



## Working with Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices Industry

<b>Policy name</b>	Working with Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices Industry.
<b>Policy summary</b>	This policy explains the MS Society's position on any working relationships with healthcare industries that make a profit.
<b>Policy owner/ Responsible Director</b>	Executive Director of Research and External Affairs
<b>Policy lead</b>	Director of External Affairs
<b>Audience</b>	All staff and volunteers
<b>Key Consultation:</b>	Director of Research Head of Research Head of Policy and Evidence Head of PR Head of Corporate Partnerships Head of Campaigns and Public Affairs Country Directors Head of EDI
<b>Approver</b>	Board of Trustees
<b>Approval/effective date</b>	September 2025
<b>Approval Cycle</b>	3 years, Policies should be reviewed and updated when relevant legislation or other requirements change.
<b>Next review</b>	2028

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to outline the MS Society's position on any working relationships with healthcare industries that make a profit. This policy applies to those who manufacture and market treatments and medical devices for MS, including but not exclusive to, pharmaceutical companies, biotechnology companies, cannabis industries, and medical device companies.
- 1.2 The MS Society's relationships with other commercial entities not listed above but that do provide money, skills or other resources, is outlined in the Corporate Partnerships and Donations policy and the Corporate Partnerships Operational Guidance.

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- 1.3 Employees and volunteers are expected to be familiar with both policy documents to understand if their activities and working relationships are covered by each policy.
- 1.4 This policy should also be read alongside Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry's (ABPI) Code of Practice.
- 1.5 The MS Society's vision is a world free from MS. The MS Society recognises the importance of working collaboratively with all stakeholders with an interest in MS to achieve this vision. Those who market and manufacture drugs and devices to treat MS are an important stakeholder in achieving our vision. At the same time, we need to be open and transparent about these working relationships. It is vital that the MS Society maintains its independence, integrity, impartiality and transparency in all that we do.
- 1.6 The MS Society works with industry when we are confident it is in the interest of people with MS. Any collaboration with industry must clearly support the MS Society's strategic aims and objectives and be in line with its organisational strategy. The MS Society will not enter into any relationship which could in any way jeopardise its independence or impartiality. We will never give one company a competitive advantage over another, and will always seek support from a range of companies where possible.
- 1.7 The MS Society will always fully meet the requirements of the Charity Commission, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland. The MS Society recognises the need for industry to comply with relevant laws, such as the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 and the UK Bribery Act 2010 and the ABPI Code of Practice.

### Definitions

- 1.8 **Pharmaceutical company:** A pharmaceutical company, or drug company, is a commercial business licensed to research, develop, market and/or distribute drugs, most commonly in the context of healthcare. They can deal in generic and/or brand medications.
- 1.9 **Medical devices:** A medical device is described as any instrument, apparatus, appliance, software, material or other article, whether used alone or in combination, including the software intended by its manufacturer to be used for human beings for the purpose of: diagnosis, prevention, monitoring, treatment or alleviation of

disease, or investigation, replacement or modification of the anatomy or of a physiological process, and which does not achieve its principal intended action in or on the human body by pharmacological, immunological or metabolic means, but which may be assisted in its function by such means.

- 1.10 **Biotechnology company:** A company that uses live organisms or their products, such as bacteria or enzymes, to manufacture drugs.
- 1.11 **Cannabis company:** A cannabis company is a commercial business regulated to research, develop, market and/or distribute cannabis based products, most commonly for medicinal purposes. They can deal in generic and/or brand medications

## 2 Policy statement

### Purpose and aims

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out how, why and when the MS Society works with the pharmaceutical and medical devices industry. It aims to ensure that the MS Society complies with external legislation and/or regulation, manages internal risks within the organisation and meet our own internal standards for working with the pharmaceutical and medical devices industry.

### Scope

- 2.2 This policy applies to all activities involving the pharmaceutical and medical devices industry and all staff and volunteers should comply with it. Fundraising activities by groups of individuals who happen to work for a particular pharmaceutical or medical device company are outside the scope of this policy.

### Standards

- 2.3 The MS Society's vision is a world free from MS. The MS Society recognises the importance of working collaboratively with all stakeholders with an interest in MS to achieve this vision. Those who market and manufacture drugs and devices to treat MS are an important stakeholder in achieving our vision. At the same time, we need to be open and transparent about these working relationships. It is vital that the MS Society maintains its independence, integrity, impartiality and transparency in all that we do.
- 2.4 The MS Society works with industry when we are confident it is in the interest of people with MS. Any collaboration with industry must

clearly support the MS Society's strategic aims and objectives and be in line with its organisational strategy. The MS Society will not enter into any relationship which could in any way jeopardise its independence or impartiality. We will never give one company a competitive advantage over another and will always seek to work with a range of industry partners to ensure no one company has undue influence. All funding collaborations will be governed by a written agreement.

- 2.5 The MS Society will only accept funding from companies when it fulfils all of the following criteria:
- That a partnership will result in benefit to people affected by MS and is in line with our vision and organisational strategy.
  - The named lead from the MS Society's Executive Group is satisfied that accepting support is in line with this policy, and will not result in any significant reputational damage.
  - There is no attempt by the funder to directly or indirectly influence the charity's strategy or activity.
  - The donation or contribution is in line with the MS Society's Acceptance and Rejection of Donations Policy.
- 2.6 Any direct collaboration with industry will be governed by a clear written agreement, in line with the most up to date ABPI Code of Practice for the Pharmaceutical Industry. Written agreements will identify requirements and expectations from each party, including intellectual property (IP), publications and exploitation. The written agreement will be developed in line with this policy and with the MS Society's intellectual property policies. The agreement will also include reporting requirements, or any other obligations, which should be agreed with all companies during the planning stages of a project. The MS Society will ensure that there is a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of each collaboration.
- 2.7 We will carry out an Equality Impact Assessment for any funded work with Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices Industry to identify and mitigate any potential negative impact on marginalised group(s).
- 2.8 Wherever possible, funding requests will be sought from a number of companies for a particular programme of work. The MS Society

will negotiate with all potential partners on an equal basis to ensure that no individual company is treated differently from any other in regard to funding of any particular project.

- 2.9 No more than 5% of annual income should come from companies covered by this policy in any one year. Please see latest annual report at [www.mssociety.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/our-work/how-we-work](http://www.mssociety.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/our-work/how-we-work).
- 2.10 Any donations offered to staff, volunteers or any person acting in the name of the MS Society must be made directly to the charity and are governed by the terms of this policy and MS Society sign off procedures.
- 2.11 The MS Society will not accept honorarium for staff participation in an event unless the responsible Director is satisfied both that participation in the event is consistent with this policy, whether or not an honorarium is paid, and that the receipt of an honorarium does not create a risk of a perceived loss of independence, impartiality, openness or transparency. If honorarium is appropriate, it will be donated back to the MS Society.
- 2.12 If a donation or contribution satisfies this policy and is acceptable under the Acceptance and Rejection of Donations Policy, but exceeds £100,000 in a year or £250,000 over the life of the project then the nominated lead from the Executive Group shall notify other members of the Executive Group about the proposed donation or contribution, with the final decision then being made by the Chief Executive.
- 2.13 The MS Society will ensure that its activities and publications are non-promotional and do not aim to stimulate demand for a particular treatment nor promote it over its competitors. The MS Society will not actively encourage people affected by MS to seek a particular product or service from a healthcare provider. However, it may draw attention to specific products or services if we believe this could benefit people affected by MS. References to products or services in any of the MS Society's publications or information services by generic or trade name do not constitute a recommendation of the product or service.
- 2.14 The MS Society will consider providing content or quotes for inclusion in press releases developed by pharmaceutical and medical device industries on a case-by-case basis. We will take into account

the objective and purpose of the press release and whether the objective is to inform people with MS about a pharmaceutical or medical device or whether the intention is to obtain a competitive advantage and is promotional. In the latter case we would not take part.

- 2.15 All MS Society information is based on the latest evidence and is informed by people affected by MS, health and care professionals and others with relevant expertise. Companies will not be allowed to edit MS Society publications or other resources. No information resource or materials produced by the MS Society will be influenced in any way by the acceptance of pharmaceutical or medical device industry sponsorship.
- 2.16 Where the MS Society works with any company or companies on a specific project of its own, the MS Society will retain editorial control over all publications and printed materials and will maintain copyright.
- 2.17 If the MS Society participates in a project run or organised by an industry partner, for example, attending a roundtable to inform a report, we will require industry partners to clearly identify that the MS Society did not have editorial control in any final products. This will be included in a written agreement.
- 2.18 The MS Society's logo and any of its materials may not be used by any industry partner in any internal or external publication or document without the MS Society's written consent.
- 2.19 The MS Society will only work with pharmaceutical and medical device companies where it can ensure compliance with the most recent ABPI Code of Practice. Where a company is not a member we will require written assurance of compliance with these principles.
- 2.20 In strict compliance with GDPR regulations, the MS Society will not, under any circumstances, disclose any of its members' or supporters' information to any other organisation or third-party organisations working on behalf of a company.
- 2.21 This policy will be provided to any potential and current industry partner. Template written agreements are available on request.
- 2.22 The MS Society reserves the right not to work with a company.

## Openness and Transparency

- 2.23 The MS Society will report on all collaborations and financial contributions from industry in its annual report (available at: [www.mssociety.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/our-work/how-we-work](http://www.mssociety.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/our-work/how-we-work)) and in financial accounts.
- 2.24 Where the MS Society works with pharmaceutical or medical device companies on a specific project the charity will acknowledge this publicly through openly declaring commercial sponsorship of a project, where relevant, and what input each company had, if any.
- 2.25 Any MS Society volunteers or staff who have a relationship with industry that directly relates to their role at the MS Society must declare and manage any conflict of interest that may arise in line with our Managing Conflicts of Interest Policy.
- 2.26 The MS Society will consider participation in independent market research funded by Pharmaceutical and Medical Device Industries. At all times involvement will only consist of staff time and will not involve MS Society staff sourcing external participants for their research.

## Campaigning and influencing

- 2.27 Financial support from companies to support MS Society campaigning activities to external audiences where the objectives of the work directly promote a particular treatment or product will not be accepted.
- 2.28 The MS Society reserves the absolute right to make public comment based on its impartial view of the evidence and data relating to treatments and services.

## Research

- 2.29 Where there is a partnership between the MS Society and pharmaceutical companies, a policy will be agreed regarding research publications, data access and IP. This would be set out by the MS Society in advance of any agreements of this type.
- 2.30 The MS Society will consider requests to support or signpost to patient and public involvement (PPI) activities that industry plans to run in research subject to those requests meeting the MS Society's criteria. reserves the absolute right to make public comment based

on its impartial view of the evidence and data relating to treatments and services.

### 3 Responsibilities

- 3.1 **The Board of Trustees** is responsible for ensuring a working with pharmaceutical and medical industry policy is in place and approval of this policy.
- 3.2 **The Executive Director of Research and External Affairs** is the policy owner and is responsible for ensuring the policy covers all relevant areas and has a policy lead.
- 3.3 **The Director of External Affairs** is the policy lead and is responsible for updating the policy as required and ensuring it is reviewed as part of its review cycle.
- 3.4 **The Head of Corporate Partnerships** is responsible for maintaining records and ensuring financial compliance with this policy.
- 3.5 **The Leadership group and line managers** are responsible for ensuring staff and volunteers are aware and have read the policy.
- 3.6 All staff and volunteers are responsible for complying with this policy.

### 4 Laws and regulations (standard paragraph)

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

### 5 Monitoring and compliance

- 5.1 Information and details on funding of projects will be reported in the MS Society annual report and accounts.

### 6 Training and support

- 6.1 Staff or volunteers should seek guidance from their line manager if they have questions about how to implement the policy.

### 7 Review and maintenance

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years.

### 8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1: related documents

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- 8.2 Appendix 2: document provenance
- 8.3 Appendix 3: data privacy checklist
- 8.4 Appendix 4: equality impact assessment summary



## Appendix 1: related documents

<b>Document title</b>	<b>Relationship to this policy</b>
Managing Conflicts of Interest Policy <a href="https://axon.mssociety.org.uk/page/11161?SearchId=380175">https://axon.mssociety.org.uk/page/11161?SearchId=380175</a>	Mentioned in this policy
ABPI Code of Practice for the Pharmaceutical Industry <a href="https://www.abpi.org.uk/reputation/abpi-2024-code-of-practice/">https://www.abpi.org.uk/reputation/abpi-2024-code-of-practice/</a>	Mentioned in this policy
Annual report	Mentioned in this policy. All relationships with pharmaceutical and medical industry partners will be reported in the annual report.
Acceptance and Rejection of Donations Policy	Mentioned in this policy
Corporate Partnerships Operational Guidance	Mentioned in this policy

## Appendix 2: document provenance

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



## Appendix 3: data privacy check list

### Screening question:

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

NO

*If you answered yes to the above screening question **you should complete the data privacy check list**. Please contact the Head of Information Governance for support. Once completed, please include a summary of the outcome here, or 'not relevant' if one has not been completed:*

not relevant

## Appendix 4: equality impact assessment

### Screening question:

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

NO

### Equality impact assessment summary:

*If you answered yes to the above screening question you will need to complete an equality impact assessment:*

***The Equality Impact Assessment form can be downloaded from here.***

*Please contact the Head of EEDI for support. Once completed, please include a summary of the EIA here, or 'not relevant' if one has not been completed:*

not relevant