



OPEN

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

Meeting date: Thursday 4 June, 10.30am
Held by videoconference

Present

Nick Winser	Chair of the Board of Trustees
Sarah Schol	Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees
Stuart Secker	Treasurer
Jason Atkinson	Trustee
Susan Crane	Trustee
Christine Gibbons	Trustee
Ruth Hasnip	Trustee
Marion King	Trustee
Emily Reves	Trustee
Anne Shinkwin	Trustee
Ceri Smith	Trustee
Polly Williams	Trustee
Catherine Doran	Chair of the Northern Ireland Council
Kathryn Foot	Chair of the Cymru Council
Mary Douglas	Chair of the Scotland Council

Attending

Nick Moberly	Chief Executive
Vicky Annis	Executive Director of Corporate Services
Susan Kohlhaas	Executive Director of Research & External Affairs
Ed Holloway	Executive Director of Digital & Services
Emma Whitcombe	Executive Director of Engagement & Income Generation
Morna Simpkins	Director of Scotland
Penny Coombes	Head of Governance
Mital Patel	Head of Strategy & Impact
Robin Hurd	Head of Finance
Tom Shelston	Strategic Marketing Consultant
Danielle Walker	Governance Manager (minutes)

Apologies

Rufus Olins	Trustee
Jackie Mumby	Chair of the England Council

1 COVID-19 and impact on long-term planning

- 1.1 Nick Moberly (Chief Executive) introduced the Quarter 1 Progress and Performance Report and invited questions from the Board. The report included an executive summary of our performance in quarter 1, a summary of progress against the 2020 business plan, the quarter 1 management accounts, and the summary Risk Register.

- 1.2 Nick Moberly then delivered a presentation on our organisational strategy, the opportunities we have focused on in 2020, and the potential longer-term implications of COVID-19 on our future plans. He advised the Board that COVID-19 has had an impact on our agenda, but that we have broadly stuck to our plans as the crisis had sharpened and accelerated trends already identified during the development of our new strategy. The Board agreed that our strategic direction remained valid, but that certain areas needed to be accelerated and learning drawn from the current situation. We need to move faster to respond to the differing needs of people within the MS community. We need to accelerate our willingness to use digital channels, while recognising that offline support is still important. We need to learn from the engagement opportunities afforded by the pandemic, and we need to collaborate with MS charities and other neurological organisations.
- 1.3 The Board then received a presentation from members of the Executive Group on our expected financial position over the next three years, what would need to be done differently to manage financially, and how we would continue to deliver impact for people affected by MS while making necessary savings. Some changes to improve efficiencies had already been planned under the Project Orange programme of work, however, like many other charities, the coronavirus crisis has had a huge impact financially, with an expected loss of £10m (30%) of our income this year and £5m (15%) in 2021.
- 1.4 The Executive Group detailed a number of proposed changes that were intended to address the financial challenge, summarised below:
- Supporting Volunteers - a new, UK-wide Community Networks Team, a smaller more strategic Volunteering Team and a Nation-specific community development function.
 - Individual support grants - pausing our national grants programme for at least two to three years and focusing on supporting groups to award grants.
 - Strengthening our national services - bringing together a range of roles from across the organisation into our UK Services Team.
 - Northern Ireland High Dependency Day Care - closure of our Day Care Service in Belfast.
 - Research and influencing - a new Stakeholder Engagement Team responsible for professional engagement. Investing in local campaigning and innovative ways to improve care services.
 - Research grant oversight - reducing research grants and management team, and changing leadership structures.
 - Fundraising in the community - a national team to support product development, mass participation events and consistent supporter experiences. Fewer fundraisers focused on high value supporters and pursuing new opportunities.
- 1.5 The Board acknowledged that difficult decisions were necessary in the current climate to enable the charity to weather the difficulties caused by the pandemic and ensure its long-term sustainability. The implications of the proposals for the MS community and for the organisation were considered in detail. The Board agreed that, while regrettable, the proposals were a necessary response to the crisis and the areas for change identified should be progressed by the Executive Group.

2 New engagement offer update

- 2.1 Emma Whitcombe (Executive Director of Engagement and Income Generation) provided an update on progress that was being made with the development of a new

engagement offer and the proposed changes to legal membership.

- 2.2 The Board was provided with an overview of the vision for the new engagement offer, and the progress to date with development of the new online elements. The proposals for engaging with existing members and others, and the routes they would have access to the planned new model were discussed, and the timeline through to the AGM in December and planned transition period were considered.
- 2.3 The Board also discussed the importance of continuing to support existing members who prefer to engage with us offline and ensuring the new engagement offer felt like a coherent, joined-up offer, however an individual chose to connect with us.

3 Services and Support Impact Report

- 3.1 Ed Holloway (Executive Director of Digital and Services) provided an overview of the Services and Support Impact Report and highlighted the increased reach of services, and increased understanding of the reach and impact that had been achieved.
- 3.2 The Board welcomed the report and noted the impressive levels of impact and delivery of services being achieved for the MS community.

4 Committee Updates

- 4.1 Stuart Secker (Treasurer, Chair of the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee) gave an overview of the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee meeting on 6 May 2020, and advised the Board that they had considered the financial implications and risks of COVID-19, and scrutinised the Annual Report and Accounts ahead of them being submitted to the Board for approval.
- 4.2 Christine Gibbons (Trustee, Chair of the Governance Committee) gave an overview of the Governance Committee meeting on 20 May 2020 (and by extension, of the April meetings of the National Councils).
- 4.3 The Board approved the Governance Comms and Engagement Plan, which the Committee had commented on. The Board also approved the postponement of the AGM to Saturday 5 December and noted that Trustee recruitment timings would be adjusted to fit the new AGM schedule. The Board agreed that Council elections should be postponed this year and approved the change to the Rules and Standard Operating Procedures that would allow current Council Members to have their terms extended by a year if required.
- 4.4 Jason Atkinson (Trustee, Chair of the People Committee) gave an overview of the People Committee meeting on 7 May 2020 and the Board noted that it had been dominated by COVID-19 and the impact on staff. The committee had received a presentation on Internal Comms and Engagement, and had reviewed the results of the first staff survey of the year.

5 Annual Report and Accounts, and Scheme of Delegation

- 5.1 The Board noted that the MSS Trading accounts, which were consolidated within the MS Society 2019 Annual Report and Accounts, had been signed off by MSS Trading Directors. The Board reviewed and approved the 2019 Annual Report and Accounts, authorised Stuart Secker as Treasurer to sign the letter of representation, and to sign the Annual Report and Accounts.

5.2 The updated Scheme of Delegation was approved by the Board. The Board also noted that it had already been discussed by the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee, and the Governance Committee.

The next Board meeting will take place on Friday 18 September via video-conference.