

NORMS Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Purpose

NORMS (North Somerset Multiple Sclerosis) exists to provide a friendly, welcoming, and accessible environment for people affected by Multiple Sclerosis (MS) in our community. We recognise that MS affects everyone differently — with a wide range of symptoms, progression rates, and personal circumstances. This individuality shapes how we approach inclusion. Our commitment is to:

- Respect and celebrate the diversity of our members.
- Remove barriers to participation wherever possible.
- Foster a culture of openness, honesty, transparency, and mutual respect.

Our Commitment

We will:

- Welcome all individuals affected by MS, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, faith, socio-economic background, or level of disability.
- Recognise and respect the uniqueness of each member's MS journey — there is no 'one-size-fits-all' experience.
- Provide a range of participation options — from in-person meet-ups to online gatherings — to accommodate differing energy levels, mobility, and personal circumstances.
- Ensure our venues, materials, and activities are as accessible as possible, with clear information about accessibility provided in advance.
- Promote a safe, supportive space where all voices are heard and valued.
- Challenge discriminatory language, attitudes, or behaviour in a constructive and respectful way.

Guiding Principles

- **Openness:** We will be clear about what we can and cannot offer, and will actively seek feedback to improve.
- **Honesty:** We will communicate truthfully and in plain language.
- **Transparency:** We will explain our decisions and the reasons behind them.
- **Respect:** We will treat all members, volunteers, and partners with dignity and consideration, and expect the same in return.

Accessibility

We understand that accessibility goes beyond physical space. We will:

- Use step-free venues with accessible toilets where possible.
- Provide seating, rest breaks, and quiet areas during events.
- Offer hybrid/online options to reduce the need for travel.
- Keep activities low-cost or free where possible.
- Use plain language in our communications and provide alternative formats upon request.

Complaints Procedure

We are committed to resolving concerns quickly, fairly, and respectfully.

Step 1 — Informal Resolution

If you experience or witness behaviour that you feel breaches this policy, speak to a NORMS organiser or volunteer as soon as possible. We will listen without judgement and work with you to resolve the matter informally.

if possible.

Step 2 — Formal Complaint

If the matter cannot be resolved informally, you can submit a formal complaint in writing (by email or post) to the NORMS coordinator. Your complaint will be acknowledged within **7 working days**.

Step 3 — Review and Response

Two members of the organising team (who are not directly involved in the complaint) will review the matter. They may contact you for further information. You will receive a written response within **21 working days** of acknowledgement.

Step 4 — Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may request an appeal. This will be considered by an independent person (e.g., an external mediator or trusted partner organisation). Their decision will be final.

We will treat all complaints confidentially and sensitively, in line with data protection laws.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required, to ensure it reflects best practice, member feedback, and the evolving needs of our community.

Approved by: NORMS Organising Team

Date: [Insert Date]

Next Review Date: [Insert Date]