



**OPEN**

## **Board Meeting Summary Report Multiple Sclerosis Society Board of Trustees**

Meeting date: 2 April 2025

Carriage House, 8 City North Place, London, N4 3FU and via video conference

### **Present**

#### **Trustees**

Professor Sir Paul Curran	Chair of the MS Society
Emily Reves	Vice Chair
Nick Keveth	Treasurer
Dr Shewly Choudhury	Trustee
Leah Mates	Trustee
Bayan Mohajeri	Trustee
Chris Murray	Trustee
David Silver	Trustee
Polly Williams	Trustee
Dr Stephanie Wright	Trustee

#### **Council Chairs**

Mary Douglas	Scotland Council Chair (interim)
Susannah Robinson	Wales Council Chair
Philippa Donnelly	Northern Ireland Council Chair (interim)
John Stainton	England Council Vice Chair

#### **Staff Attending**

Nick Moberly	Chief Executive
Vicky Annis	Executive Director - Corporate Services
Gavin Atkins	Executive Director - Services & Support
Dr Sarah Rawlings	Executive Director - Research & External Affairs
Ed Tait	Executive Director - Engagement & Income Generation

### **1. Opening Remarks**

The Chair of the MS Society welcomed the Board and attendees to the meeting. Thanks were given to Stephen O'Keane, who had stepped down from the Board, for his support and contribution as a Trustee, Scotland Council member and Audit and Risk Committee member.

### **2. Chief Executive's Report**

The Chief Executive gave a report on progress that had been made on delivering impact for the MS community since the last Board meeting. The report included a summary of our financial performance at the end of 2024, and against key performance indicators for the delivery of core activities. Particular achievements were highlighted:

## **Stop MS**

- The successful conclusion of Octopus stage 1 recruitment
- The Research Strategy Committee's recommendation to invite our Centres of Excellence in Cambridge and Edinburgh to apply for a further 5 years of funding.

## **Be Heard**

- Our External Affairs team have focused on establishing relationships with the new Government and parliamentarians.
- The announcement of a Neuro Forum – a key campaigning ask which we and other members of the Neurological Alliance have pushed hard for. It'll address gaps in treatment and improve access to support and services. And we've been involved in supporting its set-up with the Neurological Alliances across all four nations.

## **Live Well**

- Local Groups continue to provide vital grass roots connection and support
- Work on the redevelopment of the Belfast Resource Centre (through our partnership with Sense) continues to progress.
- Successful bid for institutional funding in Wales for delivery of tailored navigation support to people affected by MS through the Community Connections Project.

The report also highlighted continued good progress in driving forward our Transformation Programme, albeit with timeline slippage noted in some areas.

## **3. Annual Report and Accounts 2024**

The Board was asked to approve the MS Society 2024 Annual Report and Accounts, which had been scrutinised by the Audit & Risk Committee and our auditors, Haysmac. The Board received assurance that the MS Society remains a going concern and gave approval.

The Board noted that the MSS (Trading) Ltd 2024 Annual Report and Accounts had been approved by the Directors at a meeting earlier that day.

## **4. Organisational Strategy**

The Board received an update on the finalisation and plans for implementation of the 2025-2029 organisational strategy. The new vision statement, "A world free from MS" was approved. It had received positive support from key stakeholders, including people affected by MS, as part of the strategy development process.

## **5. Project Mead – Phase 2 case for investment**

The Board approved Phase 2 of Project Mead, our services transformation project. The second phase would see the new services model embedded, with expanded service delivery and enhanced digital integration. Community engagement and the launch of the service proposition were also part of the plans. Expected outcomes include expanding the reach of our services, improving efficiency, and strengthening volunteer and digital services.

## **6. National Councils Report**

The Board received reports from the National Councils.

Discussion took place about the waiting times to see neurologists in Wales, which continued to be an issue in each nation. The Breathing Space project had been extended

for one year and would continue to provide vital support to carers through respite and short breaks.

In Northern Ireland, work to renovate the Resource Centre was progressing but some concerns on the impact of the change were being raised by users, which would need to be addressed as part of the re-opening process.

The changes to benefits and PIP were consistently raised as a significant concern across the UK, with the variation in each nation adding complexity.

Mary Douglas was welcomed as interim Chair of the Scotland Council. Both Scotland and England Council had low numbers and faced challenges in arranging meetings.

The Board approved the co-option of Laurence Price to the Wales Council.

## **7. Community Voice and National Councils Review**

A proposal was received for the approach to reviewing how the MS Society hears the community's voice and the role of National Councils within that framework. An initial piece of work to explore how we best create meaningful and deep connections with the MS community in each nation, and what role Councils could fulfil within that, was agreed. Council Chairs would be closely involved in the development of a proposal. The option of additionally bringing nation-specific trustee positions onto the Board would also be considered.

## **8. Research Deep Dive**

The Board undertook a deep dive into our Research Strategy. Prof Anne Rosser, Professor of Clinical Neuroscience at Cardiff University and Scientific Co-Chair of the Research Strategy Committee, also joined the meeting for the item.

## **9. Committee Reports**

The Board received a report on the Nominations & Remuneration Committee (NRC) meeting of 12 March 2025. The Committee had considered the recruitment plans for Trustees and Independent (non-trustee) Committee Members for 2025. The annual skills survey and Board diversity report had informed the discussion, and the 2025 Board recruitment objectives were agreed as people with digital, data and tech and research expertise, people with more advanced MS, and people who would bring diversity of thought and experience. A recommendation to increase Trustee terms from two terms of three years, to three terms of three years (in line with charity sector norms) was supported.

The Board received a report on the Strategic Implementation & Finance Committee (SIFC) meeting of 18 March 2025. The Committee had scrutinised the Annual Report, Reserves Policy, Project Mead phase 2 case for investment, and Outcomes and Benefits Framework, as well as reviewing the Strategic Risk Register. The Committee had considered the quarterly investment report and the management accounts to 31 December 2024.

The Board received a report on the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) meeting of 18 March 2025. The Committee had reviewed the Annual Report and Accounts for 2024, and the external auditors' findings report in detail. An unqualified opinion would be issued on the financial statements. The Charity Commission's Internal Financial Controls Checklist

(CC8) was reviewed. An update on progress with the internal audit plan was received. The Committee had considered the Annual Compliance Report and Data Protection Policy before these were reviewed by the Board.

#### **10. Governance matters**

The Board approved the Data Protection Policy. The Annual Compliance Report was received and the updated Strategic Risk Register noted.

The Board Register of Interests was noted, which would be shared on the MS Society website.

The Board reviewed the Scheme of Delegation Report, which was a standing item to ensure the Board had oversight of decisions delegated to sub-groups of the Board and taken between Board meetings.