

MS

Multiple Sclerosis Society

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

Short breaks



Short breaks

Contents

Introduction	1
Short breaks and respite: a definition	2
Who can help me find a short break?	3
What standards should I expect?	7
What kinds of things are short breaks?	10
Ideas and inspiration – short breaks examples	14
What about families and carers?	16
How can I find residential 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

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 daytrip 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.

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/branches 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. You can arrange for these to be

sent to you by calling the 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 p.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

DirectEnquires

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 if you don't have access to the internet. The Secretary
Disabled Holiday Information,
PO Box 186,
Oswestry,
Shropshire
SY10 1AF
www.disabledholidayinfo.org.uk

Discover Northern Ireland

For tips and advice on holiday travel in Northern Ireland.
www.discovernorthernireland.com

Enjoy England

For tips and advice on holiday travel in England.
www.enjoyengland.com/access

Holidays for All

A directory containing 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



and can advise on accessible holiday schemes.

Give them a call to find out more on 028 9080 2802.

OpenBritain

A wide range of services and facilities aimed to provide as much reliable accessibility information as possible, with particular emphasis on UK tourism and holidays. OpenBritain has backing from organisations including the AA, National Trust and English Heritage. OpenBritain is available as an online database, or you can order a copy from their online shop phone RADAR on 0207 250 3222. www.openbritain.net

MS Society branches

Some MS Society branches own self catering holiday homes that are set up and equipped to cater for people with MS. Get in touch with your local branch for more information. To find your local branch you can look on our website or call the information team on 020 8438 0799.

MS Society Scotland own self catering chalets, call the Scottish team on 0131 335 4050 to find out about them.

MS Society Northern Ireland offer Holidays at SHARE Holiday Village

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 0208 438 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 including, for example: 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 622462
www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk

Tourism for All UK

National charity for accessible tourism. They are 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.

0845 124 9971

www.tourismforall.org.uk

Visit Scotland

For tips and advice on holiday travel in Scotland.

www.visitscotland.org

Visit Wales

www.visitwales.co.uk

For tips and advice on holiday travel in Wales.

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 extra 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 kinds of things are short breaks?

Taking a short break doesn't have to mean going on holiday or a staying in a respite care centre. There are many ways to get the break you need daily, weekly or occasionally, whether you want to take the break 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 p.23 for details).

There's a world of possibilities out there, here are just a few ideas to get you thinking.





"Something that would be lovely is a day where you go and get pampered. That's what I would like, something like a spa break."

– MS Society focus group



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.

To find out what's available near you, you can go on the Next Step website www.nextstep.direct.gov.uk and search by course and location, or contact your local adult education provider for a prospectus.

You can also visit the Adult Learning pages on www.direct.gov.uk to find out about choosing where to learn, training and learning for work, and financial help available.



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 when.

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 p.4-5 for details of national guides.)

More useful organisations and resources

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 and access guides available. Contact them via their website (below) or ask the MS Society Information Team for support.

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk



Ideas and inspiration – short breaks examples

Whether you are looking for a holiday, a daytrip, 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 aware of Asmer's needs. Asmer and her daughter were called to the boarding gate, first and were transferred to the onboard wheelchair and taken to their seats before the other passengers here boarded.



Shirley went with her family for a 2 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 and including 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 local minicab's offices to take her to and from at each end.

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 MS Society's SBA 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 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!

What about families and carers?

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 of an assessment of your own needs. This is called a Carers 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. Contact details below.

National carers organisations

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 the estimated 6 million people who care for family or friends. For advice and information on getting a break, you can call the Carers UK 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 Direct

Gives free and confidential information and advice to carers via their helpline and their website.

0808 802 0202 – lines are open 8am to 9pm Monday to Friday, 11am to 4pm at weekends.

Calls are free from UK landlines and mobiles or you can request a free call back.

www.nhs.uk/carersdirect

Crossroads Care

Provides short-term respite care in your own home enabling a carer to have a break from their caring responsibilities. A trained carer support worker comes into the home to take over the caring responsibilities.

England and Wales

0845 450 0350

www.crossroads.org.uk

Northern Ireland

028 9181 4455

www.crossroadscare.co.uk

Scotland

0141 226 3793

www.crossroads-scotland.co.uk

Princess Royal Trust for Carers

Information, advice, discussion and support for carers. The Trust has a unique network of Carer's Centres, young carer services and an interactive website which deliver round the clock support. The website has useful information for carers on taking and booking a holiday or days out together.

0844 800 4361

0141 221 5066 (Scotland office)

www.carers.org



How can I find residential respite care?

The MS Society keeps a list of residential care homes separated out into area, types of services available, and fees. Call the Information Team on 020 8438 0799 to ask for one or to talk to us. For information on Scottish residential care homes call 0131 335 4050.

The organisations listed below also have details of how to find respite and residential care.

Care and Social Services Inspectorate (CSSIW)

Operating in Wales, providing a similar service to the CQC.
01443 848 450
www.cssiw.org.uk

Care Quality Commission (CQC)

The independent regulator of health and social care in England. It provides a database of residential, respite, nursing homes,

and care agencies in local areas. Some agencies listed on the Care Quality Commission database also provide home carers. You can search by area for local services. As a regulatory body, the Commission can't recommend one establishment or agency over



another. And it can't organise the supply of care or respite. It can, however, give you information such as inspection choice.

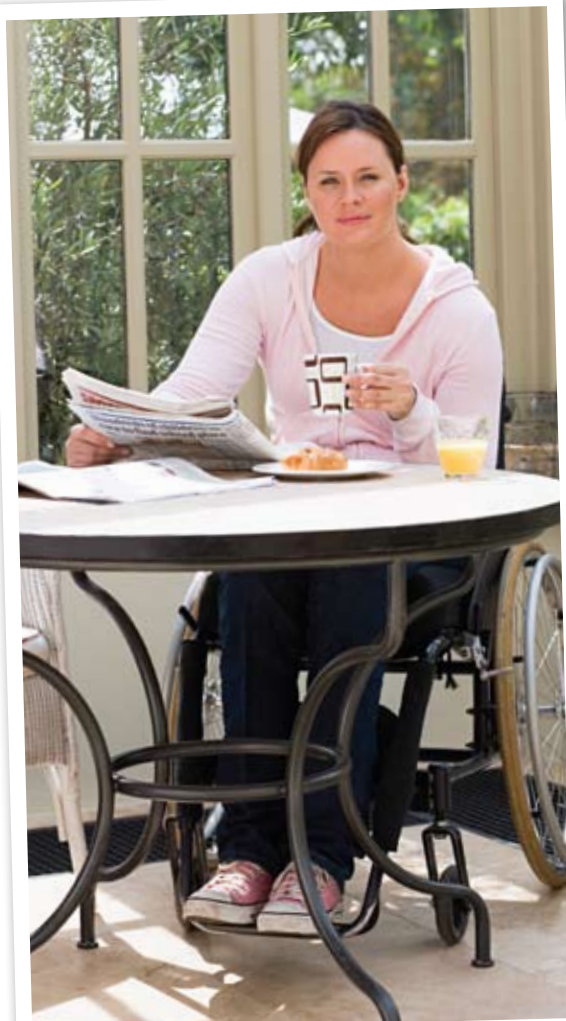
CQC National Correspondence
PO Box 1258
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE99 5AU
03000 616161
www.cqc.org.uk

Local Social Services Department

Your local Social Services department will have listings of residential and respite care homes within your area. You can go to www.direct.gov.uk or www.nidirect.gov.uk in Northern Ireland, and search for "care homes" or "temporary stays in a care home" for more information. You can also call your local authority direct, or Health and Social Care Trust if you live in Northern Ireland.

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)

Operating in Northern Ireland, providing a similar service to the CQC (see above).
028 9051 7500
www.rqia.org.uk



Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland

Operating in Scotland, providing a similar service to the CQC.
0845 600 9527
www.scswis.com

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-term 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 social services department.


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 and ask them to carry out an assessment of need. If you are a carer and you haven't had a Carers Assessment, ask for one at your local social services department.





**"If I had five days
away from the
kitchen I would be
a happy man"**

– MS Society focus group

The Carers 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 either:

- ▲ 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 services* has information on assessments. The process varies across the UK and there are separate publications in Scotland and Wales. Call 020 8438 0799 in England or the national offices for Scotland and Wales to get a copy. Contact details for national offices are on the back page.

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 social services department, 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. If you live in Scotland please call 0131 335 4050.

The MS Society grants team can also offer advice on searching for alternative 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 0700.

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 in Blackpool and St Anne's.

01253 341 218

www.bondhotel.co.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

The Handicapped Aid Trust (HAT)

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.

01253 796 441

www.handicappedaidtrust.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 who administer the grants for more information.

01394 388 746

www.theogilvietrust.org.uk

Turn2us

A charitable service which helps people access the money available to them – from welfare benefits, to grants and other support. They can 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. Alternatively you can do both of these yourself online.

0808 802 2000 (Mon-Fri 8am-8pm)

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

Tel: 020 8502 9339

Can I hire equipment?

Whatever sort of break you're taking, you'll likely 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 ie wheelchairs, bathing equipment and bath aids.

Find your local centre to discuss your requirements.

0844 871 11 11

www.redcross.org.uk



The Ceiling Hoist users Club (CHuC)

Promotes the interests of those 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 a map of accommodation around the UK. Users write reviews of the accessibility of rooms and use of hoists. You can write to them at: CHuC

7 The Scarplands

Duston

Northampton

NN5 6EY

www.chuc.org.uk

Direct Mobility

Specialises in mobility aids and disability equipment.

0800 092 9322

or 020 8370 7888

www.directmobility.co.uk

Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)

Holds a comprehensive database of disability equipment and can help you source any equipment for sale or hire.

0845 130 9177

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.

www.independentliving.co.uk

National Mobility Hire

Offers long 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 are becoming increasingly accessible and local councils offer free off-peak travel on buses to disabled people living in their area. Call your local bus company to find out if you are eligible.

You can also visit:

England

www.freebustravel.co.uk

Northern Ireland

www.translink.co.uk

Scotland

www.transportscotland.gov.uk

Wales

www.traveline-cymru.info

Go to www.nationalrail.co.uk and search for 'passenger services.'

You may also be eligible for a Disabled Persons Railcard. Find out by calling 0845 605 0525 or visiting www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk

Train companies have different policies about carrying mobility scooters on trains. Generally, trains can accommodate most standard sized wheelchairs. Call ahead to check the accessibility of the stations and trains you want to use, and to make the arrangements for assistance where necessary.

Trains

Each train company has a website and helpline so that you can get information from them directly. National Rail has information on getting assistance when planning a journey, such as help getting on or off a train, or ramps for a wheelchair.

Planes

Air travel today is more popular and accessible than ever. 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 know exactly what your needs are

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 firms now have wheelchair accessible vehicles, check locally for more information.

Useful travel websites

Direct Gov

Government website providing information and practical advice on public services in a 'one stop shop'. There is plenty of information on things to consider when planning your break, including travel and transport. Also contains links to other useful travel organisations, websites and contacts.

England and Wales

www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/TravelHolidaysAndBreaks

Northern Ireland

www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/people-with-disabilities/travel-holidays-and-breaks.htm



Door to Door

A transport and travel information website for people with disabilities and reduced mobility. They have information that may be useful to you in planning a journey. The website also includes direct links to other organisations travel websites. www.dptac.independent.gov.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

The Forum of Mobility Centres

Information on hire companies who can provide adapted vehicles for self drive car hire.

0800 559 3636

www.mobility-centres.org.uk





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.

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 what you should do in an emergency. The Department of Health, in partnership with British

Red Cross, produce a multi-lingual phrasebook covering common medical questions in a variety of languages. Go to www.dh.gov.uk and search for "Emergency Multilingual phrasebook" to download a copy or call the MS Society Information Team on 020 8438 0799 to be sent one.

**“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

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, please discuss the options with your doctor or MS specialist 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.



**"No bingo, no
basket weaving and
no tartan rugs!"**

– MS Society focus group

ABTA

Tour operators that are members of ABTA (Association of British Travel Agents) 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.

0901 201 5050

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 TFA online directory, or contact Tourism for All for further information.

0845 124 9971 or

44 1539 814 683 from overseas

www.tourismforall.org.uk/Travel-agents-and-operators.html



What about insurance?

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, internet providers have competitive prices. 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 any existing health conditions will not be covered.

However, if you do declare your medical conditions, your insurer will be able to confirm whether or not it 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 publication *Insurance and MS* has much more information. Call the information team on 020 8438 0799 to get a copy.

A free leaflet about holiday insurance 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 two years of publication.



Multiple Sclerosis Society

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 also funds around 80 vital 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!



Multiple Sclerosis Society

**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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