



National Financial Assistance Regulations Procedures On The Administration Of Funds

The purpose of the national financial assistance service is to provide financial assistance to the people with MS when there are no other sources of funding available for the particular request, statutory or otherwise.

Introduction

The financial assistance service of the MS Ireland is a national service delivered through the voluntary Branch Welfare Committees, in consultation with MS Ireland's staff team of Regional Community Workers. Financial Assistance is a payment made by the voluntary Branch to assist with the purchase of goods and/or services **where there is no other source of funding available.**

There is no entitlement to financial assistance and it is discretionary and cannot be guaranteed. Financial Assistance payments can be sought to cover a range of circumstances and payments can be used to alleviate hardship or contribute to the applicant's quality of life. In recognition of the variance in resources available to individual voluntary Branches, they can decide what proportion of their fundraised income is apportioned to welfare.

Financial Assistance can only be considered by the voluntary Branch Welfare Committee as there is no National Finance Assistance fund.

1 Governance

Any person with multiple sclerosis (PwMS) can apply to a welfare committee regardless of membership of MS Ireland or association to a voluntary Branch. .

- 1.1 Eligibility for financial assistance is not based on Branch association, but on having a diagnosis of MS.
- 1.2 MS Ireland's regional community workers will be involved in the application process, which will ensure uniformity nationally
- 1.3 Every voluntary Branch will have a Welfare Committee

2 The Welfare Committee

- 2.1 The Welfare Committee is a sub-committee of the Branch. As laid out in the MS Ireland Bye Laws, article number 56 a Welfare Committee will consist of no less than three and not more than five Branch committee members, one of whom must be the honorary treasurer.
- 2.2 The regional community worker will be a member of the Welfare Committee and he/she must be involved in all decisions made regarding the granting of welfare. The regional community worker will not be required to be in attendance at all Welfare Committee meetings. However, they must be consulted on all financial assistance applications and informed of the outcome of same. These consultations may take place by phone or email.

There are a number of reasons why the regional worker should be involved in the Financial Assistance Process:

- 2.3 Sometimes applications for Financial Assistance are made when another intervention would be more appropriate; the regional worker can advise on this and make the necessary referrals etc.
- 2.4 The regional worker is also aware of various funding streams where the application may be successful.

3 The Regulations

The following regulations should be applied to all applications:

- 3.1 Application for financial assistance is open to any person as defined in 1.1 hereunder whether he/she is a registered member of MS Ireland or not
- 3.2 Applications may be submitted on behalf of a person with Multiple Sclerosis (PwMS) from:
 - 3.2.1 The person with MS
 - 3.2.2 The care giver of a PwMS
 - 3.2.3 A family member of a PwMS
- 3.3 All applications should be made in advance of the welfare meeting.
- 3.4 Any financial payments which are ongoing in nature will be reviewed at intervals agreed by the Welfare committee and the agreed allocation may be

adjusted or discontinued. These continuous payments relate to home support, such as home help and personal assistants (PAs).

- 3.5 The Welfare Committee will only issue financial assistance payments on receipt of an application form and supporting documentation where appropriate.
- 3.6 Where financial assistance is given, a cheque will be made payable to the service/utilities provider, e.g. ESB, Eircom. Cheques may be made payable to individuals by agreement.
- 3.7 The Branch appoints its own Welfare Committee with MS Ireland's regional community worker as one of those Committee members. It is advisable that the treasurer is a member of this committee.
- 3.8 The Branch Welfare Committee deals with each financial assistance request in the strictest confidence
- 3.9 All applications are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (<http://foi.gov.ie>) and the Data Protection legislation (<http://dataprotection.ie>).
- 3.10 The opinion of MS Ireland's regional community worker must be sought on all applications made to the Welfare Committee
- 3.11 Where an application in excess of €1,000 is being considered by the Welfare Committee with the support of MS Ireland's Regional Community Worker, the application should be approved by a full Branch Committee without mentioning the name of the applicant.
- 3.12 Each application will be assessed on its own merit. There is no entitlement to any financial assistance from MS Ireland.
- 3.13 Each applicant will be communicated to in writing following the Welfare Committee meeting in a timely fashion outlining the decision of the Welfare Committee.
- 3.14 If an applicant is unhappy with the outcome of the Welfare Committee they will have an opportunity to appeal this decision to an independent appeals committee. This Committee will be comprise members of the senior management and appropriate regional staff and branch officers
- 3.15 In the event of an appeal, no communication will be made to the applicant until a decision has been made.
- 3.16 MS Ireland's regional community worker will, if necessary:
 - 3.16.1 Involve the local Allied Health Care Professionals with the consent of the applicant.
 - 3.16.2 Negotiate with State or Semi-state agencies to have the need met, e.g. Community Welfare, other grant making bodies.
 - 3.16.3 If necessary assist the PwMS in completing the application for the grant, e.g. 'Disabled Person's Housing Grant'.

The welfare committee cannot consider application based on the following criteria:

- 3.17 Requests for purchases already made, or for which a deposit has been paid or an order or booking placed. Applicants should not enter into financial arrangements in anticipation of receiving help from MS Ireland, as welfare cannot be guaranteed.
- 3.18 Requests involving long-term financial commitments, such as top-up grants for residential care and similar requests.
- 3.19 Requests for unconventional treatments e.g. CCSVI
- 3.20 Unsolicited payments of any nature. e.g. fuel grants, Christmas gifts