CONTACT DETAILS

NATIONAL OFFICE

Multiple Sclerosis Ireland National Office ,
80 Northumberland Road, Dublin 4.
Tel: (01) 678 1600
Fax: (01) 678 1601
Email: **info@ms-society.ie**

NATIONAL MS CARE CENTRE

MS Care Centre
65 Bushy Park Road,
Rathgar, Dublin 6.
Tel: (01) 490 6234
Fax: (01) 490 6724
Email: **carecentrer@ms-society.ie**

Regional Offices

SOUTHERN REGION

MS Ireland Cork Regional Office,

Multiple Sclerosis Ireland,   Tel No: (021) 4300001
South Regional Office,
North Quay House,
Pope's Quay,
Cork.   Email: **southern@ms-society.ie**
Regional Community Worker: Patricia Lucey   087 7727015

MS Ireland Kerry Regional Office,

Multiple Sclerosis Ireland,
The Barracks,   Tel No: (064) 6630851
Beaufort,
Killarney,
Co. Kerry.   Email: **siobhanl@ms-society.ie**
 Regional Community Worker: Siobhan Lynch   087 2663489

SOUTH EAST REGION

Multiple Sclerosis Ireland,	Tel No:	(056) 77 77 771
South East Regional Office,		
Walkin Street,		
Kilkenny.	Email:	southeast@ms-society.ie
Regional Coordinator:	Katie Hourigan	087 2663564
Regional Community Worker:	Una Goan	087 7375298
	Deirdre Growney	087 9006171

MIDLANDS REGION

Multiple Sclerosis Ireland,	Tel No:	(090) 6471137
Midlands Regional Office,		
Clonbrusk Resource Centre,		
Coosan Road,		
Athlone,Co. Westmeath.	Email:	midlands@ms-society.ie
Regional Community Worker:	Mary Leonard	0872663659

MID WEST REGION

Multiple Sclerosis Ireland,	Tel No:	(061) 303802
Mid West Regional Office,		
'Tara',		
St Nessans Road,		
Ballykeeffe,		
Limerick.	Email:	midwest@ms-society.ie
Regional Community Worker:	Mary McCusker	086 1448767
	John MacDonald	087 2502009

NORTH EAST REGION

Multiple Sclerosis Ireland,	Tel No:	(042) 9754304
North East Regional Office,		
Enterprise Centre,		
Office No 87,		
Dublin Road,		
Castleblayney,		
Co. Monaghan.	Email:	northeast@ms-society.ie
Regional Community Worker:	Aoife Lambe	086 4613369
	Sarah Kavanagh	086 1525246

NORTH WEST REGION

Multiple Sclerosis Ireland,	Tel No:	(074) 9189027
North West Regional Office,		
Butt Building,		
Ballybofey,		
Co. Donegal.	Email:	**northwest@ms-society.ie**

Regional Community Worker: Catherine Peoples   087 2663570
                                          Maria Keegan   087 6334993

WESTERN REGION CONTACTS

Multiple Sclerosis Ireland,	Tel No:	(091) 768630
Western Regional Office,		
Curragrean,		
Merlin Park,		
Galway.	Email:	**western@ms-society.ie**

Regional Community Worker: Aidan Larkin   087 2500726

Western Regional Office, Mayo

	Email:	**geraldinek@ms-society.ie**

Regional Community Worker: Geraldine Kubernat   087 2502031

Multiple Sclerosis Ireland

MS Ireland
THE MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF IRELAND

Our information line service is open 9:30am-5pm
Monday to Friday, Call us on 0818 233 233

www.ms-society.ie   0818 233 233   info@ms-society.ie

The Branch Handbook

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All appendices are available here:
https://www.ms-society.ie/branch-handbook-appendices

Section 1: Welcome to The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland (MS Ireland)

Introduction

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland (MS Ireland) is the only nationwide organisation working with and on behalf of people living with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and the many thousands of people who share their lives.

MS Ireland is a Company limited by guarantee with no share capital. MS Ireland is a registered charity. Company Registration Number 296573. Charity Number 5365. Charities Regulatory Authority Number 20007867.

OUR MISSION
"To enable and empower people affected by Multiple Sclerosis to live the life of their choice to their fullest potential".

OUR VISION
MS Ireland has a vision of Irish society where all people affected by MS live positive and active lives in the community.

Our vision is to enable people affected by MS to live the life of their choice to their fullest potential, to participate in all aspects of society and to foster, where possible, research on a national and international basis to identify a cure and evidence based strategies to assist in the day to day management of living with MS.

OUR VALUES

SUPPORTIVE
We support individuals whether they are People with Multiple Sclerosis (PwMS), staff or volunteers so that we can work together to fulfil our mission.

TRANSPARENT
Being open and honest in everything that we do.

INFORMATIVE
Communicate reliable, accurate and useful information.

EMPOWERING
Through the provision of information, advocacy and support services we enable people to make informed choices.

MS Ireland was established in 1961 by a group of volunteers interested in creating awareness of MS and providing support for those with the condition and their families. Over the years the Society has grown and developed many important services but at our core is our vast numbers of dedicated and passionate volunteers.

At all levels of the organisation MS Ireland wants to ensure the work and contribution of all volunteers is included, recognised and supported. Without volunteers MS

Ireland would not be able to create significant awareness of MS/MS Ireland or deliver the level of support to people with MS and their families.

The vast majority of volunteers volunteer through one of our 33 Branches. These local community groups are run by members who either have MS or have family members or friends with MS. The role of the voluntary Branch is to provide support and services to the local community, complementing or supplementing other services offered by MS Ireland, other agencies or the State.

This Branch Handbook has been developed to help Branches with their work. It can be used by any Branch member and should form part of any new committee member's induction into the Branch structure.This version of the Handbook is a replacement of the Branch Handbook that was developed in 2001. This Handbook should be read in conjunction with the **CONSTITUTION of THE MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF IRELAND** (**Appendix 1**) and the **BYE-LAWS** of MS Ireland **(Appendix 2)** copies of which form part of this Handbook. (Bye-laws 26-100) relate specifically to Branch operations.
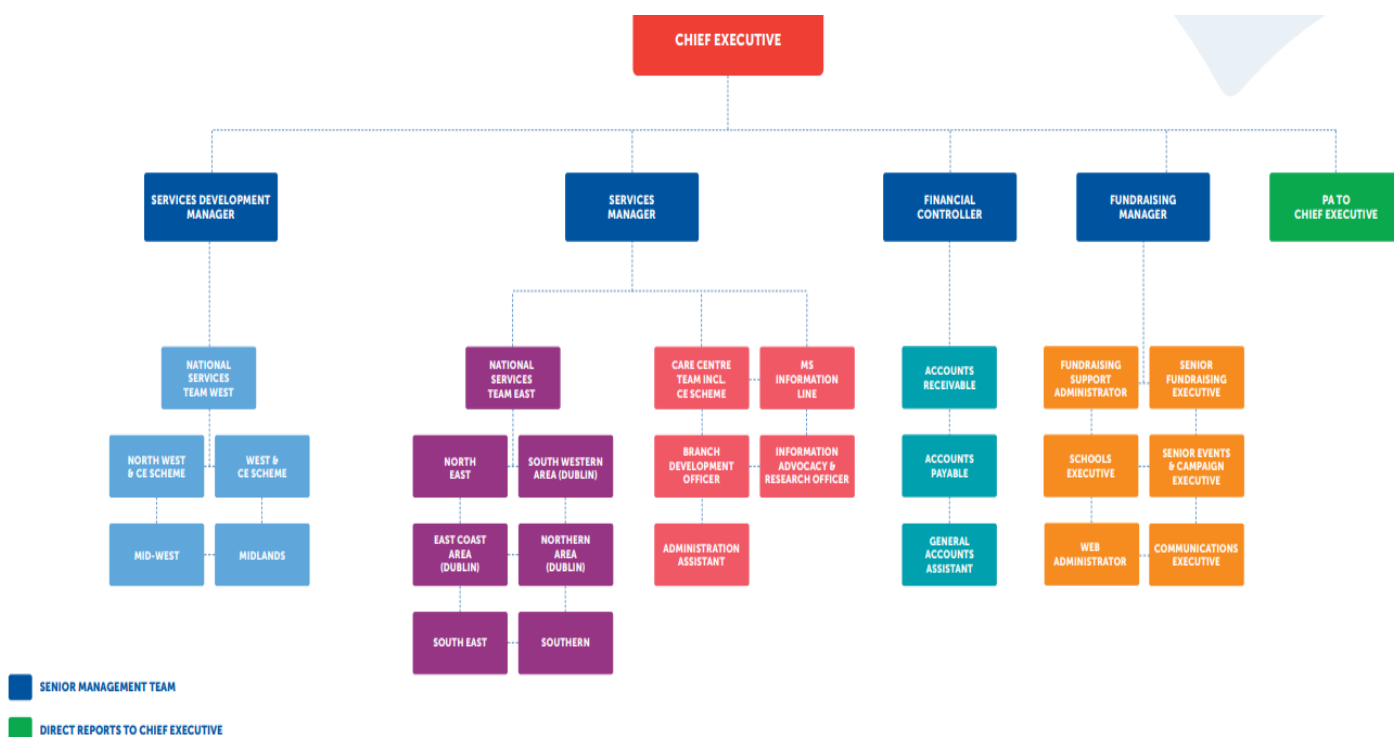
Organisational Structure/Organisational Chart available here

MS Ireland Senior Management Team

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM MS IRELAND

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Ava Battles

SERVICES MANAGER	SERVICES DEVELOPMENT MANAGER	FINANCIAL CONTROLLER	FUNDRAISING MANAGER
Olga Estridge	Aidan Larkin	Jackie Baker	Caitriona Hughes

MS Ireland Staff Chart

SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

DIRECT REPORTS TO CHIEF EXECUTIVE

MS Ireland's structure has been developed to meet the needs of the MS community in the most efficient way possible. We have formed certain structures and adopted various working relationships to not only deliver quality services but to conduct our business in a way that is financially and legally sound, open to all regardless of membership, inclusive of all abilities and views and honest and transparent in all our dealings.

At the centre of our structure are people with MS and their families. They are the main cohort of people we deliver services to, the others being health professionals, students, academics, medics and scientists.

The following structures enable MS Ireland to deliver services and carry out our work.

The Board
The Board is charged with MS Ireland's strategic direction and delegates the Chief Executive to carry out operations. There are thirteen people on the Board, many of whom have MS or have a family member with MS. They also come from many varied disciplines and offer expertise in finance, management and legal affairs. Members are elected by the general membership and are volunteers. Board members are paid no emoluments.

Board Sub-Committee Structure
1. Organisation and People
2. Digital Innovation and Technology
3. Finance Audit Risk and Strategy
4. Services, Advocacy and Research
5. Governance
6. Remuneration and Nominations Committee

National Office
National office is based in Dublin and is responsible for the overall management and administration of the activities of MS Ireland. Departments include Services, Finance, Fundraising and Communications.

Council
Council is a representative body made up of delegates from every Branch. Council meetings enable Branches to voice the concerns of their members while receiving updates from the Chief Executive (CE) and Chairperson of the Board on developments in MS Ireland. The Council is represented by three elected members on the Board.

Branch Network (Local Services)
Voluntary Branches throughout the country provide a range of services, social opportunities and support for people with MS and their families.   Voluntary Branches are self-financing and organise a number of fundraising activities to support their work.

Regional Integrated Meetings
As part of MS Ireland's integrated Model of working Regional Integrated meetings

take place twice a year in each region. This is an opportunity for all Branches in a Region to come together with the Regional Staff, and where possible, the Branch Development Officer and/or a representative from the Senior Management Team. The primary goal of these meetings is to facilitate a forum for Branches to come together to share ideas, plan events, receive training and support and receive updates that are relevant to MS Ireland and the Branch network specifically. The Branch is an integral part of MS Ireland and as the role of the Branch involves fundraising, providing a range of support services to PwMS and their families, these forums are valuable in striving to ensure that no matter where you are in the country as a person with MS and/or a Branch you can avail of services that are reliable and compliant with the relevant codes of practice and current legislation. MS Ireland acknowledges the fact that volunteering in today's world is challenging and the oversight that is required from MS Ireland, our funders, statutory and non-statutory agencies and the general public require us to be up to date and compliant. This can be onerous on individual Branches and these Regional Integrated Meetings are specifically aimed at ensuring that all MS Branches are supported in the valuable work they do for and with people with MS and family members on behalf of MS Ireland.

The services of MS Ireland

Individual and Family Support
Through our case work service our teams of professional Regional Community Workers support the person with MS through the transitional changes that MS, as a disease, presents. Support is also available to the family members in dealing with the challenges they may face as a family unit. See **Regional Services** (**Appendix 3**) for contact details.

Living with MS programmes
A range of living with MS programmes, workshops and activities are organised throughout the country.   They are targeted at various groups such as children of parents with MS, those newly diagnosed, carers and health care professionals. Programmes include physical therapies, symptom management and information/education seminars*.*

MS Information Line 0818 233 233
Our confidential information line provides immediate information and support to those affected by MS. The **MS Information Line: 0818 233 233** MS Information Line

Information
Our information tools include a variety of booklets and information sheets, our website **www.ms-society.ie**, our MS news magazine, conferences, seminars and the valuable knowledge and experience of our staff.

The National MS Care Centre
The **National MS Care Centre** which is HIQA approved is Ireland's only respite and therapy centre for people with MS. It offers respite care, therapeutic services, neurological assessments and many social activities in a homely environment in the suburbs of Dublin.

Representation
MS Ireland advocates on an individual and collective platform for the improvement in services, resources and policies affecting people with MS.

Membership
The MS Community is a strong, vibrant gathering of different people and groups affected by or interested in Multiple Sclerosis. Some of our members are actively involved in the Society and attend programmes, volunteer and speak publicly about their MS. Others prefer to maintain their privacy and wish only to receive information and services. However much or little you want to get involved, becoming a member will benefit you and us in many ways. Membership of MS Ireland is open to anyone who wishes to join our strong and active community. As a member you have the opportunity to influence policy, access information and services and shape how we address the needs of people with MS. Your membership also means we can continue to advocate for additional and improved services across the country for people living with MS.

Membership means:
1. A stronger voice to influence the government, health services and other bodies.
2. A sense of ownership and belonging.
3. A say in the way MS Ireland operates and develops.
4. Keeping informed through the website, social media channels and information booklets.
5. Building a stronger society that is endeavouring to meet the needs of the MS

community.

When you become a member you will receive a membership pack with the following information:

1. A selection of relevant booklets e.g. "MS Explained".
2. Contact details for your local Branch and Regional Office.
3. Directed to the **MS Ireland Website**, **MS & Me** blog and MS News

__MS Ireland services are available to anyone affected by MS regardless of membership. However, we encourage everyone to become a member to help us develop services and meet the needs of the MS community.__

Section 2: Branch Structures and Services

MS Ireland has a network of 31 voluntary Branches that are supported by MS Ireland nationally and regionally. Voluntary Branches are run for people affected by MS by people affected by MS and their friends and family.

The overall direction of the voluntary Branches is coordinated by MS Ireland. **The Constitution of MS Ireland** ("the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland"), the **Bye-Laws** and Branch Handbook provides the rules and regulations which the Branches are expected to comply with.

The role of the Branch involves providing a range of support services to PwMS and their families. The services and activities provided by the Voluntary Branches vary from Branch to Branch. Differences depend on a number of variables:

- The number of members within the Branch, particularly active members who volunteer their time
- The influence members have over the activity of the Branch.
- The capacity and strength of the Branch Committee who direct the work of the Branch.
- The needs and desires of Branch members.
- The presence and level of existing/similar services in the area.
- The fundraising capacity and activities of the Branch.
- Culture, custom and practice.

Common Services and Activities

1. Social Activities

Providing opportunities for people with MS and their families to meet and socialise is a central feature of all Branches. These gatherings and occasions allow people to chat and share experiences with others, building people's knowledge about the condition and learning new ways to manage the effects of MS. Events range from coffee mornings, day trips, dinners and lunches, quizzes, social outings, fundraising events, weekends away and holidays. Often Branch Committee meetings are turned into open meetings and encourage people to attend.

Social activities can be important for some people as their condition advances or they become more isolated. Many want to remain active as best they can and help other people with their journey with MS. On the other hand, some people may not be ready to get too involved with other people or groups. Often social gatherings can be scary for those newly diagnosed as they come face to face with how the condition may affect them.

2. Financial Assistance

Financial Assistance is a financial contribution given to PwMS to assist with some expenses arising from their MS which they cannot cover personally. Financial Assistance is primarily given to people with MS but can also be given to families and carers.

Financial Assistance Regulations and Application Forms are available through the Regional Office and the Branch Financial Assistance sub committee. The involvement of the Regional Community Worker is paramount and all financial assistance application forms must be forwarded to the Community Worker.

3. Direct Services

Voluntary Branches provide a limited number of direct services themselves, mindful of matching their expertise with their members' needs. However, some Branches offer a number of the following services:

- Social Groups – some Branch organise various support groups. Carers support groups are most popular.

4. Fundraising

Events are varied but the most common events include Church gate collections; walks and runs; cycles, swims and golf classics; sales of work; bag packs and street collections.   Many Branches have long running fundraisers that take place annually drawing on loyal supports. Many Branches also work with local businesses and groups who fundraise on their behalf.

Branch Role and Function

The Role of a Branch (Article 27 Bye-Laws)

The purpose of a Branch is to assist in carrying out the objectives of MS Ireland, as stated in the Constitution, in its area

1. To progress/adhere to the strategic direction of the organisation (see Strategic Plan) as set out by the Board and directed by the **Constitution** and **Bye Laws** of the organisation.

The Function of the Branch

To engage with the National and Regional Office to cooperate and deliver in a planned manner a range of services to PwMS in that area**.** The core activities of the Branch include:

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- To undertake fundraising activities.
- The provision of Information about the organisation and its services.
- Work in cooperation with the Regional Office to plan for regional activity and services.
- To provide financial assistance in conjunction with the Regional Worker.
- Promoting the work of the Branch and MS Ireland.
- To support programmes in conjunction with the Regional Office.
- To organise social activities.
- To hold an AGM.

Branch Structure

Each Branch is run by a committee who are elected annually to organise activities and events beneficial to members. Training for **all Branch committee members** can be offered by MS Ireland.
The committee consists of:

- Chairperson
- Vice-Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Council Delegate (it is a recommendation of the Board that this position be held by the Chairperson or another nominated person).
- A minimum of three other members.

The role of the committee is to carry out the purpose and function of the Branch as outlined above. This is achieved through;

- planning the Branch's activities
- ensuring that it fulfils its obligations
- making decisions on behalf of the whole Branch.

Branch Affiliation

A Branch consists in general of individuals based in the Branch's designated area as defined by the board. The Branch network is a very important part of MS Ireland and supports the work of the organisation. Branch members are all volunteers and include people with and without MS.

Branch Bank and Credit Union Accounts

All Branch Bank accounts should be company accounts and should include two Board members as signatories (Charities Regulator requirement) in addition to the signatories of the nominated Branch members. Before opening a new bank account **or changing signatories on the account**, approval must be sought from the Board of MS Ireland. Please follow the following process to change signatories on the Branch bank account.

1. Branch sends the names/signatories to National Officer via Branch Development Officer
2. National Office gets mandate for the Bank in Question and gets branch and Board signatories once approved by the Board.

3. National Office sends signed mandate to the Bank in question to action new signatories.

Branch Services

Each Branch endeavour to support the services provided by the Regional Office.

Section 3: Roles and Responsibilities within an MS Branch

The Chairperson & Vice Chairperson

Role and Responsibilities

The Chairperson needs to be the focal point of Branch work: He/she is ultimately responsible for the proper running of the Branch. The Chairperson is both the leader and manager. The main duties of a Chairperson can be summarised as:

1)   Management

It is the role of the Chairperson to manage the affairs of the Branch in accordance with the Constitution and Bye-Laws of the Society.

- Understanding, encouraging, supporting and supervising the work of **all committee members** to ensure work is progressing effectively and efficiently. It is important for the Chairperson to communicate with all members and to delegate tasks fairly and adequately.
- Working cooperatively with the Regional Office to develop and deliver in a planned way a range of services to PwMS in your area.
- Enlisting the help of outside organisations to further the aims of the Branch, i.e an independent trainer/facilitator.
- Liaising with the Regional Office in relation to any national developments or activities.

2)   Spokesperson/ Representative

The Chairperson is the public face of the Branch and is the first point of contact for other people/organizations. He/she shall:

- Act as host at all Branch events.
- Represent the Branch at all outside meetings and events.
- In the absence of PRO, liaise with the media to ensure that all communication adequately reflects the Branch and its activities.

3) Meeting Facilitator

Chairing meetings is the principal role of a Chairperson. It is the Chairperson who presides at and conducts all Branch, Committee, General and Open meetings, in accordance with the Bye-Laws. The decisions made at the committee meetings form the workload and direction of all Branch activities, it is therefore very important that all meetings are run effectively. In addition to the Annual meeting, a Branch committee must hold one open and a minimum of four committee meetings each year as per **(Bye Law 30)** *'Each Branch shall hold a Branch Annual General*

Meeting and should endeavour to hold at least one other open Branch meeting every year.' Or as recommended, committees should meet monthly.

4) Regional Integrated Meetings

- There will be two Regional Integrated Meetings held annually where the Chair should be available to be in attendance.

How to Chair a Meeting

1. Preparation
- The Chairperson should agree the agenda with the Secretary and ensure that all relevant documentation is available to committee members at least 10 days before a meeting.
- He/she must prepare any additional documentation needed relating to the agenda and also ensure all committee members are adequately prepared for the meeting.
- He/she shall ensure all attending understand the established standing orders for the meeting.

2. Running the Meeting

- Start the meeting on time and welcome all those in attendance.
- Check quorum is met. (50% + 1 of the committee).
- Note all apologies received from those who cannot attend.
- Ask someone to second the minutes of the last meeting, having noted any changes. **(Note: the Chairperson must sign and date the minutes).**
- Deal with any matters arising from the minutes that are not on the agenda for the current meeting. Essentially this is a brief update on items that are not up for discussion but have been decided on previously.
- Ensure everyone has an opportunity to contribute.
- Ensure voting procedures are adhered to properly, if used.
- The last item on the agenda is usually 'any other business' (AOB). This allows for items not listed on the agenda.
- Once all discussion has finished it is useful to reiterate the decisions made, update the checklist and clarify the jobs needing completion by the next meeting.
- Confirm the date as per Forward Planner.
- Close the meeting and thank those for attending.

3. Follow Up
The Chairperson should follow the work designated in the meetings and ensure it meets deadlines the committee has agreed on. Many Branches use 'Action Lists' to summarise tasks needing completion, the person responsible and the proposed completion date.

The Secretary & Assistant Secretary

Role and Responsibilities

The Secretary has the most varied work of all the committee members. He/she is the administrative support to the Branch and the main liaison with the National and Regional Offices. Training for all Branch committee members will be offered by MS Ireland and it is best practice that all new elected committee members attend this training as soon as is practical after the election.

Administrative services provided by the Secretary:

- Secretarial support to Chairperson and committee, including dealing with correspondence, collating information etc.
- Maintain minutes of all Branch meetings and distribution to members.
- Devise agenda with the Chairperson and distribution to members.
- Main liaison with National and Regional Offices, liaison when there is a change in Branch officers.
- Communication with Branch officers/PRO regarding upcoming events in order to update and maintain information on the MS Ireland website and social media.
- Ensure Branch has enough headed note paper with correct logo and literature.
- Ensuring that all committee officers are MS Ireland members.
- Ensuring Branch membership fees are up to date and notifying the membership officer of any changes to Branch membership list.
- It is also his/her responsibility to make sure that supporting information is available in time for meetings.

Preparation for a Branch Committee Meeting

- The date for the following meeting should be confirmed per Branch Forward planner.
- The Secretary must liaise with the Chairperson to create an agenda. The Agenda should inform other members of the topics to be dealt with, why they are being discussed and what contribution they should prepare beforehand.
- The Secretary should liaise with all Branch officers if there is accompanying documentation to be sent with the agenda.
- Distribution of the agenda pack (agenda, minutes of previous meeting and any other relevant documents pertaining to the meeting) to all members must be carried out at least
- ten days before the meeting by post or email.
- A reminder call/text to all members may increase attendance.

Follow up after Committee Meetings

- Try to transcribe the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting. Follow

the same format as usual, write an organised, accurate account of the meeting.
- Record actions and by whom.

Minute Taking

Minutes are the written record of the business transacted at a meeting. These are important points to consider when taking the minutes of a meeting:

- Keep a 'Minutes Record Book' to record the monthly minutes and file each one chronologically. These can be used later for references.
- Sit at the top of the room, or beside the Chairperson for convenient clarification or help as the meeting proceeds.
- A sign in sheet should be kept. Only registered members of MS Ireland have voting rights.
- Record apologies for non-attendance.
- As the Chairperson conducts the meeting, the first item on the agenda is to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Amendments may need to be made.
- Only record the main points stated, decisions made and actions taken
- All votes should be recorded;
  - the motion and the names of the Proposer and Seconder.
  - Record whether motions are adopted or rejected.
  - how the vote is taken (by a show of hands, voice or other) and whether the vote is unanimous.
  - Keep a record of the number for and against the motion.

How to Organise the Branch Annual General Meeting

An Annual Meeting acts as a review of the year. All points to prepare and carry out a Branch meeting are relevant and should be taken into account for an Annual Meeting. However these points must also be considered for an Annual Meeting:

- The Branch Annual General Meeting shall be held prior to the 31st March each year and shall transact the following business:
  a) Receive the annual report of the Branch Treasurer and audited accounts for the preceding year.
  b) Receive the report of the outgoing branch committee.
  c) Elect Members to any Branch committee vacancies and Council delegate.

- When sending out the agenda and minutes to members, **a copy of the accounts and minutes of the previous Annual Meeting should also be sent**, a minimum of 14 working days beforehand.

- The Annual Report, an overview of the main achievements of the year, may be presented by the Chairperson or the Secretary.

- Copies of the accounts presented by the Treasurer may be given to those in attendance.

- Election of Officers.

- Motions and Any Other Business to be put to the Annual Meeting should be

added to the agenda beforehand. If they arise during the meeting, they must be noted in the minutes.

- When to start planning for an AGM.

The Treasurer & Assistant Treasurer

Roles and Responsibilities

The Treasurer should **not** be seen as the sole arbitrator of finances within the Branch; this is the collective responsibility of the full Branch committee. He/she should however provide relevant financial information to the committee and should explain and report on the accounts at the regular committee meetings. Training for all Branch committee members will be offered by MS Ireland and it is recommended that all committee members attend training as soon as is practical after the election.

The Treasurer is responsible for the banking of all Branch funds, the upkeep of the Branch accounts and the presentation of the financial position of the Branch and the audited accounts in the Branch Annual Meeting.

The principal duties of the Treasurer are to:

- Ensure that adequate records exist regarding the Branch's financial transactions including accurate and up-to-date records of all income, expenditure, assets and liabilities as per the e-Docs system.
- Prepare an Outline budget for the coming year **(see Appendix 5).**
- Issue receipts for all funds received, where appropriate.
- Lodge all monies received in the Branch's bank account.
- Make all approved payments promptly.
- Act as a signatory to the Branch's bank accounts, (with at least one other committee member).
- Bye-Law 68; All items of expenditure shall be recorded in the Branch's accounts, payments should be made by cheque. Payments should never be made directly from the cash proceeds of fundraising events or from donations, unless a written remittance advice note signed by two unrelated Branch committee members is given to the Branch Treasurer.
- Bye-Law 69;   When cash is taken in, two or more unrelated people should assist in its counting and ensure that it is safely stored until banked at the first opportunity. The safety of Branch members should be a priority..
- Enter all income and expenditure information onto the eDocs system on a monthly basis **(see Appendix 6).**
- Forward details of all income, expenditure, assets and liabilities to the Branch's auditor in early January in relation to the upcoming Branch Annual Meeting.
- Forward a copy of the audited accounts to the Finance Department for consolidation into MS Ireland's accounts by the 31st of March. Report to the Annual Meeting on the audited accounts for the preceding year.
- A Branch may avail of Internet banking facilities, solely in order to view its account(s), transactions and balance(s).

- Ensure money from fundraising events (chq's) are received before media coverage & presentation events take place.

e-Docs Financial Reporting System for Branches
e-Docs Financial Reporting System was introduced in February 2016 and launched in May 2016 for Financial Reporting in all Branches.
The purpose of the system is to provide a single platform for Branches to enter their financial information. The benefit of doing this is that all Branches will have standardised reporting and the Finance Department can review the information on a monthly basis rather than waiting for half year returns. In addition it will save time as all Branch information can be viewed on the system individually or consolidated to see the full picture. Previously this was a manual exercise which was carried out by the Finance Department at half year intervals.

The software package is hosted on a secure website by e-Docs Software Solutions. The site itself is hosted on an isolated server with proactive security monitoring. Data is not stored on local devices such as laptops or desktop computers. All traffic between the client's browser and the server is encrypted using 256 bit SSL encryption. This is the same technology which is used when making financial transactions online.

The package currently has functionality to record income and expenditure and the ability to print summary/detailed reports for Branch Meetings. In addition the information can be exported to excel/pdf if necessary which can be given to the local auditor. It is intended to add Bank Reconciliation and possibly Balance Sheet functionality in the next phase of the project. It is also envisaged that the system will replace the need for half year reporting once the Bank Reconciliation is fully functional (Bank Reconciliation will help to verify that all transactions have been captured correctly on the system). The Finance Department will have the ability to review all transactions of every Branch on the system and from a control and monitoring perspective this will greatly assist.

In the event that a Branch does not have the capability to use the system then they must arrange for their local auditor/accountant to assist i.e. they must use the system.

The process for Branches to use the system is as follows see **(Appendix 6)**:

1.   Register their username and individual password (minimum of 8 characters for added security) on the system.

2.   The Branch Development Officer receives an email to say that a new user has

registered.

3.   The Branch Development Officer must activate the account for the user to be given access.

4.   The Finance Department controls the level of access that a user is given i.e. Branch access gives the user access to information for that Branch alone whereas the Finance Department has Group access to have visibility of all information on the system.

5.   The user is e-mailed that their account is now activated.

6.   The user can now access the information and enter their income and expenditure as per training notes.

7.   If the user forgets their password there is a password reset option at the logon screen of the system.

8.   If a user forgets their username the Branch Development Officer can retrieve it from the system on their behalf.

9.   If a user is no longer a treasurer or should no longer be given access, the Branch Development Officer can remove the user's access to the system.

Maintenance of financial records and reporting to the Branch Committee
Finance reports are formal records of all the financial activities that have happened throughout the year in a Branch. They provide the Branch with information about its financial position, performance and any changes that have occurred. A finance report should be understandable, relevant, reliable and comparable. As a means of standardising Branch accounting procedures, MS Ireland has introduced e-Docs Financial Reporting System which produces standardised financial reports for Branches.

Frequency of financial reporting to the committee
The treasurer should provide financial updates to the branch committee to enable financial decisions to be made for the branch. Accordingly, as far as is possible a report should be presented at each branch committee meeting and ideally not more than two months should lapse since reporting.

Bequests
Gifts made at the time of death (whether through a last will and testament or a living trust) are made as a specific bequest. Bequests received may be in the form of funds or property and may have conditions attached to them which may restrict the use of the gift or if the gift can be sold. Please inform the Chief Executive of all Bequests received. All details from solicitors regarding Bequests should be sent to the National Office for audit purposes.

Restricted Funds

Restricted Funds represent income received that can only be used for particular purposes which arise because of restrictions on their use imposed by the donor at the time of receipt or because the funds were collected in a public appeal to raise money for a particular purpose. A simple example would be funds received where the donor has specified that they be used for research - in this case the money cannot be used for anything other than research. Unrestricted Funds have no conditions placed on them and can be expended at the discretion of the society.

Income Procedures

Outdoor Collections – Church gate and Flag days and Supermarket Bucket Collecting ***Please note that a Garda permit is required for ALL cash collections in a public place. If the collection takes place on private property with the permission of the owner a permit may not be required.***

- Bucket collections are run by the Branches, throughout the year. The Branches will ensure that they follow the guidelines set out in Guide to Cash/Bucket Collection (**Appendix 7** Currently being updated as a result of working during COVID-19**)** and process the monies raised as per Statement of Guiding Principles of Fundraising **(Appendix 8)**.
- The Branch Committee will assist in any application to the Gardaí for a permit and they will issue the Guide to Cash/Bucket Collecting (**Appendix 7** Currently being updated as a result of working during COVID-19**)** to the fundraiser.
- Spot checks are carried out on outdoor collections by the Branch Auditors or MS Ireland employees when requested by the MS Society. This is to ensure that the Branches are complying with the collection guidelines set out to them for bucket collecting such as the buckets being sealed and numbered appropriately.
- Branches carry out bucket collections with volunteers. The buckets are required to be sealed at all times during collection. Each bucket is pre-numbered and recorded before they are used for collecting and the volunteer that takes the bucket is recorded. When collection is complete two members must open the buckets together and record the amount collected in each bucket and sign off on the total raised. The money should then be lodged as soon as possible. As most banks do not take coins unless the coin bags are filled, the coins are exchanged for notes in the local shops if possible. If not the coins should be recorded and held by the treasurer until the coin bags are full and then lodged.

Events: Coffee Morning, World MS Day, Christmas Party, Musical and Sporting Events.

- Branches run various events throughout the year in order to raise funds for the Branch. Donations from these events are processed according to the procedures in the Fundraising Procedures (**Appendix 9** Currently being updated as a result of working during COVID-19).
- All Branches should, if they are required, apply for a Garda permit and the appropriate form can be either posted or emailed out.
- The money received at the event is stored in a cash collection box and

then counted by two members of the branch and lodged as soon as possible.

Donations

MS Ireland Branches receives a number of donations in various different forms and for different reasons. All donations are processed according to the procedures set out in the Fundraising Procedures **(Appendix 9** Currently being updated as a result of working during COVID-19).

Counter Box Collections
- For all collection boxes sent out, both the number and the details of where it has been sent should be recorded.
- Make arrangements to collect the collection box.
- When they are returned to the Branches this is marked off and the amount raised is also recorded.
- The donation is processed according to the guidelines set out in (**Appendix 9**.).
- If a collection cannot be arranged then the donor can return the funds by cheque, credit card or bank lodgment, as set out in (**Appendix 9** Currently being updated as a result of working during COVID-19.).
- A receipt should be sent to the store.

Raffle
- Raffle books are purchased from local stationery shops. They should be numbered before they are handed out to volunteers. The raffle books and funds raised are then handed back to the branch and lodged as soon as possible.
- Raffle books not returned are followed up with the volunteer.

Tax Back on Donation

1. Under the Charitable Donation Scheme MS Ireland is eligible to claim tax paid on qualifying donations of €250 or more from one individual/company in one calendar year.
2. Any donation with a perceived benefit to the donor is not eligible for tax reclaim, e.g. tickets for an event, sponsorship, raffle tickets.
3. The tax reclaim process involves a donor completing CHY3 (5 year) or CHY4 (annual) form. The donor then returns this form to the fundraising department in the National Office.
4. The fundraising department will need a donation amount and proof of receipt from the Branch.
5. The claim is then sent to Revenue through the Revenue Online Service (ROS).
6. All tax reclaims should be managed through national office.
7. To assist the process it is vital that all donations are correctly recorded, receipted and dated.

Gifts in Kind
- A record of all gifts in kind received should be maintained and the auditor should be informed at year end for inclusion in the annual audited accounts.

Expenditure

Travel Expenses

A committee member/Branch member will be reimbursed from Branch funds for travel to council meetings and Regional Integrated Meetings. There will be no reimbursement for travel to local Branch committee meetings. An expenses claim form has to be completed and signed off by the Branch Treasurer and Chairperson.

Sales Expenses
Advertising, prizes, fundraising material costs, purchase of cards and stars, events expenses are all sales expenses as the money spent on these items is expected to generate income for the branches.

Admin Expenses
Stationery costs, telephone, postage, rent of meeting rooms, auditing, accountancy, AGM expenses, are all admin expenses as they are used in the running of the branch. Receipts have to be provided with the claim.

Expenses
Bank interest and charges are finance expenses incurred by every branch to facilitate the running and operating of their bank accounts.

Intercompany Expenses
There is a 15% contribution of net assets requested from each branch to the national office on an annual basis. The branches also purchase fundraising materials from the fundraising department in national office e.g. T-shirts, posters, buckets, balloons, locking tags, Christmas cards. Donations are also made to the MS Care Centre and Friends of the MS Care Centre by branches throughout the year.

PRO

Role and Responsibilities
Prioritise and plan effectively (with the committee) all Branch advertising with local press, newsletters, social media platforms etc to inform the public of all events. Help raise awareness and generate positive publicity about the Society & the local Branch by building relationships within the community.

The Council Delegate & the named Alternate Delegate

Role and responsibilities:

1. To represent the interests of their Branch at Council.
2. To bring issues/ideas to Council as directed by the Branch.
3. Communicate decisions made by Council to the Branch.
4. Communicate the Council minutes to the Branch so that the Branch can carry out any actions in a timely manner along with the minutes. The minutes should be available in a timely manner.
5. Where there is an issue of conflict within the Branch the delegate and Branch will abide by the Bye Laws relevant to conflict resolution , i.e. prior notice in writing must be sent to the Chief Executive.

Planning and Conducting an Annual General Meeting (AGM)
The Annual General meeting (AGM) is an important event for every Branch. It gives the members, the general public and the committee a broad overview of the Branch's current directions, financial health and confirms its purpose. It is also an opportunity to revitalise the Branch through the official engagement of members into key elected positions.

It is important to note that there is no maximum number of Committee members, however, it is important not to elect too large a committee as the quorum for all committee meetings is one half of those elected to committee at the previous Annual Meeting plus one. The Branch committee may co-opt additional members at any time throughout the year and can appoint as they see fit other officers such as Public Relations Officer, etc.
In accordance with (**Bye-law 51)** the expectation is that committee members attend committee meetings.

The Council Delegate and a named alternate delegate must be elected at the AGM. Other committee members may attend Council **but only** as observers.

Bye-law 106   Council will select annually a representative to serve on the Board for a three-year term. The selection will be conducted as follows:

a)   The Chairperson shall notify all Council members of the name of any Council member wishing to stand for election to the Board.

b)   The representative shall be selected at the final Council meeting before an upcoming MS Ireland AGM, by secret ballot from among those present and entitled to vote.

Bye-law 107   Once elected to the Board, a Council member is entitled to remain as their Branch delegate to Council, for the duration of their membership of the Board.

Bye-law 108   A Council representative on the Board shall, on completion of their three-year term, retire from the Board. However, they may be nominated for an additional three years, up to a maximum of nine years.

Most importantly, the Branch should try to make the AGM a positive experience where people go away firmly committed to the Branch and its goals and activities.

Elections

At the meeting you need to elect key office-holders. The AGM is the time to publicly elect the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer and other committee members.

Presentation of Accounts

You will need to present the annual accounts to the members in a standard format. Again, the MS Ireland Bye Laws provides that you must have your accounts audited.

Preparation for an AGM

It is best practice that AGM preparations commences in December. The AGM is usually organised by the Secretary, with assistance from the rest of the Branch, but this can be altered if someone else volunteers. It is important, though, that everybody in the Branch knows who is responsible. The Secretary should have the current list of Branch affiliated members. Please **note that a minimum of 9 Members are required to be present** to hold a valid Annual General Meeting **(Bye-Law 41)** Membership of the Society should be validated with MS Ireland. **Only members of MS Ireland** may vote at Branch AGM's and **only members of MS Ireland** may be elected as Branch committee members.

AGMs held on the Zoom Platform

AGMs may be held on the online Zoom platform. The Branch Development Zoom account licence is available to all Branches.   If a Branch wishes to organise their AGM on the Branch Development Zoom account they must contact the Branch Development Officer with a date. The process for Branches to use the system is as follows;

If Branches wish to organise their AGM's on the Branch Development Zoom Licence they must contact the Branch Development Officer with a date by email on trionanr@ms-society.ie or by phone on 086 4164044

A Branch Officer may be assigned as Host or Co-host of the meeting. Tríona Ní Ráinne does not have to be in attendance

The quorum for a Branch AGM is 9 Members of MS Ireland in attendance. If it is not possible for 9 Members to attend an online AGM, then please inform MS Ireland's Branch Development Officer of this in advance.

1. The Branch contacts **the Branch Development Officer** with a date and the meeting will be booked on the Zoom Account

2.   The registration link for the meeting will be sent to the Branch Secretary . This in turn will be sent out to the members by the Branch Secretary.

3.   Names of those who register for the meeting will come into the Zoom Account. **The Branch Development Officer** will send the list of registrants to the Branch Secretary. This list will be used to admit attendees to the meeting.

4.   Elections –

- Only Members of MS Ireland are entitled to vote.
- Branch Committee members also have to be Members of MS Ireland.
- If there is more than one person running for an officer role the Branch Secretary will send those names to the **Branch Development Officer** so that polling can be set up for the meeting.
- Alternatively the election may proceed by voting through a show of hands
- If there is only one candidate for the role a proposer and seconder from the floor will suffice
- **If an officer's term has not finished there is no need to re-elect. Please see bye-laws 45 and 46 below**

Bye-laws

Branch Committee

45. The Branch committee should consist of the following members:

   a)   Branch Chairperson
   b)   Branch Deputy Chairperson
   c)   Branch Secretary
   d)   Branch Treasurer
   e)   A minimum of three other members, which may include a Branch Deputy Treasurer and/or Branch Deputy Secretary.

46. Those listed at a) to d) above shall be the Branch Officers and shall hold office for a maximum period of three consecutive years and shall not be eligible for re-election to that particular post for one year after the term of office, which they hold, expires.

Date
The date of the AGM may be set by MS Ireland to be held on a date before the end of March each year in the case of a Branch not being able to do the same.

Advertisement
Though an advertisement is not now required by law, you may consider doing it anyway to encourage public involvement and an inclusive atmosphere. A small block in the classifieds is enough. Give the name of the association and the place, date and time of the meeting.This can also be done through Social Media.

Office holders and Committee
Confirm which of your current office holders will be re-nominated for the coming year and who will be retiring.

If there are vacancies, make sure that you have approached people who are willing to fill them and remember that there may be people who come forward at the meeting itself.

Most importantly try to ensure that you have enough suitable nominations to fill the available positions.

If people are to be nominated in their absence have them sign a document saying that they are willing to stand.

Vetting

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Person) Act 2012-2016 makes vetting a legal requirement "of persons who wish to undertake certain work or activities relating to children or vulnerable adults or to provide certain services to children or vulnerable adults"

Under the act a person with a disability is considered to be vulnerable.

It is therefore necessary for us to vet

- everybody who is involved with the organisation.
- who provides activities like physiotherapy, massage, reflexology etc.
- some branches contract therapists directly to provide a range of services or therapies, such contractors will now have to be vetted .
- all Branch Officers i.e. Chairpersons, Secretaries, Treasurers etc.
- any Branch member who undertakes home visits.

Vetting Procedures **(Appendix 10)**

Auditor
Leave enough time for the auditor to go through your books and prepare your accounts. Make an appointment well in advance; this is a busy time for auditors.
Invite the Auditor to the AGM and ensure that the auditor knows the exact date of the AGM.
Have a nomination ready for the position of next year's auditor from somebody who you have approached and who is willing to act.

Meeting papers
Prepare the following documents and post them out to all members and office bearers in advance of the meeting:

1. A Sign in sheet with space for contact information.
2. A set of accounts - balance sheet and financial statement - in the required format.

3. Annual Report
   The Branch's annual report must contain the accounts, and should contain
   -a summary of the year's activities
   -a record of the year's achievements
   -a preview of what is planned for the next year
   -a restatement of the organisation's vision.
4. Agenda consisting of:
   a. Welcome by chairperson
   b. Apologies
   c. Confirmation/Approval of the minutes of the previous AGM
   d. Business arising from the minutes
   e. Chairperson's report
   f. Treasurer's report and presentation of audited financial statements
   g. Election of Officers
   h. General business
   i. Guest speaker (if any, to be invited well in advance and give a time)
   j. Date of next meeting
   k. Close
5. Minutes
   The relevant minutes are the minutes from the previous AGM, not the previous Committee meeting.

Meeting procedure
The procedures at the AGM are basically the same as those at an ordinary committee meeting.

Motions
Motions must be moved
1. to accept the minutes of the last AGM
2. to approve the Chairperson's report (the Annual Report)
3. to approve the Treasurer's report (the Financial Statement)

Motions must be seconded, and a vote (generally a show of hands) taken.

Nominations
Nominations must be called from the floor for Office holders - Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer - and Committee members. If more than one person is nominated for any office, or if there are more nominations than there are committee places, there must be an election through a secret ballot.

Special procedural provisions

The only special procedural provisions at an AGM are that:

1. The quorum for a valid Branch Annual General Meeting is a minimum of 9 Members present and voting **(Bye-Law 41).**

2. If the position of Chairperson is being contested, the Chairperson should stand down from the Chair during the election and be replaced by an acting Chairperson (someone who is not standing for any position) specially elected

just for the period of the election).

Guest speaker

The branch may invite a guest speaker to attend the AGM.

After the AGM

Documentation

Make sure that the minutes are written up shortly after the meeting. If (as sometimes happens) they are left until the evening before the mailout, the Secretary may have difficulty finding last year's notes.

Ensure that you send any necessary documentation, for example

- Audited Accounts
- AGM Appendix 1 - Branch Officers
- AGM Appendix 2
- Branch Financial Assistance Compliance Form

Handover

Retiring officers must hand over the operations to the new person, together with all documents, rubber stamps, bank details, phones, laptop and all passwords (to email, edocs, online banking, laptops, phones) etc. Retiring officers should also give their successors briefings describing key processes and current priorities and challenges.

Banking

If there is a change of officership on the Committee the bank signatories on the organisation's bank account may also change. It is necessary that the new signatories (two committee members and two Board members)are authorised at the AGM if possible or the first Committee meeting if necessary

Recruiting Volunteers

Many people want to volunteer but don't have the time to do so. The key is recruiting people who are willing, and most importantly, able to commit their time to MS Ireland. To find the best volunteers, you have to know what skills you are looking for and where to look. Of course, Volunteer Ireland is a quick, easy and free way to reach many volunteers that may fit your needs. Posting a volunteer opportunity takes about 5 minutes, and will be recommended to volunteers who match with the skills and cause areas you indicate. Also requesting volunteer support around specific tasks or events can be a way to interest people with limited time but with an interest in volunteering.   Volunteer Policy **(Appendix 11).**

Section 4: Branch Sub-Committees

To ensure the effective running of a Branch it is recommended that the Branch committee appoint at least two sub-committees: e.g. A financial assistance sub-committee, and a fundraising sub-committee; based on the core activities within a Branch. Training can be offered by MSI where the need is identified.

Financial Assistance Sub-Committees
The Financial Assistance sub-committee will operate in accordance with the
Financial Assistance regulations of April 2016.
The Financial Assistance Committee is a sub-committee of the Branch. As laid out in the MS Ireland Bye Laws, **(Bye-law 77)** a Financial Assistance Committee will consist of no less than three and not more than five Branch committee members, one of whom must be the treasurer. The function of the Financial Assistance Committee is to assist with financial assistance applications. **The regional community worker will be a member of the Financial Assistance Committee and he/she must be involved in all decisions made regarding the granting of financial assistance**. The regional community worker will not be required to be in attendance at all Financial Assistance Committee meetings. However, they must be consulted on all Financial Assistance applications and informed of the outcome of same. These consultations may take place by phone or email. (See appendix for Financial Assistance Application Form Appendix 12).

Fundraising Sub-Committee
The very existence of a Branch depends on its ability to raise funds. In order to provide services, you need not only volunteers but the funds to pay for the goods and services and any expenses associated with their delivery.

The following is a list of the main areas that generate income for the Branches;
● Church Gate Collections (Flag Day Collections(Garda permit required, plus Managers permission for private property such as Shopping Centre / Pub).
● Sponsored Events, Walks / Marathons / Hill Walks / Swims / Bike Trips.
● Draws / Raffles / Lotteries (Garda permit may be required).
● Christmas Cards and/or Christmas Stars.
● Counter Box Collections   Donations (Individual & Company).
● Events run by people or organisations for the Branch, e.g. Bridge night, Plant sale, coffee morning etc.
● Online fundraising - Is a fantastic tool to spread the word quickly and easily about a supporter's story and fundraising journey.

NB: Any event that's on a public road needs to be properly supervised & Garda permission may be needed. Health & Safety of participants is top priority.

The Branch secretary is responsible for getting the necessary permits and permissions and these should be applied-for as early as possible but at least 8 weeks before the event. The Branch secretary should also inform the Fundraising Department in MS Ireland of all the Branch's fundraising and social events so that these are covered by MS Ireland's insurance and can be promoted on our website.

Where the fundraising event is predominantly cash based e.g. Church Gate

collections the following procedures must be applied;

a)   MS Ireland's sealed collection boxes must be used.

b)   Seals must be intact, when boxes are logged out and returned (signed for).

c)   Sealed boxes returned to an agreed collection point.

d)   Collectors should be over 16 years of age.

e)   Funds to be counted by at least two members, re-seal empty boxes.

f)   Lodge funds promptly to Branch's bank account and give receipt to the Treasurer **OR**

g)   Give funds directly to the Treasurer for lodgement to the bank account.

Each Branch should have fundraising materials that display clearly the MS Logo, Charity Number 5365 and Charities Regulatory Authority Number: 20007867 and the Branch name. Replacement materials can be ordered through the MS Ireland National Office. Please allow sufficient time for delivery. The following is a sample of a Branch's fundraising material:

- Sealed Collection boxes
- Sealed Static boxes
- Replacement seals for both the above.Sponsorship cards
- Laminated posters A3 and A4
- Flag day stickers
- Banners
- Labels
- Thank you cards
- T-shirts

It is vital that the fundraising sub-committee thank all the volunteers and members for their efforts and it is good PR to inform each one of the amounts raised.

Online Fundraising

Online fundraising is a simple and easy way to boost your branch fundraising. It is a fantastic tool to spread the word quickly and easily about a supporter's story and fundraising journey. It also helps raise awareness about your branch and all the good work that you do!

There are a number of different platforms that you can use and these have different charges associated with them.

Platform	Platform Fee	Credit Card yTransaction Fee
JustGiving	0%	1.9% + 0.20c
EveryDayHero	5%	2.9% + 0.30c
Idonate	2%	3%
Facebook	0%	0%
GoFundMe	0%	2.9% + 0.30c

We would recommend using JustGiving and Facebook due to their low or non-existent charges. Bear in mind that not everyone has Facebook and in order to donate to a Facebook fundraising page you have to have a Facebook account.

Justgiving: **https://www.justgiving.com/ms-ireland**

Facebook: **https://www.facebook.com/fund/MultipleSclerosisIreland/**

One of our supporters has created page – what do I do next?
We have 100s of supporters across the country using various different platforms for their fundraising. In order to allocate the money back to your branch the fundraising team needs email confirmation from your supporter detailing where they want the funds to go and a link to the fundraising page in question.

Please email **fundraising@ms-society.ie.**

Online fundraising platforms transfer funds to us on a monthly or fortnightly basis so in order to reduce the administration time for our accounts teams the sooner we know about a branch online fundraising page the better. Once the fundraising page has finished the accounts team can then transfer the funds directly to the branch.

Section 5: Best Practice

All Branch officers **must** make themselves familiar with the following best practices policy documents. These are all available to download from **www.ms-society.ie**

MS Ireland Constitution(Appendix 1)

CONSTITUTION of THE MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIETY OF IRELAND

MS Ireland is governed in accordance with its Constitution which was adopted in November 1998 and amended upto and including 24 September 2016. Every incorporated company has its own Constitution comprising its Memorandum and Articles of Association. The Articles contain the regulations which the Company must comply with. A copy of the Constitution is lodged with the Registrar of Companies. The Constitution is a public document and may be inspected by anyone(usually on payment of a fee) either at the Companies Registration Office or the Company's Registered Office i.e. National Office.

Branch Bye-laws (Appendix 2)
BYE-LAWS

The Bye-Laws were developed in conjunction with the Constitution of MS Ireland. The Bye-Laws are the rules that govern the internal management of our Branches. They were written by the organisation's directors and cover topics such as how Branch officers are elected, how meetings of Branches are conducted, and what officers the organisation has and their duties. The Bye-Laws and Constitution are the primary official documents by which MS Ireland is regulated.

Insurance
The MS Society provides for certain insurance covers under its insurance programme that provides cover or indemnity to Branches.   Branches should check with the National Office to ensure the event they are organising is covered.

Public Liability Insurance
MS Ireland has public liability in place in respect of its legal liability for bodily injury to third parties and/or loss of or damage to third party property.

This policy also provides indemnity to Branches, Fundraisers or Voluntary Groups, Committees acting on behalf and under the control of MS Ireland in respect of the legal liability for which MS Ireland would have been entitled to under the policy if the claim had been made against MS Ireland.

There is a Limit of Indemnity of €13,000,000 on any one occurrence or series of occurrences arising from one originating cause

This cover operates in respect of normal day to day branch activities, such as meetings, or social gatherings etc. and is the form of insurance usually sought by Local Authorities, Schools or Community Centres or other property owners when hiring out rooms and facilities or when collections or other activities are staged in public areas.

Cover extends to include fundraising events or activities organised by or with the consent of MS Ireland but specifically excludes waterborne and airborne activities carnivals, horse-shows, music concerts or similar events requiring exceptional crowd control measures.

If any branch has a query in relation to any proposed activities they should check in advance with MS Ireland's Brokers, Hooper Dolan Insurance Group Chartered Insurer.
Hooper Dolan Insurance Group
Court Place, Carlow
Mobile: 087 - 2588981
E-Mail: **alanwhelan@mhd.ie**   Web: **www.mhd.ie**

A Confirmation of Liability Insurance Certificate is available for Branches on request from the Branch Development Officer.

Property Insurance
Branches are responsible for their own property unless cover has been arranged by specific agreement with MS Ireland and cover included under the Society's Property Insurance Policy for which MS Ireland is responsible for the first €750 on each and every claim.

Branch Equipment
Some of the Branches have equipment which they use to assist members when attending functions/ outings or exercise programmes . Having equipment brings with it responsibility. If a branch has equipment they must inform MS Ireland so that it can be included in our insurance cover. In order for our insurance cover to be valid in relation to equipment the following must be in place.

- A maintenance/service records must be kept for each piece of equipment.
- A schedule of the decontamination of the equipment after use.
- A record of the training /instruction given to the persons using the equipment.

Money Cover for Cash in Private Dwelling Houses of Volunteers
There is a limited amount of cover for Cash in the Private Residences of Volunteers under MS Ireland's insurance programme.

Cover is restricted to €500 as outlined in the Policy Document cover under the MS Ireland Programme.

Obviously it is not a good idea for volunteers to retain monies in the Private Residences for any longer than is necessary and it is good practice that it is lodged into the appropriate MS Ireland Bank account without delay.

GDPR
As of the 25th of May 2018 the GDPR Regulation came into effect. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) is a regulation by which the European Parliament, the European Council and the European Commission intend to strengthen and unify data protection for EU citizens. The GDPR aims to give EU citizens back control and transparency over their personal data, how it is used, by whom and for what purpose. Under the GDPR, personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner. As the GDPR is a regulation, it is legally binding; if you're not compliant with the regulation then you're breaking the law.

MS Ireland has a privacy statement available on the MS Ireland website at the link **https://www.ms-society.ie/privacy.**

MS Ireland privacy statement (Appendix 13)

GDPR for Branches (Appendix 14).

Freedom of Information Act 2014
The purpose of the Act is to facilitate access to information. It is a means of promoting more openness and accountability. There is a legal presumption that the public has a right to know. Best practice is to be open about the information we keep. FOI should be a last resort.

Charities Act 2009
The purpose of the Act is to reform the law relating to charities in order to ensure greater accountability and to protect against abuse of charitable status and fraud and to enhance public trust and confidence in charities and increase transparency in the sector.

The Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) is Ireland's national statutory regulatory agency for charitable organisations. The CRA was established on the 16th of October 2014 under the terms of the Charities Act 2009.

It is an independent agency of the Department of Justice and Equality.

Key aspects of the Act will provide for:

- a definition of charitable purposes for the first time in primary legislation.
- a Register of Charities in which all charities operating in the State must register.
- the submission of annual activity reports by charities to the new Authority.
- updating the law relating to fund-raising, particularly in relation to collections by way of direct debits and similar non-cash methods.
- the creation of a Charity Appeals Tribunal.
- the provision of consultative panels to assist the Authority in its work and to ensure effective consultation with stakeholders.

The Act, together with the Charities Acts 1961 and 1973, and the Street and House to House Collections Act 1962, provides for a composite regulatory framework for charities through a combination of new legislative provisions and retention of existing charities legislation, with updating, where appropriate.

Code of Fundraising Practice
Statement of Compliance with Guiding Principles for Fundraising

This Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising has been drawn up
in the context of the publication of The Charities Bill 2007 which proposed that the operational and administrative aspects of fundraising would be regulated by agreed Codes of Practice to be developed with the sector. MS Ireland is fully committed to achieving the standards contained within the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising.

Codes of Good Practice to Protect Children
MS Ireland is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of all the children and young people with whom we work. Our policy on child protection is in accordance with **Children First**, the national guidelines for the protection and welfare of children.

MS Ireland is committed to promoting the rights of the child including the participation of children and young people in matters that affect them. A set of guidelines have been introduced by MS Ireland and all staff involved agreed to adhere to these guidelines in the work they do involving young participants.

Vulnerable Adults
MS Ireland is dedicated to implementing and promoting measures to protect the right of all service users to be treated with dignity and respect and is committed to ensuring that the organisation provides a safe environment which is free from all forms of abuse, including discrimination, bullying, harassment or sexual harassment, neglect and mistreatment. In achieving this aim, MS Ireland is committed to ensuring that there are policies, procedures, guidance and training for staff and service users that prevent any infringement of this right. MS Ireland acknowledges that a service

user may be experiencing harm or abuse at home, in the community, or in some other service. MS Ireland will support employees/volunteers to recognise when someone is experiencing harm or abuse and to report these concerns in line with this policy **Adult Protection Policy**

Health and Safely

Many of the services of MS Ireland are provided through/with the assistance of local Branches. It is essential to ensure that this is done in a way that safeguards the health, safety and welfare of volunteers providing the service and the people who receive these services.

Who is responsible for implementing Health and Safety?

Branch Committees are responsible for health and safety in relation to all the activities carried out by the Branch. Specific responsibilities of the Branch Committee are to:

- Ensure that all volunteers working in the Branch take reasonable care for the health ,safety and welfare of themselves and anybody who may be affected by what they do or fail to do.

Social Media Guidelines (Appendix 15)

Most people now have some form of social media account, whether it's on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Zoom. MS Ireland encourages the use of social networking sites to help promote the work and activities of our Branches. Social media is really just another way of sharing content and engaging with people. Social media channels can work alongside more traditional channels of communication- magazines, newspapers, books, websites, etc. as ways of sharing knowledge and immediacy, allowing real-time engagement with readers/users.

We use social media across all of our work here at MS Ireland. We use it to campaign, to raise awareness of the condition, to ask people to support our events and lots of other things too. It's a great way of reaching lots of people and making sure they know all about our work.

A lot of our volunteers, supporters and staff are all on social media too. They use it to help share information about MS Ireland but also their personal experience of MS. We have a strong presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and find that social media is allowing us to support more and more people living with MS each year. And by connecting with us on social channels, and sharing positive stories, you can really help us spread the word.

However, there are a few general rules that we ask you to follow when you're referring to us online, joining in the conversation or using the MS Ireland brand. Sometimes these are for legal reasons but they are mostly intended as 'house rules' with plenty of tips and helpful pointers. If you are ever confused about using social media in relation to MS Ireland, please get in touch with your comms@ms-society.ie

MS Ireland Branches

MS Ireland has a dedicated team of volunteers at our 33 voluntary Branches around the country.

Southern Branches
1. Cork City
2. Cork North West
3. Fermoy
4. Kerry North
5. Kerry South
6. West Kerry

South East Branches
1. Carlow
2. Kilkenny
3. Tipperary South
4. Waterford
5. Wexford South

Midlands Branches
1. Laois
2. Longford
3. Offaly

Mid West Branches
1. Clare
2. Limerick
3. Tipperary

North East Branches
1. Cavan
2. Louth
3. Meath
4. Monaghan

North West Branches
1. Donegal
2. Leitrim

Western Branches
1. Ballina
2. Galway
3. Roscommon
4. Mayo South
5. Tuam

Dublin North and Fingal Branch
1. Dublin North

Dublin South and Wicklow Branches

1. Dublin South   2. East Wicklow

South West Dublin, Kildare and Wicklow Branches
1. Kildare   2. Dublin West