MS-UK Strategic Plan

2019 - 2021
Welcome!

MS-UK is a national charity formed in 1993. We are here for people affected by multiple sclerosis – that’s around 107,000 people in the UK and 2.3 million worldwide.

MS is a condition that affects the central nervous system – your brain and spinal cord. There is currently no cure. The symptoms people experience vary greatly from person to person and over time. Such symptoms may include fatigue, pain, sensory problems such as with vision, cognition difficulties and issues with bodily functions such as speech and swallowing and bladder and bowel.

Just as there is no cure, there is also no definitive understanding of the cause of MS. This means that there is no consensus around how to treat or manage MS, doubling the uncertainty in people’s lives and those around them.
This is why MS-UK has always been at the forefront of promoting choice, of providing people with all the information and support they need to live life as they wish to with multiple sclerosis; whether that be through drugs, complementary therapies, lifestyle changes, a mixture of these or none at all. We will always respect people’s rights to make informed decisions for themselves.

This strategy builds upon the foundations created during our last strategic period – a charity that really listens to those we are here to support, provides professional services and is robust, efficient and effective. As we look to the next three years we will be focusing on what the MS community told us would make the biggest difference to them today and is not available anywhere else - this strategy sets out how we plan to do just that.
What guides us...

**Our vision** - our hope for the future

A world where people affected by multiple sclerosis live healthier and happier lives.

**Our mission** – the difference we want to make

To improve understanding of multiple sclerosis and provide support where it is needed most.
Our values...

Community-led
The voices of people affected by multiple sclerosis inform all our work

Independent
We do not accept funding from sources that may, or can be perceived to, jeopardise our ability to act in the best interests of people affected by MS

Professional
We are knowledgeable and provide high quality services

Unbiased
We will always be balanced in the information we share

Non-judgemental
We respect an individual’s right to make choices for themselves

Supportive
We treat everyone fairly, with respect, care and compassion
How we developed our strategy

We knew from the outset that we wanted this strategy to be community-led. We also knew that if we wanted to involve people in a meaningful way, this would take time. So in February 2018 the board agreed a plan of how we would do just that. Needless to say, the plan did not go completely as expected, but we are confident that we have produced a strategy that has the wishes of people affected by MS at its core.

So what did we do?

1. We began by meeting with staff and board members to review our vision, mission and values

2. We consulted our virtual insights panel and held a focus group to test these ideas

3. We revisited and refined our vision and values based on their feedback

4. We determined our strengths and weaknesses and our opportunities and potential threats

5. We researched the ‘players’ in our field and thought hard about who we are here to support

6. We then asked our community – what is the biggest difference we could make for them today, that they cannot get anywhere else (along with some other questions) – we ran surveys and held focus groups

7. The board and management team met and considered all of this information and agreed the key priorities for MS-UK for the next three years

8. The management team then thought about how we could achieve these and developed detailed plans for the board to approve

9. We produced this strategy and also an accompanying video
Our strategic priorities
1. Supporting people affected by multiple sclerosis to be healthier and happier

There were many suggestions from the MS community as to how we could support people to be happier and healthier. Central to the insight people shared with us was that our current services were vital to them and that the approach that we take towards information and support is unique and therefore something that we will continue to provide for this strategic period. This includes the MS-UK Helpline, MS-UK Counselling and Josephs Court, our wellness centre in Essex.

The most talked about gap for people affected by MS and felt across the UK was loneliness and isolation. People told us that there was simply not enough support to overcome the barriers contributing toward their isolation and not enough available to help them feel a part of something, connected to the world and less lonely. This will be a new area that MS-UK will move in to and see what we can do to make things better for people over the coming years.
2. Increasing understanding of multiple sclerosis

The consultation work we carried out brought home to us just how important an increased understanding of MS is to the community. We need to continue and further develop our work to increase people’s understanding of their condition and give them everything they need to make informed choices about how they wish to live with MS. To do this we need to engage more deeply with people affected by MS so we can learn from them, and share that learning.

But we also know we need to increase the understanding of MS for those who do not have the condition and will use MS Awareness Week as an opportunity to target specific audiences.
3. Managing our charity as efficiently and effectively as possible

Underpinning all that we do is the need to be efficient and effective. We owe it to our beneficiaries, supporters, staff and volunteers to operate in a way that means we are making the most of every penny that is entrusted to us. This means ensuring that not only are we well-run today, but that we are also fit for the future.

We will continue to invest in the good governance of the charity and review our performance as well as ensure that we are financially robust. We will also look after and develop our staff and volunteers as we know that we cannot do what we need to without them.

We have an ambition to move to new premises so that we may have sufficient space to achieve this strategic plan and are ready for when the right opportunity arises.
Final words

MS-UK recognises the importance of being led by those we are here to support – the MS community.

We are proud that this strategy was almost a year in the making as we wanted to have as much input as we could gather to ensure that in the next three years we deliver on what the community has told us will have the greatest impact on their lives.

It only leaves us to say thank you so very much to those that attended focus groups, sent us emails, called us and completed surveys – we could not have done it without you.

We hope to use your voices, that you generously shared with us, to make a real difference to the lives of people affected by multiple sclerosis.