, and no one should know more than they need to know for the issue to be resolved.
- 2.20. Investigating Officers can decide not to pursue an issue if they consider it unreasonable or frivolous.

VOLUNTEER PROBLEM SOLVING POLICY

- 2.21. Failure to comply with reasonable requests in relation to the problem-solving process may be seen as a failure to operate within the policies and practices of the MS Society.
- 2.22. Failure to adhere to decisions and action plans arising through the process may lead to the opportunity to volunteer being withdrawn.
- 2.23. If a volunteer is unhappy with the outcome of an investigation, they can appeal in writing within 14 days to the Head of Volunteering and Community Networks, stating the reason for their appeal.
- 2.24. The Head of Volunteering and Community Networks will then arrange for an appeal meeting to take place within 14 days of the appeal letter being received. Each situation will be examined thoroughly and depending on the circumstances, the Head of Volunteering and Community Networks will appoint a panel, consisting of at least two other colleagues, including a senior manager, to hear the appeal and make a decision. Any decision is final, and no further appeal will be considered.
- 2.25. Should the Head of Volunteering and Community Networks have been involved in any way in the original investigation, then the Executive Director of Services and Support will be responsible for the appeal process.

3. Responsibilities

Volunteers

- 3.1. Volunteers should understand that they will be treated fairly in any situation where a problem relating to them is being dealt with and we ask them to assist the Investigating Officer to the best of their ability.
- 3.2. Volunteers should continue to operate in line with the Code of Conduct and be honest, transparent and open-minded in assisting with dealing with the problem.

All staff

- 3.3. It is the responsibility of any member of staff who is made aware of a problem that needs to be addressed using the problem solving policy to address it as soon as possible, including a Volunteering and Community Networks Team Manager where required – this is usually the Volunteer Support Manager or the Performance and Policy Manager.
- 3.4. Where colleagues are needed to support in the investigation process, this should be made a priority, and they should ensure they or a

nominated member of their team, can be available to assist in a timely manner.

Volunteering and Community Networks Team

- 3.5. The Volunteering and Community Networks Management team is responsible for ensuring that an appropriate Investigating Officer is appointed to conduct any problem-solving investigation, where required, and that the volunteer problem-solving procedure is followed.
- 3.6. The team will also be responsible for reviewing any learnings and making relevant changes to ways of working where needed.
- 3.7. The Head of Volunteering and Community Networks is responsible for making final decisions on whether a volunteer is stood down following an investigation and for overseeing any appeals process.
- 3.8. The Performance and Policy Manager is the policy lead and is responsible for ensuring that the volunteering problem-solving policy and procedure follows best practice and that Investigating Officers have the relevant training and support to follow the procedure.

4. Laws and regulations (standard paragraph)

- 4.1. The policy complies with the relevant laws and regulations in place at the time of approval. Any changes in laws and regulations before the scheduled review process will be applied as soon as possible.
- 4.2. The policy also complies with the relevant professional and sector standards and codes in force.

5. Monitoring and compliance

- 5.1. The Performance and Policy Manager will annually review instances of the problem-solving process being formally applied.

6. Training and support

- 6.1. The Performance and Policy Manager will ensure that any appointed Investigating Officers are fully briefed before undertaking any investigation.

7. Review and maintenance

- 7.1. Learnings will be reviewed by the Volunteering and Community Networks Management Team quarterly and the policy will be formally reviewed every three years.

8. Appendices

Appendix 1: related documents

VOLUNTEER PROBLEM SOLVING POLICY

Appendix 2: document provenance

Appendix 3: privacy impact assessment summary

Appendix 4: equality impact assessment summary



Appendix 1: related documents

Document title	Relationship to this policy
Volunteering Policy	Mentioned in this policy
Volunteer problem-solving procedure	Related document
Code of Conduct	Mentioned in this policy
Safeguarding Policy (England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland)	Mentioned in this policy
Financial Crime Policy	Mentioned in this policy
Grievance Policy	
Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy	Sets out our approach to equity, equality, diversity and inclusion (EEDI) as an organisation, but also our EEDI expectations
Whistleblowing Policy	Related policy

Appendix 2: document provenance

Date endorsed	Category	Summarise changes made	Reason for changes	Consulted	Changes endorsed by
[month / year]	[Scheduled review / Interim update]	[list changes made to policy]	[List the reason for the changes]	[List who was consulted]	[Job title/Board/Committee/EG]



Appendix 3: privacy impact assessment

Screening question:

Does this policy relate to the gathering, processing, storing or the use of personal identifiable information of staff, volunteers, service users or donors; or gathering processing or storing commercially sensitive information (either ours or partner organisations); or altering processes or systems relating to gathering, processing or storing or use of this information?

NO

Privacy impact assessment summary:

If you answered yes to the above screening question you will need to complete a privacy impact assessment. Please contact the Head of Information Governance for support. Once completed, please include a summary of the PIA here, or 'not relevant' if one has not been completed.

Appendix 4: equality impact assessment

Screening question:

Does this policy or any of its processes have an impact on staff, volunteers, supporters, users of our services or activities or any other people who may come into contact with us?

YES

Equality impact assessment summary:

Please see EIA [here](#).

Risk score is 1.