A guide to short breaks and respite for people affected by MS

Short breaks
Short breaks

Contents

Short breaks and respite: a definition 2
Who can help me find a short break? 3
What standards should I expect? 7
What can I do on a short break? 10
Ideas and inspiration – short breaks examples 14
What about families and carers? 16
How can I find respite care? 19
Who can help me pay for my break? 21
Can I hire equipment? 26
How will I get there? 28
What if I want to go abroad? 32
What about insurance? 35
Introduction

Whether it’s the annual family holiday, a weekend with friends, a day out in town or an afternoon’s activity, taking a break is vital to everyone’s well-being. Short breaks are opportunities to enjoy family or friends, go on an adventure and explore different places, meet new people, or just a chance to relax and recharge your batteries.

For some people with MS and their carers, arranging a short break or activity can be a daunting prospect. Other people may know what they want to do, but need some financial assistance to achieve this.

Where you decide to go and what you decide to do is up to you. The most important thing is that the choice remains yours – you are the expert when it comes to planning the short break, holiday or respite care that suits you and your family.

This guide aims to help you research your own break or activity. It could be a weekend in an accessible hotel with or without care provided, a stay in a respite care centre, or a day trip away from usual surroundings. There are lots of accessible places around the UK and abroad for you to enjoy and explore.

“Respite would enable me to have a social integration with all aspects of society, rather than just the MS condition”
– MS Society focus group
Short breaks and respite: a definition

Respite, also referred to as ‘short breaks’, is a break from the usual day-to-day routines for both carers and the person who is cared for.

Short breaks aim to support carers caring for a family member, partner or friend in taking a break in a variety of ways, giving both the carer, and person cared for, positive results.

In the past, respite has meant a break in a care home or nursing home, but times have changed and a break can come in many forms: a time to rest and recharge your batteries, or a chance to experience new things. You might like to take a break with your loved one, maybe with some extra support, or you might like the idea of pursuing separate activities.

Breaks can vary from a few hours to a few weeks. The ideas are endless. This booklet will give you an opportunity to think about what you would like to do and how to go about doing it.
Who can help me find a short break?

There are many organisations and agencies that can help you find and plan the kind of break you want. Listed here are some of the most popular organisations and agencies. If you want further support to find information, or simply want to talk to other people about the options, then the MS Society can help.

You can go to our website www.mssociety.org.uk for more information and useful resources. If you don’t have access to the internet and would like to talk to someone who can help you find information about short breaks and respite, call our Information Team on 020 8438 0799 (0131 335 4050 in Scotland).

Support volunteers at MS Society branches have local knowledge, insight and skills that can help you find and plan your break. We have branches across the UK. Visit www.mssociety.org.uk/nearme or call our Information Team to find your local branch.

Copies of many of the guides, books and directories listed here are available from our library. Contact our librarian on 020 8438 0900 (email librarian@mssociety.org.uk), or browse our online library catalogue at www.mssociety.org.uk

You can share and get tips, ideas and inspiration from other people affected by MS by talking to people through our online discussion forums.

Our Short Breaks and Activities (SBA) fund provides grants to help with the cost of short breaks, respite and activities for people with MS or their carers. See ‘Who can help me pay for my break?’ on page 21 for more details.

“I would like a break that is a holiday, and not institutionalised like a care home, nursing home or hospital”

– MS Society focus group
Useful organisations

DirectEnquiries
Nationwide access register providing detailed information about thousands of accessible locations across the UK, including hotels, nature reserves, train stations and more. The search facility enables users to prioritise locations by their chosen access facilities. Also offers accessible city guides and the opportunity to read and add reviews of locations.
0134 436 0101
www.directenquiries.com

DisabledGo
Provides online access guides to a vast range of venues – including hotels, restaurants, cinemas, colleges, sports grounds and tourist attractions. DisabledGo surveyors visit every venue and record a wide range of detailed access information, meaning users can rely on independent information.
0845 270 4627
www.disabledgo.com

Disabled Holiday Info
Gives travellers with disabilities appropriate information on accessible holiday accommodation, attractions and activities. They don’t have a contact phone number, but you can write to them if you don’t have access to the internet.
Disabled Holiday Information
PO Box 186
Oswestry
SY10 1AF
www.disabledholidayinfo.org.uk

Holidays for All
A group of UK disability organisations offering leisure activities and accommodation throughout the UK and abroad, for people with disabilities, their friends and families.
0845 124 9973
www.holidaysforall.org
MS Society branches
Some MS Society branches own self-catering holiday homes that are set up and equipped for people with MS. Get in touch with your local branch for more information. Find your local branch on our website at www.mssociety.org.uk/nearme or call the Information Team on 020 8438 0799 (0131 335 4050 in Scotland).

MS Society Northern Ireland offers holidays at SHARE Holiday Village and can advise on accessible holiday schemes. Give them a call to find out more on 028 9080 2802.

OpenBritain
Provides quality accessibility information about accommodation, attractions, destinations and where to eat, drink and shop in Britain. You can select your specific accessibility needs when searching, and see ratings and reviews from other visitors. Managed by the charity Tourism for All UK, Open Britain also has useful information about other aspects of planning a trip. 0845 124 9971 www.openbritain.net

The Rough Guide to Accessible Britain
Filled with inspiring days out, all reviewed by an enthusiastic and dedicated team of disabled visitors, the ‘Rough Guide to Accessible Britain’ book is an invaluable travel guide for anyone with accessibility needs. You can buy it in any good bookshop or ask in your local library. The MS Society also has a copy you can borrow. Call the librarian on 020 8438 0900 to arrange it. www.accessibleguide.co.uk
**Shared Care Scotland**
A unique Scotland-wide online database and a telephone enquiry service to put carers and service users in touch with all forms of short break and respite services that best match their needs. This includes home-based and residential-based respite, family placements, holiday breaks and accessible guest houses and hotels. The website has a wealth of information about all aspects of short breaks.
01383 622 462
www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk

**Tourism for All UK**
National charity dedicated to making tourism welcoming to all by providing information on accessible accommodation and other tourism services to help find short breaks, holidays or just simple day trips. Special offers and discounts are available to members of Tourism for All.
0845 124 9971
www.tourismforall.org.uk

**National tourist boards**
The national tourist boards for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland provide a wealth of information about where to go and where to stay in the UK, including details of accessible accommodation and attractions, and useful resources to help with planning a short break.

**Visit England**
www.visitengland.com

**Discover Northern Ireland**
www.discovernorthernireland.com

**Visit Scotland**
www.visitscotland.com

**Visit Wales**
www.visitwales.co.uk
What standards should I expect?

The access standards that people with MS tell us they need overlap with the standards of the National Accessible Scheme (NAS). This scheme identifies how accessible accommodation is to people who may have difficulty walking, use a wheelchair, or have a sensory impairment.

The NAS can offer you peace of mind when booking a short break. Where you see the NAS logos, you can be sure that the accommodation and core facilities have been assessed against demanding criteria.

How does the National Accessible Scheme work?

Accommodation in the UK is extremely diverse – from remote cottages in the countryside through to modern city centre hotels. Under equality legislation, property owners are required to make reasonable adjustments to improve access, but there is still huge variation in the accessibility of services across the UK.

The NAS recognises that it may not be possible for a property to be completely wheelchair accessible. However, it takes into account that where, for example, some properties do not have ground floor bedrooms or space for a lift, they may have made sufficient changes for someone who uses a walking stick or has a sensory impairment.

Accommodation providers are reassessed for their access and facilities at least every three years, or more often if they upgrade their facilities or if there is a change of ownership. Ask providers if they participate in the NAS when you make a booking.
Symbols used by the National Accessible Scheme

Typically suitable for a person with sufficient mobility to climb a flight of steps but would benefit from fixtures and fittings to aid balance.

Typically suitable for a person with restricted walking ability and for those that may need to use a wheelchair some of the time and can negotiate a maximum of three steps.

Typically suitable for a person who depends on the use of a wheelchair and transfers unaided to and from the wheelchair in a seated position. This person may be an independent traveller.

Typically suitable for a person who depends on the use of a wheelchair in a seated position. This person also requires personal or mechanical assistance (eg carer, hoist).
Access Exceptional: provides for all levels of mobility impairment listed above with reference to the British Standard BS 8300:2001. Achieves the standards above for either independent wheelchair users or assisted wheelchair users and fulfils additional, more demanding requirements.

Typically provides key additional services and facilities to meet the needs of visually impaired guests.

Typically provides key additional services and facilities to meet the needs of guests with hearing impairment.

Typically provides a higher level of additional services and facilities to meet the needs of guests with visual impairment.

Typically provides a higher level of additional services and facilities to meet the needs of guests with hearing impairment.
What can I do on a short break?

Taking a short break doesn’t have to mean going on holiday or staying in a respite care centre. There are many different ways to get the break you need. It could be daily, weekly, or just occasionally. It could be separately or together, or with a professional carer taking over the caring.

The MS Society’s Short Breaks and Activities (SBA) fund can consider grants for people with MS or their carers for a variety of breaks – long and short (see page 24 for details).

There’s a world of possibilities out there. Here are just a few ideas to get you thinking.
Learn something new

Learning can be a great way to relax and socialise. It doesn’t have to be formal, or involve studying for a qualification. It doesn’t even have to take place in a classroom.

You can find all sorts of courses taking place at colleges, libraries, community centres and outdoor locations, during the day or evening, long-term, short-term, or for one day only. From Indian head massage to learning Greek, there’s a huge range of courses running, whether you’re developing an existing interest or skill, or trying out something new.

Contact local adult education providers to find out what’s available near you.

You might be eligible for grants and bursaries to help pay for courses and training – visit the Education and Learning section at www.gov.uk
Sport and leisure
Leisure centres are a good choice for taking time out. From swimming to the gym, Jacuzzi to yoga, your local leisure centre can be buzzing with activity, or a calming retreat. Most leisure centres have accessible facilities such as hoists, lifts and disabled changing rooms. Contact your local authority for details and to find out what’s on.

For some serious pampering, spa breaks are an excellent chance to spend quality time with family and friends, or get away from it all. The quality and accessibility of spas can differ, so it’s wise to research the spa’s facilities thoroughly before booking.

If you’re a sports fan, going along to support your team, or seeing another live sporting event, might be a great way to take a break.

Days out
The UK is brimming with great choices for a whole range of exciting days out, whether you’re interested in history, arts and culture, thrill-seeking, shopping or exploring the great outdoors.

A good starting point to get inspiration is to check out the tourist board for the country or region you want to visit. These sites are filled with information about transport, accommodation, things to do and where to go, and provide lots of practical advice and information on accessibility. (See page 6 for details of national tourist boards.)

More useful organisations and resources
Changing Places
Campaigns for bigger, fully accessible toilets with hoisting equipment and height-adjustable changing beds, that can make a day out more enjoyable. Find a map of all Changing Places toilets in the UK on their website or call 020 7696 6019 (01382 385 154 in Scotland).
www.changing-places.org
Good Access Guide
Online guide to accessible leisure time and tourism.
www.goodaccessguide.co.uk

English Heritage
Plenty of ideas for days out and featured events. The website is searchable by region, county or town and has detailed access information for most sites. You can also download the ‘English Heritage Access Guide’ for free from the website, or call 0870 333 1181 to order the document in a different format.
www.english-heritage.org.uk

National Trust
The National Trust protects and opens to the public over 350 historical houses, gardens and ancient monuments. The Trust’s admission policy admits the companion or carer of a disabled visitor free of charge on request, while the normal membership, or admission fee, applies to the disabled visitor.
0844 800 1895
www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Woodland Trust
Encourages people of all ages and abilities to visit woods. They have mapped almost all the woods you can visit, all over the UK. You can search by area, and narrow down your search to find woods with disabled access. Access guides are also available. Contact them via their website or call the national switchboard on 01476 581 111.
www.woodlandtrust.org.uk
Ideas and inspiration – short breaks examples

Whether you are looking for a holiday, a day trip, or just an afternoon’s activity, here are some ideas to get you thinking…

Gary wanted a complete break away from home. He chose a week away in a supported environment that had activities and evening entertainment. He was even able to participate in the fishing activity and caught one ‘this big’! Gary’s wife drove him to the centre, giving her the chance to see where her husband was spending his week.

Asmer decided she wanted to visit her mother in Antigua with her daughter. She booked her flight through her local travel shop where special assistance was arranged. They were greeted at the check-in desk and called to the boarding gate first. Asmer was taken aboard by wheelchair and they were both in their seats before the other passengers boarded.
Shirley went with her family for a two week break at a holiday park in an accessible chalet with wet room. As Shirley uses a ceiling track hoist at home they arranged for a portable hoist to be delivered by a local organisation for the duration of the holiday. Transport was arranged through her local community transport organisation.

Lindy decided to take a weekend break. She arranged to meet up with friends in a hotel by the sea. She stayed in a hotel with all amenities on ground level, which included a large accessible bedroom. She arranged special assistance through the train company when booking her ticket. They assisted her to board the train and stow her case and manual wheelchair, which was repeated on arrival at her destination. She had also arranged transport in advance through a local minicab’s offices to take her to and from the hotel.

Chris loves his dog, loves to paint and loves the sea. He needed a companion to assist him with getting up, going to bed and personal care. He received a grant through the Short Breaks and Activities fund to pay for a professional carer to go with him. He had a relaxing break in a small cottage in Dorset where he was able to paint and take his dog for long walks along the wheelchair-friendly seafront. He arranged his transport through his local MS Society branch.

Paul is a full-time carer to his wife Sue. Paul wanted to visit a London museum. Through a local care agency, he arranged additional support for Sue. Paul returned home refreshed, and Sue had also had a great day, visiting local shops, lunching out and having her nails painted! Paul and Sue both think this is something they’d like to do again.
Caring for someone close to you who has MS can mean that you have little time to yourself to relax and take a break. Having a break is vital to your own health, well-being and quality of life, as well as for the person who you care for.

Taking a break will mean different things to different people. Carers tell us that having a range of opportunities to take a break also enables the person they are caring for to be able to enjoy new experiences, mix with others and have a change of scene and routine.

You may need an hour each week, a day here and there, a week or two away for a holiday, or a combination of all of these.

“I would like the three of us to take a holiday together and have a carer be there for the morning so I didn’t have to do the caring. The rest of the day would be our own.”

– MS Society focus group
Some carers may choose to go on holiday with the person they care for or to go away alone. Only you will know what will work best for you.

Your local authority has a responsibility to family carers and you have the right to an assessment of your own needs. This is called a Carer’s Assessment. To find out more about how to request an assessment, how to prepare for it and what the outcome could be, visit the Carers UK website (see page 18).

**National carers’ organisations**

**Carers Direct**
An information service for carers from the NHS. Contains comprehensive information about carers’ rights, where to get help and support, social care funding and looking after yourself. The website is open to all, but the telephone helpline is only available for people living in, or caring for someone in, England.
0808 802 0202
www.nhs.uk/carersdirect

**Care Information Scotland**
A website and helpline with information about care services. Though the service is aimed at people over 65, a great deal of the web information is relevant to adults with a disability and their carers generally.
Helpline 08456 001 001
www.careinfoscotland.co.uk
**Carers UK**
A national charity set up to help people who care for family or friends. For advice and information on getting a break, call the Advice Line on 0808 808 7777. They also have a directory of travel agents and charities that can help you arrange a suitable holiday. Some agencies specialise in ensuring your holiday is fully accessible.

**England**
020 7378 4999
www.carersuk.org

**Northern Ireland**
02890 439 843
www.carersuk.org/northern-ireland

**Scotland**
0141 445 3070
www.carersuk.org/scotland

**Wales**
02920 811 370
www.carersuk.org/wales

**Carers Trust**
Umbrella organisation for independent charities including Crossroads Care schemes, which provide flexible breaks for carers, and carers’ centres, which provide local information and support services. Find your local services on their website.

Carers Trust was formed in 2012 from the merger of Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Crossroads Care. In Scotland, carers’ centres continue to use the name Princess Royal Trust for Carers.

0844 800 4361 (head office)
www.carers.org

**Crossroads Caring Scotland**
Trained carer support workers provide flexible breaks for carers at home in Scotland.

0141 226 3793
www.crossroads-scotland.co.uk

**Crossroads Caring for Carers Northern Ireland**
Trained carer support workers provide flexible breaks for carers at home in Northern Ireland.

028 9181 4455
www.crossroadscare.co.uk
How can I find respite care?

Respite care offers a chance for carers to take a complete break from their caring responsibilities. During the break, care is provided instead by a professional carer or care support worker. The break could take place at home, or during a holiday, for example with care provided by a support worker at your destination. Or it could take place in a residential care home, nursing home, or specialised respite care centre.

Bear in mind that some homes and centres allow partners and carers to stay in the accommodation with the person being cared for, but others do not. Some will also offer more opportunities for socialising and getting out and about than others. Think about what you want from your break when planning, and try to visit if you can. It’s always a good idea to contact the home or centre to request brochures and discuss your own personal needs before making a booking.

The MS Society Information Team can help you find out about respite care services in your area. Call them on 020 8438 0799, or contact your local authority for information about respite care services near you.
Regulatory bodies
All residential care and nursing homes in the UK have to register with the health and social care regulator that covers their nation. On their websites you can access inspection reports that show whether a care or nursing home is meeting national standards. Regulatory bodies can’t recommend one service over another, or organise care and support on your behalf, but provide information to help you make your own choice.

England: Care Quality Commission (CQC)
03000 616 161
www.cqc.org.uk

Northern Ireland: Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)
0289 051 7500
www.rqia.org.uk

Scotland: Care Inspectorate
0845 600 9527
www.scswis.com

Wales: Care and Social Services Inspectorate (CSSIW)
0300 062 8800
www.cssiw.org.uk

Directories
Carehome.co.uk
This website has an online directory of care homes and other residential care services in the UK. You can search by location, type of service and care specialism, and read recommendations from people who have used the service. www.carehome.co.uk

Find Me Good Care
Information about care and support services in England, provided by the Social Care Institute for Excellence. There is lots of advice and guidance on planning, changing and paying for care in the Good Care Planner. www.findmegoodcare.co.uk

Homecare.co.uk
Sister site to carehome.co.uk, this website has an online directory of home care and nursing agencies in the UK. You can search by location and read recommendations from people who have used the service. www.homecare.co.uk
Who can help me pay for my break?

Financial help towards the cost of activities and short breaks is available from a variety of sources.

**Local authority statutory funding**
Your local authority may be able to provide funding for, or contribute towards the costs of, short breaks and respite care. They may work with voluntary organisations or charities and involve specialist short break providers to offer you a break. There are a variety of funding options they can offer – from vouchers to personal budgets. Contact your local authority to see whether you qualify for help with funding.

**Respite vouchers**
You may be able to receive vouchers from your local council for short breaks. (Vouchers are not available in Scotland but you may still be able to access funding for a short break.) These vouchers can be redeemed with local services when you choose, giving you the freedom to decide where and when to have a break.

For example: Mary looks after her partner (who has MS) 24 hours a day. They are allocated eight hours a week of respite care. Instead of arranging this with Care Watch (a local agency), the local authority gives Mary vouchers for 32 hours a month of care, which she can redeem flexibly with an agency she likes, at whatever time is best for her.

These schemes are not available everywhere, so check with your local authority.
**Personal budgets and direct payments**

Personal budgets are available to people with disabilities and their carers who are eligible to receive publicly-funded social care services. They give much greater choice and control to people over the kind of services they receive, by allocating a budget that you can control yourself. You can then decide how to spend this money to meet your assessed care needs and agreed outcomes, in line with a personalised support plan. Carers can use their personal budget to take a break from caring responsibilities.

Personal budgets may be taken as cash (as a direct payment) or as a service managed on your behalf by the local authority. If you would prefer to arrange and pay for services yourself, then you may wish to get direct payments to pay for your short break or respite care. To see whether you qualify for a personal budget or direct payments, contact your local authority.

If you are a carer and you haven’t had a Carer’s Assessment, ask for one. The Carer’s Assessment will enable you to discuss your own needs and help you plan, and possibly fund, a short break.
To be eligible for direct payments you need to be one of the following:

- disabled and aged over 16
- a carer aged 16 or over, including people with parental responsibility for a disabled child
- an older person

The MS Society booklet *Getting the best from social care services* has information on assessments. The process varies across the UK and there are separate booklets for Scotland and Wales. Call the Information Team on 020 8438 0799 (0131 335 4050 in Scotland) to get a copy. For information relating to Northern Ireland, call the national office on 028 9080 2802.

**Are direct payments the same across the UK?**

No. Although direct payments are available everywhere, the way councils manage them differs across the UK, depending on whether you are in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales. Check with your local authority, or Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland, for details.
The MS Society Short Breaks & Activities fund

The MS Society’s Short Breaks and Activities (SBA) fund provides financial support to people affected by MS. The fund can consider grants for people with MS and their carers to help them access a broad range of short breaks and activities.

What can SBA grants be used for?

- A short break or holiday, an experience, an activity or a series of activities for someone with MS or their carer.
- Salary costs for a paid carer needed to help someone with MS, or their carer, have a break either in their home or elsewhere.
- Travel, accommodation and disability equipment hire costs linked to having a break.
- Some complementary or alternative therapies.

How do I get an SBA grant?

All applications need to be accompanied by a letter of support from a health or social care professional or carer’s support worker. If you have any questions (or would like to request an application form) and you live in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, please contact the Grants Team at the MS National Centre in London on 020 8438 0700 (email grants@mssociety.org.uk). If you live in Scotland please call 0131 335 4050.

The Grants Team can also give information about alternative sources of funding if you aren’t eligible for statutory funding or MS Society grants.

Local MS Society branches can sometimes help with funding if there is a shortfall. To find your local branch go to www.mssociety.org.uk or call the Information Team on 020 8438 0799.

Other charitable funding sources

3H Fund

Grants given for accommodation costs as part of a holiday, which must be taken in the UK. Funding is available for disabled people, their families and carers who are on a low income.

01892 860 219
www.3hfund.org.uk
Blitz Holiday Funding
Supported by The Bond Holiday Group for subsidised short breaks at their accessible hotels in the Blackpool area.
01253 341 218
www.bondhotel.co.uk

Disability Aid Trust
Gives grants towards the cost of helpers to assist people with disabilities on holiday, to give carers a break. Applications must be supported by an organisation, or health or social work professional.
0800 028 0647
www.disabilityaidtrust.org.uk

The Family Holiday Association
Helps to provide breaks away from home for economically and socially deprived children and their families. Typically, the families are affected by severe financial hardship and with extra difficulties such as long-term or terminal illness.
020 3117 0650
www.fhaonline.org.uk

Margaret Champney Rest and Holiday Fund
Provides small grants to carers to enable them to have a complete break from their caring role while the person they care for is receiving respite care. Applications for grants should be made by professionals such as a social worker or community nurse on the carer’s behalf. Contact The Ogilvie Trust, which administers the grants, for more information.
01394 388 746
www.theogilvietrust.org.uk

Turn2us
A web-based service which helps people access the money available to them – from welfare benefits to grants and other support. Search their database of grant-giving charities to check if you are eligible for financial support or services. They can also do a benefits check for you.
0808 802 2000
www.turn2us.org.uk

Victoria Convalescent Trust
Awards grants for convalescence and respite care for people who cannot be helped through statutory services. Applications for grants are usually made by a social worker or health care worker, but consideration can be given to requests from other sources.
11 Cavendish Avenue, Woodford Green, Essex IG8 9DA
020 8502 9339
Can I hire equipment?

Whatever sort of break you’re taking, you may need the same equipment you have at home, and maybe even some additional equipment as well. For example, if you use a track hoist at home, you may need to hire a portable hoist for use in a hotel or holiday home if they don’t supply one. You may also need things like wheelchairs or kitchen or bathing equipment.

Depending where you stay, some holiday providers may have the equipment you need already installed or available to hire. If not, they may have information about where you can hire equipment locally during your stay.

The organisations below offer equipment hire on a short-term basis.

**British Red Cross**
Certain local centres hire or lend equipment including wheelchairs, bathing equipment and bath aids. Find your local centre to discuss your requirements.
0844 871 1111
www.redcross.org.uk
The Ceiling Hoist users Club (CHuC)
Promotes the interests of disabled people who need to use hoists, particularly people who need, or prefer, ceiling track hoists (also called tracker and tracking hoists). Their website has a section called ‘I’ve stayed there’ with user reviews of hoists and the accessibility of rooms.
01604 805 839
www.chuc.org.uk

Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)
Holds a comprehensive database of disability equipment and can help you source any equipment for sale or hire.
0300 999 0004
www.dlf.org.uk

Independent Living
Can provide a list of products for hire, and advice on disability equipment and aids. They do not have a phone number, only a website, so contact the MS Society Information Team on 020 8438 0799 if you don’t have access to the internet.
www.independentliving.co.uk

Mobility Equipment Hire Direct
Mobility equipment hire for breaks and holidays in the UK and abroad. Equipment can be delivered direct to the accommodation. Wide range of equipment available including wheelchairs, hoists, scooters, profile beds, standing aids and bathroom equipment.
0800 644 6062
www.mobilityequipmenthiredirect.com

National Mobility Hire
Offers long-term or short-term mobility equipment hire.
0870 094 9808
www.nationalmobilityhire.com

Wheel Freedom Limited
Wheelchair hire, scooter hire, knee trolley hire and bath lift hire across England, Scotland and Wales.
0800 025 8005
www.wheelfreedom.com
How will I get there?

Depending on where you go, and on your mobility needs, your transport might need a little extra planning.

**Buses**

Buses and bus stations are becoming increasingly accessible. Free off-peak travel on buses is available for disabled people across the UK, and in some areas the pass also entitles you to free or discounted travel on other forms of transport. Contact your local council to find out about disabled persons’ bus passes in your area and about local variations and restrictions.

More information is available for:

- **England**
  - www.freebustravel.co.uk
- **Northern Ireland**
  - 0289 066 6630
  - www.translink.co.uk/accessibility
- **Scotland**
  - 0141 272 7100
  - www.transportscotland.gov.uk
- **Wales**
  - 0871 200 2233
  - www.traveline-cymru.info

**Trains**

Each train company has their own arrangements for supporting disabled passengers and transporting mobility equipment. Check individual websites or phone the helpline of the company you’re travelling with for information to help plan your journey.

National Rail has information on the accessibility of stations and getting assistance during a journey, such as help getting on or off a train, or ramps for a wheelchair. Visit the website at www.nationalrail.co.uk or ring the contact centre on 0845 748 4950.

You may be eligible for a Disabled Person’s Railcard, which can save you and a companion a third off most rail fares throughout Great Britain. Call 0845 605 0525 or visit www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk for more information.
Planes
Air travel today is more popular and accessible than ever. Free assistance services for disabled passengers and persons with reduced mobility (PRM) should be available at all European airports if you have a physical or sensory disability. You can get, for example:

- help with registration at check-in
- assistance with moving through the airport, including to toilets if required
- help with getting on and off the plane
- help with stowing and retrieving baggage on the plane

Wherever you’re travelling to, it’s important to let the airline and the airports know exactly what your needs are as early as possible, but at least 48 hours before flying, otherwise you risk not getting the support you need.

Most airlines will carry two items of mobility equipment free of charge. Wheelchairs will have to be checked in, but the airline will provide you with an airport wheelchair in place. You can often keep your own wheelchair until the moment you board the plane. Weight restrictions might apply to your wheelchair. Check individual airline policies for details.

For a comprehensive overview of everything you might need to think about when travelling by air, visit www.flying-with-disability.org.
**Taxis**
Many local minicab and taxi firms now have wheelchair accessible vehicles. When booking, remember to specify whether your wheelchair is manual or powered, as not all vehicles will be able to accommodate electric wheelchairs.

Dial-a-Ride or Taxi Card services may also be available for disabled people in your area – check with your local council for more information.

**Useful travel websites**

**Gov.uk**
UK government website proving practical information on public services, including transport, in a ‘one stop shop’.

For information about using all forms of public transport within the UK, see www.gov.uk/transport-disabled

For information about travelling abroad as a disabled person, see www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-for-disabled-people

**Transport Direct**
Government-funded website providing comprehensive travel information about all forms of transport in England, Scotland and Wales. When using the journey planner, click ‘more options’ to specify your accessibility needs (for example ‘step free’).

www.transport-direct.info

For information about transport in Northern Ireland, visit www.translink.co.uk
Driving Forum of Mobility Centres

Network of 17 independent centres covering the UK, which offer information, advice and assessment to people with disabilities and carers. Provides information on hire companies that offer adapted vehicles for self-drive car hire.

0800 559 3636
www.mobility-centres.org.uk

Wheelchair Travel

Vehicles for hire to both carry, and be driven by, a disabled person. Self-drive rental minibuses or minivans with lifts are also available, as well as cars with hand controls and left-foot accelerator. These services are available to people visiting or living in the UK. They also organise tours of London and other cities for wheelchair users.

01483 233 640
www.wheelchair-travel.co.uk

“Having the freedom to go and use all sorts of facilities in the community. Yes it is about being normal”

– MS Society focus group
What if I want to go abroad?

If you’re travelling abroad, you might want to think about language barriers, how to transport your medication, having vaccinations and whether you’d rather travel independently or go on an organised trip.

The UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office has produced a guide called ‘Disabled Travellers’ which gives lots of information and advice about going abroad and travelling with a disability, as well as a list of useful contacts. Download a copy from www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-travellers or request a printed copy from the MS Society Information Team on 020 8438 0799.

Language

If you happen to need assistance while abroad, language barriers may be a problem. Try to find contact details of English-speaking doctors at your destination, and details of what to do in an emergency.
Travelling with medication
Transporting medication may require similar preparation. Consider carrying evidence, such as a letter from your doctor, to confirm that you need the medication. You will also need the dispensing label on the medication as well. Different drugs have different storage requirements, and remember that some may need to be kept in the fridge. If you’re not sure about how to store a drug, check with the manufacturer or ask your MS nurse. Requirements may vary as products change and develop.

For air travel, the Department for Transport says that syringes are prohibited in hand luggage unless required for medical reasons and that, in general, airport managers and aircraft operators have the discretion to refuse any ‘potential weapon’. Contact both the airport and your individual airline to let them know you will be bringing the medication with you in your hand luggage and ask for any special instructions.

Vaccinations
People are sometimes worried that having vaccinations could have an adverse effect on their MS. If you have any concerns, discuss the options with your doctor or MS nurse. Additionally, some people worry that, if they pick up a bug or infection while on holiday, they could experience a relapse. There is some evidence that an infection can bring on symptoms or make them worse – again this is something to bear in mind when planning your break.

Independent travel or an organised trip?
Independent travel can require more planning than organised trips. However this doesn’t mean it should be avoided! There are simple ways of minimising potential problems, such as carrying a mobile phone, researching your destination, sticking to paths better travelled, or finding less physically demanding ways to travel.

“Since I’ve been diagnosed I have travelled around Asia and South America. Who said I had to let MS rule my life?!”
— MS Society focus group
ABTA
Tour operators that are members of the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) will have booking conditions which meet ABTA’s code of conduct. This code is intended to protect consumers, and ABTA membership is intended as a quality symbol. ABTA can also help if the company you book with runs into financial difficulties. They have a ‘checklist for disabled and less mobile passengers’ which might help you plan your trip – download a copy from their website.
020 3117 0599
www.abta.com

International accessible tour operators and travel agencies
Tourism for All member organisations commit to offering accessible services and facilities in many countries around the world. Find a list of members on the Tourism for All online directory, or contact them for further information.
0845 124 9971
www.tourismforall.org.uk/Travel-agents-and-operators.html

“No bingo, no basket weaving and no tartan rugs!”
– MS Society focus group
Depending on the type of break you choose, you might want to think about insurance. It is best to arrange insurance as soon as you book your holiday. Shop around – you don’t have to buy from travel agents and tour operators. Wherever you buy your policy, you will need to check the level of cover.

Although insurance companies are not allowed to discriminate on the grounds of disability, you’ll usually find a clause stating that any existing health conditions will not be covered.

Your insurer will be able to confirm whether your medical conditions can be covered. Any adjustments may be free of charge or an additional premium may be required.

Remember that, if you don’t disclose any pre-existing medical conditions, it is unlikely that your insurance will pay for medical treatment or travel for medical reasons. Not disclosing a pre-existing condition might invalidate your whole policy.

The MS Society booklet Insurance and MS has much more information. Call the Information Team on 020 8438 0799 to get a copy.

A free leaflet ‘Travel insurance: what you need to know’, is available from the Association of British Insurers. 020 7600 3333 www.abi.org.uk
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Disclaimer: We have made every effort to ensure that the information in this publication is correct. We do not accept liability for any errors or omissions. The law and government regulations may change. Be sure to seek local advice from the sources listed. Suggestions for improvement in future editions are welcomed. Please send them to infoteam@mssociety.org.uk

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This information will be reviewed within three years of publication.
Multiple sclerosis (MS) is the most common disabling neurological disorder affecting young adults and we estimate that around 100,000 people in the UK have MS. MS is the result of damage to myelin – the protective sheath surrounding nerve fibres of the central nervous system. This damage interferes with messages between the brain and other parts of the body.

For some people, MS is characterised by periods of relapse and remission while, for others, it has a progressive pattern. For everyone, it makes life unpredictable.

The MS Society is the UK’s largest charity dedicated to supporting everyone whose life is touched by MS. We provide a freephone MS Helpline, grants for home adaptations, respite care and mobility aids, education and training, support for specialist MS nurses and a wide range of information.

Local branches cater for people of all ages and interests and are run by people with direct experience of MS. The MS Society is the largest funder of MS research projects in the UK. Membership is open to people with MS, their families, carers, friends and supporters.

You can help the work of the MS Society by:
- becoming a member
- making a donation
- offering your time as a volunteer

Disclaimer: Please note this short breaks booklet has been compiled from various sources. It is not a comprehensive list and the agencies or accommodation listed have not been inspected by the MS Society. Inclusion in this leaflet does not imply recommendation by the MS Society.

It is strongly suggested that you or your carer contact the relevant agencies or accommodation concerned to ascertain the exact facilities available as no one knows better what you need than yourself!
MS Society
MS National Centre
372 Edgware Road
London NW2 6ND
020 8438 0700

MS Society Scotland
Ratho Park
88 Glasgow Road
Ratho Station
Newbridge EH28 8PP
0131 335 4050

MS Society Cymru
Cwrt y Deml/Temple Court
Heol y Gadeirlan/Cathedral Road
Caerdydd/Cardiff CF11 9HA
029 2078 6676

MS Society Northern Ireland
The Resource Centre
34 Annadale Avenue
Belfast BT7 3JJ
028 9080 2802

www.mssociety.org.uk
Helpline 0808 800 8000

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