



MS Together - Private Community Support Groups Policy

Date Ratified: 05/11/2023

Approved By: CEO and the Board of Trustees

Next Review Date: 05/11/2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set clear expectations for conduct within MS Together's private community support groups. These groups are designed to provide a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for people affected by multiple sclerosis (MS) to connect, share experiences, and support one another.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all members, volunteers, moderators, and staff participating in any MS Together administered private community support group, including (but not limited to) WhatsApp, Facebook, and other online platforms.

3. Policy Statement

MS Together is committed to maintaining online spaces where all participants feel safe, respected, and supported. Participation in these groups is a privilege and not a right. Breaches of this policy will result in appropriate action, which may include removal from the group or all MS Together spaces.

Please note: If a member's wellbeing appears to be at risk or a safeguarding concern is highlighted, MS Together may need to contact our safeguarding lead and follow our safeguarding policy to ensure the individual receives appropriate support and protection.

4. Guidelines for Conduct



4.1 Be Kind and Inclusive

- **Be open to diverse perspectives and experiences.**

Our community is made up of people with different backgrounds, identities, and life experiences. We value these differences and encourage open-minded listening and learning from one another. Even if someone's experience is different from your own, approach their story with curiosity and respect.

- **Treat all members with kindness, empathy, and respect.**

Every member deserves to feel safe, supported, and valued. Consider the words and tone you use when posting or replying. Empathy means taking the time to understand where someone is coming from and offering support without judgment.

- **Disagreements must be expressed respectfully**

Personal attacks or exclusionary behaviour will not be tolerated. It's natural for people to hold different opinions. Healthy discussion is welcome, but it must remain constructive. Critique ideas, not people. Personal attacks, shaming, discriminatory comments, or behaviour that excludes others have no place here and may result in removal from the group.

4.2 No Hate Speech or Bullying

- **Hate Speech**

Hate speech will not be tolerated under any circumstances. This includes any words, actions, gestures, writings, or images that promote prejudice, discrimination, intimidation, or violence towards an individual or group based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, or any other protected characteristic.

- **Bullying and Harassment**

Bullying, harassment, or repeated negative comments directed at other members,



volunteers, or staff will not be tolerated.

- **Harmful Language**

Jokes, sarcasm, or remarks that could cause harm or offence will be taken seriously, regardless of intent. We prioritise the impact of words over the intention behind them.

- **Anti-Inclusive Behaviour**

Homophobic, transphobic, or otherwise exclusionary behaviour is strictly prohibited. Any such actions will be treated as a serious breach of this policy and may result in immediate removal from the community.

4.3 No Promotions, Fundraising Requests, or Spam

- **Advertising and Promotion**

Unsolicited advertising, self-promotion, commercial activity, or spam is not allowed in this group.

- **Personal Fundraising**

Members are welcome to share updates about personal fundraising activities (such as charity runs or events) if relevant to the community. However, direct requests for donations or financial contributions are not permitted within the group.

- **Sharing Resources**

You may share resources if they are directly relevant to MS and offered with the intention to inform or support members - not for personal profit or commercial gain.

4.4 Respect Privacy and Confidentiality

- **Confidentiality**

What's shared in the group stays in the group. Do not share another member's



words, experiences, or personal information outside the group without their explicit consent.

However, **moderators may share posts or conversations with MS Together staff** if there is concern about a potential breach of community guidelines, a need for staff input or support, or a safeguarding concern. This is done only to protect members and uphold the safety of the community.

- **Privacy Protection**

Taking screenshots, forwarding messages, or sharing another member's personal information without permission is strictly prohibited.

5. Enforcement

- Group moderators and MS Together staff reserve the right to **remove posts, mute members, remove members entirely, or close groups** if this policy is breached.
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- **Serious breaches** - including hate speech, homophobic or transphobic comments, targeted harassment, or repeated violations - will result in immediate formal warnings and may result in permanent removal.
- If a member's **safety or wellbeing is at risk**, enforcement actions may include contacting our safeguarding lead, following our safeguarding procedures, and involving relevant authorities if necessary.
- All cases will be reviewed on the basis of **both content and impact**, not solely on intent.
- **All members will be treated equally**, regardless of personal relationships, volunteer status, or history with the organisation.



- **Decisions made by MS Together staff or the Board of Trustees are final** and should not be challenged by members. If a member wishes to formally raise a concern or challenge a decision, they should contact **hello@mstogether.org** to request a complaints form.

6. Reporting Procedure

- Concerns about potential breaches should be **reported to a group moderator or MS Together staff** as soon as possible.
- Reports will be handled **confidentially** and **investigated promptly** in line with this policy.
- Members are encouraged to **report any content or behaviour** that threatens their own or others' wellbeing, including potential self-harm, abuse, or discriminatory behaviour.

7. Commitment to a Safe Space

By joining and participating in MS Together's private community support groups, **all members agree to comply with this policy in full**. Our priority is to maintain a welcoming, inclusive, and respectful environment for all.