



Multiple Sclerosis Society

Short breaks

A guide to holidays, short breaks and respite



The Multiple Sclerosis Society

More than 100,000 people live with multiple sclerosis in the UK. Every one of them shares the uncertainty of life with MS.

We're funding research and fighting for better treatment and care to help people with MS take control of their lives.

With your support, we will beat MS.

In this guide we signpost you to a number of information sources that are known to us, including charities and commercial holiday companies. We do not recommend any particular organisation or company. It is important for you to satisfy yourself that they can provide the services you want, and to the standard you expect.

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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 your well-being.

Holidays and short breaks are opportunities to enjoy family or friends, go on an adventure and explore different places, meet new people, or just relax and recharge your batteries.

This guide will give you some ideas about where to find breaks of all kinds. You may want an accessible holiday company that can offer you a package, or you may prefer to plan a holiday yourself and just need to know where to start looking.

We also offer some ideas for funding your break. While, for some, this may be through your local authority, there are other sources, including the MS Society Short Breaks and Activities (SBA) fund (see page 6).

If a family member acts as your carer, you may be looking for a holiday together, knowing that you will have the care and/or the equipment you need while you are away. Or you may choose to take separate breaks. There's a section for families and carers where they can find sources of support just for them (see page 31). And there's a separate section on taking a break with respite care (see page 34).

Short breaks can also include learning a new skill or taking part in a regular activity. If this type of 'short break' is more up your street, there may still be funding available to help with the costs, as well as help to cover any caring responsibilities. See page 7 for more on funding.

How the MS Society can help

We can help with ideas, information and funding. You can look things up online, or you can contact us directly.

Call the Helpline if you are not quite sure where to start.

 Helpline: 0808 800 8000
 helpline@mssociety.org.uk

Find information on how to get a grant to fund your short break by contacting the Grants team or go online.

Grants Team:

 020 8438 0700
 grants@mssociety.org.uk
 mssociety.org.uk/grants

Find contact details of your local branch using our 'near me' map.

 mssociety.org.uk/near-me

Browse our online library catalogue or call our librarian to find out how to borrow guides, books and directories:

 020 8438 0900
 librarian@mssociety.org.uk
 mssociety.org.uk/library

Share tips, ideas and inspiration with other people affected by MS using our discussion forums.

 community.mssociety.org.uk/forum
 facebook.com/MSSociety

“When I first made an enquiry to the MS Society, I thought they might be able to offer some assistance, but had no idea what was actually possible.”

Stuart

How the MS Society can help



©Richard Gau

How we can help locally

If you do not have contact details for a branch, visit the 'near me' page of the website or call our Helpline. Branches can help in these ways:

- Local branch support volunteers have information about planning a break at home or nearby. As well as knowing about what's accessible in your area, they may be able to help with funding.
- A branch in another part of the UK may have information about accessible properties in their area. Some branches have their own accessible holiday homes or chalets that they let out. For a full list of holiday homes, contact the Helpline.
- MS Society Northern Ireland offers holidays at Share Holiday Village. Give them a call to find out more on 028 9080 2802.



© Vicci Chittenden

‘It really did have the wow factor; being in a different place with warm weather was just so healing, rewarding, positively challenging and very refreshing. It gave me the confidence to consider other places. My trip to Ibiza has inspired me to go away again.’

Vicci has secondary progressive MS and is dependent on full time support. Traditional respite care has never really appealed to her and for her 60th birthday she wanted to go to Ibiza with her personal assistant. Her idea was to surprise an old school friend whom she hadn’t seen in 20 years, who was also celebrating her 60th birthday.

‘I have MS, but I don’t have to be that condition’, says Vicci. ‘It’s important to enjoy life as best you can and not be limited by conformity because you are ill. Life does go on, in a different way perhaps by facing different and varied challenges, but it does go on.’

‘I can’t actually remember when I had my last holiday abroad, so to make it to Ibiza for such a special occasion was fantastic and it was amazing to see each other after all that time.’

Paying for short breaks

If cost is putting you off planning a short break, it may help to know that there are funding options out there.

It is often possible to get help towards a short break from a number of sources.

Our Grants Team can tell you about how to apply for an MS Society grant or other possible funding sources.

Contact the Grants Team on:



020 8438 0700



grants@mssociety.org.uk

Here are the main ways of paying towards a short break:

Local authority statutory funding

Your local authority (or local health and social care trust in Northern Ireland) may be able to provide funding for, or contribute towards short breaks and respite care. They may work with voluntary

organisations or charities and involve specialist short break providers to offer you a break. They can offer a variety of ways to pay – from vouchers to personal budgets (individual budgets in Scotland).

Contact your local authority (or local trust) to see whether you qualify for help with funding. A family member who provides care for you may also be able to get some help towards a break – see the section for families and carers on page 31.

“I know that MS can cause low energy levels and fatigue, which can make it difficult to get things done. I felt like this too, but I filled in a simple form – and I’m not the only one who is glad I did!” Dave



©Photobility

MS Society Short Breaks and Activities fund

A Short Breaks and Activities (SBA) grant could cover, for example:

- a short break or holiday, an experience, an activity or a series of activities for you and/or the person who cares for you
- planned and emergency respite care

- salary costs for a professional carer needed to help you have a break, either at home or elsewhere
- travel, accommodation and equipment hire costs linked to having a break
- some complementary or alternative therapies if part of a short break

Check on our website or with our Grants Team before applying. We can only consider a grant if you have limited savings and you have not already booked your break. You need a letter of support from a health or social care professional to include with your application form.

Local MS Society branches

Local branches can also sometimes help with funding if there is a shortfall, or they may be able to suggest other local charities that could help out. To find your local branch go to the 'near me' page on our website or call the Helpline (see page 2).



Charities

There are a surprising number of sources of funding, both national and local. Check their criteria before making an application – most of them have a means test and will need a letter of support from a health or social care professional.

Some of the charities you could try include

3H Fund

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

 01892 860 207
 3hfund.org.uk

Blitz Holiday Funding

Works alongside the Bond Holiday Group to subsidise short breaks at their accessible hotel in Blackpool. You can get application forms from the Bond Hotel.

 01253 341 218
 bondhotel.co.uk

Disability Aid Trust

Gives grants towards the cost of helpers to assist people with disabilities on holiday.

 0800 028 0647
 disabilityaidtrust.org.uk

Disability Grants

Online directory of grant-giving bodies that can offer financial support in a number of ways, including funding for holidays and short breaks.

 disability-grants.org

Family Holiday Association

Helps to provide breaks away from home for families in difficult circumstances.

 020 3117 0651

 www.familyholidayassociation.org.uk

Joan Brander Memorial Fund

Provides grants for breaks at Revitalise centres (see page 36). We have a funding partnership with them – please contact the Grants team for more information.

 0303 303 0145

 revitalise.org.uk

Margaret Champney Rest and Holiday Fund

Provides small grants to carers to give them a break while the person they care for has respite care. The Ogilvie Trust, which administers the grants, has more information.

 01394 388 746

 theogilvietrust.org.uk

MS Research and Relief Fund

Offers grants to people with MS towards the cost of aids, equipment or services, including respite care or holidays.

 01670 505829

 ms-researchandrelief.org

Turn2us

Use their 'grants search' to look for grant-giving charities, including those near to where you live.

 0808 802 2000

 turn2us.org.uk



‘The whole experience was absolutely fantastic. Each day we went off on different day trips and got to see so much. The scenery was unbelievable; you really don’t need to go abroad. There was snow on the mountains and we even got to see a golden eagle.’

Angela was diagnosed with relapsing remitting MS in 2008. Her main symptoms include getting pins and needles down her right side, a burning sensation in her legs and often feeling lethargic.

Angela got in touch with her MS Society branch support volunteer to ask about an Short Breaks and Activities fund grant.

She says, ‘The application process was really easy and both my branch and head office have been so helpful. I have never asked for anything, but really did feel that I could benefit from some time away. I hadn’t had a break in nearly eight years and so I did feel like I deserved a holiday!’

Angela received a grant to go on a coach tour with her friend. They spent five days travelling around the West Highlands of Scotland, exploring the stunning scenery and enjoying the wildlife.

‘The coach driver and the staff at the hotel were great. I informed them about my condition and they were happy to help with anything I needed.’

Specialist travel agencies

You may have very particular needs for your holiday but not know where to start looking, or you may just want to browse catalogues or websites to get ideas.

In either case, a travel agency that can arrange holidays for you might be the answer.

The agencies below have details of different holiday and respite companies, most of which can offer you a full service.

Some offer holidays in different parts of the world and others only cover the UK. Some do both – see individual entries.

Accessible Travel

Specialist tour operator offering holidays in different locations in the UK and abroad.

 01452 729 739

 accessibletravel.co.uk

Altogether Travel

Can assist with putting together a short break or day trip in the UK

with care and support to meet your individual needs.

 01236 222 006

 altogethertravel.co.uk

Bond Holidays

Arranges holidays in their accessible hotel in Blackpool, with or without extra care in place. They can sometimes help with funding through the Blitz holiday fund (see page 7).

 01253 341 218

 bondhotel.co.uk

CanBeDone

Organises holidays for disabled travellers across the UK and the rest of the world.

 020 8907 2400

 canbedone.co.uk

“I had an amazing time away, it was just what I needed and I really didn’t want to go home in the end.” Angela

Specialist travel agencies

Can Do Holidays

Lists accessible holiday accommodation around the UK for people with all kinds of disabilities. They also offer a personal service to help you choose something to suit your needs.

 0800 298 3052

 [accessmagazine.co.uk/
can-do-holidays/](http://accessmagazine.co.uk/can-do-holidays/)

Disabled Holiday Directory

Specialist travel agency with a choice of accessible holidays in the UK and abroad.

 0800 993 0796

 disabledholidaydirectory.co.uk

Enable Holidays

Organises holidays to suit different tastes and access needs in accessible hotels and apartments across the world.

 0871 222 4939

 enableholidays.com

Holidays for All

A website containing different

types of accessible holidays, both in the UK and abroad. Types of holidays on offer range from African safaris to respite care homes and accessible hotels.

 0845 124 9971

 holidaysforall.org

Holidays for the Disabled

Helps you to find, plan and arrange a holiday abroad that will suit your needs.

 0800 622 6772

 holidaysforthedisabled.com

Tourism for All UK

Directory of all kinds of accessible holidays and trips in the UK and abroad, as well as other useful information, including tips on planning. They also manage Open Britain – see page 13.

Special offers and discounts are available to members of Tourism for All.

 0845 124 9971

 www.tourismforall.org.uk



‘As 2014 was my fiftieth year, I thought we’d really make a go of it! My wife found a ‘disabled friendly’ resort in Tenerife - meaning a flight! Quite a scary idea, especially as this would be my first flight as a disabled passenger. It was even more nerve-racking because it was my first flight ever with my daughter.’

Haroon was diagnosed with secondary progressive MS in 2002 (having ‘missed’ the relapsing remitting phase), and the furthest he had been on holiday since then was to the Isle of Wight.

Haroon made it to Tenerife. He continues, ‘The resort was simply incredible to say the least. It is owned by a German couple; the wife had MS and unfortunately died a few years ago, but the husband toiled on in his wife’s memory.’

‘We were in Tenerife for a total of two whole weeks on a ‘half-board’ basis, and mostly every day we had lunch at the pool and it didn’t matter one iota whether your disability was severe or mild, everyone was patient, supportive and polite.’

‘The resort has everything you could ever imagine – three swimming pools, each of them ‘disabled friendly’, no steps in the entire resort, blue skies, warm temperatures, bright sunshine all day, ‘disabled friendly’ beaches and no flies or mosquitoes made this the holiday of a lifetime!’

Planning your own trips and breaks within the UK

A little advance planning can make all the difference to a day out or short trip in the UK, and there is plenty of information available to help you to do this.

Sometimes it may be no more than remembering to take along your blue badge or your radar key (Disability Rights UK has more information on both of those if you need it).

Many of the following listings are web-based directories, but in most cases you can phone them or write to them if you do not have internet access. If you still need help finding information on these sites, contact our Helpline.

Changing Places

Campaigns for bigger, fully accessible toilets with hoisting equipment and height-adjustable changing beds. Search their map of all Changing Places toilets in the UK on their website.

 020 7696 6019

 01382 385 154 (in Scotland)

 changing-places.org

DirectEnquiries

Nationwide register of many types of accessible locations across the UK and ways of getting to them by public transport.

 01344 360 101

 directenquiries.com

“A high-framed, six-berth tent enables me to have breaks away with my husband and friends. Also, family camping holidays can be taken on an ad hoc basis, getting rid of the stress of making advanced bookings, which may need cancelling in the event of a relapse.” Melenie



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Disabled Holiday Information

Offers information on accessible holiday accommodation, attractions and activities in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, for days out or longer stays.

 disabledholidayinfo.org.uk

DisabledGo

Online database of accessible places in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. They also produce access guides for places visited by DisabledGo surveyors.

 01438 842 710

 disabledgo.com

 disabledgo.com/northern-ireland

Disability Rights UK

Publishes **Holidays in the British Isles**, a guide for people who want to take accessible short breaks in Britain. You can buy the book from the online shop or by phone.

They also sell the National Key Scheme 'Radar' keys which give access to locked public toilets – as well as regional lists of places you can use them.

 020 7250 3222

 020 7250 8191 (shop)

 disabilityrightsuk.org

Planning your own trips and breaks within the UK



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English Heritage

Historic sites to visit across England. The website is searchable by region, county or town, and has detailed access information for most sites. Or you can telephone to ask for a copy of the access guide.



0370 333 1181



english-heritage.org.uk

Euan's Guide

Euan MacDonald's web-based review guide features access reviews for attractions, accommodation and leisure facilities in a number of cities across the UK. You can select access needs to narrow down your search, and leave your own reviews.



0131 510 5106



euansguide.com

Good Access Guide

Online guide to accessible leisure time and tourism.

 01502 806 706

 goodaccessguide.co.uk

Historic Scotland

Days out at historic sites across Scotland. Access information is given for each place to visit.

 0131 668 8800

 historic-scotland.gov.uk

National Tourist Boards

The national tourist boards for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland provide 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

As well as offering information to tourists in England, Visit England runs the National Accessible Scheme (NAS). Members of the scheme meet national standards for their levels of access for people

with limited mobility, hearing or visual impairment. For information by phone you will need to contact one of the regional visitor information centres.

 visitengland.com

Discover Northern Ireland

 028 9024 6609

 discovernorthernireland.com

Visit Scotland

 0131 524 2121

 visitscotland.com

Visit Wales

 0333 006 3001

 visitwales.co.uk

National Trust

Over 350 historical houses, gardens and ancient monuments in England, Wales and Northern Ireland open to the public. The companion or carer of a paying disabled visitor can get in free of charge.

 0844 800 1895

 nationaltrust.org.uk

Planning your own trips and breaks within the UK

National Trust for Scotland

Historical houses in Scotland. Access information is given in the guide sent to members but not on their website, so contact them for information on an individual site.

 0844 493 2100

 nts.org.uk

Open Britain

Provides 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.

 0845 124 9971

 openbritain.net

Pitchup.com

Online directory of camping and caravan sites mainly in the UK and Republic of Ireland, but also covering parts of Europe. Look for their 'Disabled facilities' list of sites.

 pitchup.com

Rough Guide to Accessible Britain

Tips and suggestions for accessible days out in Britain. Generally available to buy, you can also download it for free.

 accessibleguide.co.uk

Shared Care Scotland

Information on all aspects of taking a short break in Scotland.

 01383 622 462

 sharedcarescotland.org.uk

Woodland Trust

The website has maps of almost all the woods you can visit, all over the UK. You can search by area, and whether they have disabled access.

 01476 581 111

 woodlandtrust.org.uk



©Richard Gau

‘Undertaking an opportunity such as this does require effort and a lot does have to come from the inner person. You need to be motivated and take a positive attitude to life’.

Dawn is dependent on Richard’s care and support as she is unable to do much for herself.

For their break they chose to go to a centre in Essex to use as a base to explore London.

Richard reports, ‘We met so many different people with different conditions during our stay and we both got to learn a lot more about each other. We both felt very safe and happy there. They provided a fleet of coaches that could each accommodate six wheelchairs.’

‘As we stayed during the Queen’s Jubilee week we got to see the different boats on the river, the London Eye and we also visited Windsor. Then, in the evening, entertainment was provided with live music and we were encouraged to dance.’

‘The ladies also had the chance to get their hair and nails done. It really was fantastic and Dawn loved it!’

Travelling around the UK

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

Public transport

Although public transport is becoming more accessible, arrangements vary from one provider to another. You can use journey planners to decide on your journey, but you need to contact the individual transport provider to find how they cater for any access needs you may have.

The following websites offer information about travelling around different parts of the UK.

Gov.uk

Online-only information on UK transport for disabled people, including reduced fares.

 [gov.uk/transport-disabled](https://www.gov.uk/transport-disabled)

National Rail

Railway journey planner, plus information on the accessibility of stations and how to get assistance during a journey.

 0845 748 4950

 nationalrail.co.uk

Scotrail

Travel assistance on Scotrail trains.

 0800 912 2901

 scotrail.co.uk/facilities/disability-and-inclusion

Translink

Journey planner across Northern Ireland.

 028 9066 6630

 translink.co.uk

Transport for London

Journey planner and information about getting around London. Use their 'Transport accessibility' page to get advice on planning a journey using an accessible route.

 0343 222 1234

 tfl.gov.uk

“We really felt like we needed a break and we’re so thankful for it. Having a break from everyday life has had a huge impact and has brought us closer as a family. It has definitely lightened the load.” Lynsey

Transport Scotland

Information about public transport in Scotland, including accessibility and concessionary fares.

 0141 272 7100

 transportscotland.gov.uk

Traveline

Journey planner across Great Britain.

 0871 200 2233

 traveline.info

Traveline Cymru

Journey planner across Wales.

 0871 200 2233

 traveline-cymru.info

Special fares

Reduced fares are available for disabled people on buses and trains across the UK.

United Kingdom

Contact your local authority for information about disabled persons’ bus passes. There’s more information on traveling by bus in England on the website.

 freebustravel.co.uk

To apply for a disabled person’s railcard and for information about travelling by train, contact:

 0345 605 0525

 disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk

Northern Ireland

You may be eligible for reduced fares on Translink services with a SmartPass. Application forms are available at bus and rail stations, or by phoning Translink.

 0845 600 0049

 nidirect.gov.uk/free-bus-travel-and-concessions

Travelling around the UK

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Scotland

Contact your local authority to see if you are eligible for a National Entitlement Card. For other questions about public transport, contact Transport Scotland.

 01412 727 100

 [transportscotland.gov.uk/
public-transport](https://transportscotland.gov.uk/public-transport)

Taxis and hired cars

Many local minicab and taxi firms have wheelchair accessible vehicles. When booking, remember to say whether your wheelchair is manual or

powered, as not all vehicles can accommodate electric wheelchairs.

Dial-a-Ride, dial-a-bus or Taxi Card services for disabled people may also be available in your area – check with your local authority or public transport service for more information.

If you looking to hire a car, the following organisations may be useful.

Forum of Mobility Centres

Provides information on hire companies that offer adapted vehicles for self-drive car hire.

 0800 559 3636

 mobility-centres.org.uk

Wheelchair Travel

As well as hiring out vehicles for wheelchair users (either as passenger or driver), they offer taxi services and tours of London, and other cities.

 01483 233 640

 wheelchair-travel.co.uk

‘My daughter loved it, she got to ride on ponies and now has a photo of them in her bedroom. I also was able to go horse riding for the first time in five years and although it was a bit of a struggle, I really enjoyed it. We were also able to relax in the steam room and Jacuzzi and forget about everyday chores.’

Lynsey lives in the Scottish borders. Diagnosed with relapsing remitting MS in 2007, she has to manage a range of difficult symptoms.

‘When my MS relapses I am unable to walk very far at all, but because I have my scooter I don’t feel this is as much of an issue, as I have found a way of dealing with it.’

Lynsey decided to apply for funding for a break that was within easy reach by car. She found a centre near Blackpool



©Lynsey Page

that all the family could enjoy together. When their application was approved, says Lynsey, ‘It felt like we had won the lottery. We hadn’t been away since our honeymoon, so it was just amazing.’

Going abroad



©Photability

If you're travelling abroad, you will need to plan well in advance.

As well as all the usual things to think about, including vaccinations and language barriers, you may have to consider how to transport medication or equipment, as well as yourself.

If you prefer to go for an inclusive package, it's worth looking at the agencies listed in the specialist

travel agency section on page 10. But if you are just as happy organising your own trip, the information below may be a useful starting point.

Information about travelling abroad

Gov.uk

Online information about travelling abroad as a disabled person.



[gov.uk/foreign-travel-for-disabled-people](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-for-disabled-people)

UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Produces a guide called ‘Disabled Travelers’, which gives information about going abroad and travelling with a disability, as well as a list of useful contacts. If you are unable to download a copy, call our Helpline.

 gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-travellers

Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA)

The ABTA website has tips for travellers, including travel alerts and a section on accessible travel. If you are using a tour operator, it's worth checking that they are a member. If so, their booking conditions have to meet ABTA's code of conduct, and you may be able to get help if the company you book with runs into financial difficulties.

 020 3117 0599
 abta.com

Disabled parking abroad

Find out whether you can use your blue badge in other parts of the world on the FIA website:

 disabledmotorists.eu

Planes

Although air travel is generally more accessible than ever, facilities and services vary enormously from place to place. All European airports should offer you free help with baggage, and getting on the plane if you have a disability, but this may not apply outside Europe.

“The holiday left me with a real sense of possibilities in my life. Doing this without relying on my husband gave me a great feeling of achievement and independence.” Rosanna

Going abroad

Wherever you're travelling to, it's essential to book early, otherwise you risk not getting the support you need. You need to explain your individual needs at the time of booking.

Most airlines will carry a wheelchair free of charge, but exact arrangements differ, so it's important to check with the individual airlines.

For more information on flying with a wheelchair, see the factsheet on the Spinal Injury Network website or call our Helpline.

Spinal Injury Network

 spinal-injury.net

Travelling with medication

Carrying medication on a plane may require some preparation. Take a letter from your doctor with you to confirm that you need the medication. You will also need to take it in its proper packaging.



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Different drugs have to be stored differently – some need to be kept in the fridge. If you're not sure about how to store a drug, check with the pharmacist or ask your MS nurse.

The regulations on what you can carry in hand luggage change frequently, so always contact both the airport and your individual airline to let them know you will be bringing medication in your hand luggage, and ask for any special instructions.

Vaccinations

While most vaccinations are safe for people with MS, some live vaccines may increase your risk of having a relapse. It is important to discuss the options with your doctor or MS nurse (particularly if you are taking a disease modifying treatment), so that you can make an informed decision about which ones to have.

Insurance

It is best to arrange insurance as soon as you book your holiday so that you are covered for anything that happens before you leave. Shop around – you don't have to buy from travel agents and tour operators. Wherever you buy your policy, check the level of cover carefully.

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

Remember that, if you do not tell them about any pre-existing medical conditions, it could cancel your whole policy.

The MS Society booklet **Insurance and MS** has more information, including a list of specialist insurance brokers. You can find this on the website and order a copy online, or contact us at

 shop@mssociety.org.uk

 020 8438 0999

The Association of British Insurers (ABI)

Information on insurance products, including travel insurance for people with a medical condition. They do not sell insurance, but tell you how to find it and what to look out for in a policy.

 020 7600 3333

 abi.org.uk



‘Our plan was that while my husband went off sailing down the Caledonian Canal with his friends, I would take a break with Angie, my personal assistant, with the help of a grant. That way he would have the freedom to enjoy himself without worrying about me.’

Rosanna has had MS for 16 years, and her husband is her primary carer. Her mobility is fairly limited, and she uses an electric scooter to get around.

‘Barcelona is a great place for anyone with mobility problems.

My research showed me that using my scooter would be much easier than in the UK.’

‘Barcelona was so different from my home life and a real tonic. I could do most things just like everyone else, without being “special”. This holiday has left me with a real sense of possibilities in my life.’

‘There is just so much I could see and do. Instead of just observing, I was able to engage in life without feeling different or special. Physiologically, emotionally and physically this has given me a real boost.’

‘Doing this without relying on my husband gave me a real sense of achievement and independence. We both came back from our respective trips with lots to talk about and share with one another. This was new and exciting and was not about MS and caring.’

Hiring equipment



© Linsey Page

Depending on the type of short break you choose to take, you may find you need some equipment while you are away, perhaps a hoist, wheelchair or bathing equipment.

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. Otherwise one of the organisations below may be able to help.

“We found a company that could deliver the equipment directly to the cruise ship so it was ready and waiting in our cabin when we arrived.”

Paul

British Red Cross

Certain local centres hire or lend equipment including wheelchairs, bathing equipment and bath aids. Look on their website or phone them to find a local office.

 0844 871 1111

 redcross.org.uk

Ceiling Hoist users Club (CHuC)

Lists accommodation in the UK and Republic of Ireland with ceiling track hoists. The website has a section where you can leave your own reviews.

 01772 814 5555

 chuc.org.uk

Hiring equipment

Disabled Living Foundation

Has a database of equipment and can help you find equipment for sale or hire.

 0300 999 0004

 www.dlf.org.uk

Independent Living

Online-only lists of suppliers of equipment and aids. Search 'product rental' for links to equipment that you can hire.

 independentliving.co.uk

Mobility Equipment Hire Direct

Wide range of mobility equipment to hire for breaks and holidays in the UK and abroad. They can deliver equipment direct to your accommodation.

 0800 644 6062

 mobilityequipmentshiredirect.com

National Mobility Hire

Offers long-term or short-term mobility equipment hire.

 0870 094 9808

 nationalmobilityhire.com



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Shop mobility

Local schemes that hire out scooters and wheelchairs in town or shopping centres so you can more easily visit shops and leisure facilities.

 0844 414 1850

 shopmobilityuk.org

 shopmobilityni.org

Wheel Freedom Limited

Wheelchair, scooter and bath lift hire across England, Scotland and Wales.

 0800 025 8005

 wheelfreedom.com

‘It was nice to have a change of scenery and to do something else. The MS was still there and we still had the day-to-day challenges of living with it, but it was nice not to have to think or worry about anything. We could get up when we wanted, go for breakfast late and then have lunch 20 minutes later! It’s made a big difference to be able to get away.’

Helen was diagnosed in 1998, just a few months before she married Paul. She now needs assistance to do pretty much all daily tasks. She also has very bad fatigue and severe tremor in her left hand.

Helen and Paul went on a two week Mediterranean cruise to mark their fifteenth wedding anniversary. They had an adapted cabin and all the necessary equipment for Helen’s stay on board, including a hired



©Helen Phillips

specialist profiling bed paid for with a grant from the Short Breaks and Activities fund.

‘Helen can’t sleep flat anymore’, says Paul. ‘Without the profiling bed we can’t go anywhere. She has huge amounts of fatigue anyway, and without a good night’s sleep she simply can’t function. The bed is imperative.’

Paul continues, ‘It was really special. We’d planned to renew our wedding vows every five years and we didn’t manage to do it on our tenth anniversary, so this made up for that one too!’

Families and carers

When MS enters a family, it can cause the usual roles to be upturned or reinvented.

If MS has done this in your family you might suddenly find that a new role – that of carer – has added itself to the ones you already hold.

Whether or not you accept the title of ‘carer’, you may still find that you have less time than before to take a break yourself or relax. And yet it is all the more important for your own health – and the well-being of the person you care for – to find ways of doing it.

Taking a break doesn’t have to be in the form of a holiday. It could mean taking time out for regular activities like following your favourite team, spending time with

friends, playing sport, learning a new skill or picking up an old one.

If you are thinking of respite care this can take different forms (see the section on page 34). See also ‘Specialist travel agencies’ (page 10) for holiday packages that include care and support.

If you provide care to a family member, you can ask about having a local authority assessment of your own needs. Legislation in this area is changing and applies differently in different parts of the UK so, for more information, visit the Carers UK website (see page 32).

Even if you do not consider yourself to be a carer, the information provided by the organisations below may be helpful.

“This free time benefits us both and gives me some time to do the shopping and look after the garden. I also occasionally go sailing in my small sail boat and even do a spot of windsurfing.”

Richard



©Richard Gau

Carers Direct

NHS information service for carers. The website is open to all, but the telephone helpline is only available for people living in, or caring for someone in England.

 0300 123 1053

 [nhs.uk/carersdirect](https://www.nhs.uk/carersdirect)

Care Information Scotland

Information about care services, aimed at people over 65, but with information relevant to adults with a disability and their carers generally.

 0845 600 1001

 [careinfoscotland.co.uk](https://www.careinfoscotland.co.uk)

Carers Trust

Practical, financial and emotional support for carers of all kinds.

It includes a special section for young carers. Find your local services on their website or telephone them.

 0844 800 4361

 [carers.org](https://www.carers.org)

Carers UK

As well as offering advice and information, local carers groups give an opportunity to connect with others in a similar position.

 0808 808 7777

 028 9043 9843 in (NI)

 [carersuk.org](https://www.carersuk.org)

 [carersuk.org/northernireland](https://www.carersuk.org/northernireland)

 [carersuk.org/scotland](https://www.carersuk.org/scotland)

‘Every Sunday, I go riding at a school north of Belfast. We go out up into the mountain, to the clear air – it’s the perfect opportunity for me to switch off and unwind. I was a little rusty but it all soon came flooding back.’

David has secondary progressive MS and his wife, Jill, is his full time carer. She also looks after her elderly mother and their two children.

Jill loves horse riding and as a child had a pony. She hadn’t ridden in many years but recently started again with the help of a grant for riding lessons from the Short Breaks and Activities fund. ‘I just love it and it does your mental health a world of good too.’

David appreciates the benefit of Jill getting some time to herself at a hobby that she



© Jill Moffat

loves. Jill has found that the horse riding has had a big impact on her emotionally, helping her to de-stress.

Respite care

Respite care allows both you and your carer to have a break from the usual routine, with care provided by a professional support worker.

It could take place at home, or during a holiday. Or it could take place in a residential care home, nursing home, or specialised respite care centre.

You can contact your local authority for information about respite care services near you. Or try one of the directories or regulatory bodies, all of which have lists of care settings.

If you are looking for flexible respite care at home while your carer has a break, contact one of the Crossroads care schemes.

If you are considering taking respite in a care setting, think about what you want from your break when planning, and try to visit if you can. Some centres allow partners and carers to stay in the accommodation with you, but others do not. Some will also offer more opportunities for socialising and getting out and about than others.

It's a good idea to contact the centre to request a brochure and discuss your own personal needs before making a booking. You can also look up the centre in the appropriate nation's regulatory body website to have a look at their latest inspection report.

“At first I wasn't sure if I would like to go away, but I knew my husband was in safe hands and would be well looked after in respite care, so I was able to relax.” Sally

Respite care

Respite care directories

These directories have information about care centres and other services that can offer respite care. In most cases, you will need to identify a centre or service first, and then get in touch to find out if they offer you what you need. Contact our Helpline if you don't have internet access.

Carehome.co.uk

Directory of care homes and other residential care services in the UK. You can search by location or 'respite care'.

 01488 684321

 carehome.co.uk

Find Me Good Care

Offers advice and information about choosing care in England. This can help you to think about what you really want before starting to look for particular services.

 findmegoodcare.co.uk

Homecare.co.uk

Sister site to carehome.co.uk, this directory focuses on home care and nursing agencies in the UK.

 01488 684321

 homecare.co.uk

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. You can find inspection reports for a care or nursing home you are interested in and, if necessary, report any concerns you have.

England: Care Quality Commission (CQC)

 0300 061 6161

 cqc.org.uk

Northern Ireland: Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)

 028 9051 7500

 rqia.org.uk

Scotland: Care Inspectorate

 0345 600 9527
 www.scswis.com

Wales: Care and Social Services Inspectorate (CSSIW)

 0300 7900 126
 cssiw.org.uk

Respite care charities

Crossroads Care schemes (England and Wales)

Network of local independent charities across England and Wales. They provide support to carers and the people they care for through flexible breaks. See the 'Local Support' section on the Carers Trust website, or telephone them, for your nearest scheme.

 0844 800 4361
 carers.org/local-support

Crossroads Caring (Scotland)

Service Care attendants provide care in the home in Scotland while your carer takes a break.

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

Crossroads Caring for Carers (Northern Ireland)

Service Care attendants provide care in the home in Northern Ireland while your carer takes a break.

 028 9181 4455
 crossroadscare.co.uk

Leonard Cheshire Disability

Offers short breaks in the home, in residential care and in activity groups for people with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 65.

 020 3242 0200
 lcdisability.org

Revitalise

Provides respite breaks in their own centres in Hampshire, Merseyside and Essex. They also offer advice on funding from local authorities or other sources, and have a funding partnership with the MS Society (see the Joan Brander Fund on page 8.)

 0303 303 0145
 revitalise.org.uk

‘Seeing the pleasure on Lauren’s face is something that will stay with me forever. I wanted it to be a lifelong memory for her as well, and I know we have achieved this.’

Stuart has lived with secondary progressive MS for more than 10 years. When he and his daughter, Lauren, needed to leave their home for two weeks while vital adaptations could be done to help him manage around the house, he was offered respite care in a care home. But Stuart was adamant he did not want this for himself, and he also needed to make suitable arrangements for Lauren.



So Stuart decided to make her dream come true and go for the once-in-a-lifetime holiday to Disneyland Florida. Stuart explains, ‘I must admit that as the trip approached I became rather apprehensive, as I was going to be so far out of my comfort

zone. However, as soon as we arrived at Gatwick I began to relax. The flight itself was effortless – the airline took all of the stress out of it for me.’

‘We had an amazing time, starting with our initial flight, the park attractions, boat rides to the wheelchair accessible buses, there was a real ‘can do’ attitude from everyone regarding my disability.’

Further information from the MS Society

Library

For more information, research articles and DVDs about MS, contact our librarian.



020 8438 0900



librarian@mssociety.org.uk



mssociety.org.uk/library

Resources

Our award winning information resources cover every aspect of living with MS.



020 8438 0999



shop@mssociety.org.uk



mssociety.org.uk/library

This resource is also available in large print.



Call 020 8438 0799



shop@mssociety.org.uk

Helpline

The Freephone MS Helpline offers confidential emotional support and information for anyone affected by MS, including family, friends and carers.

Information is available in over 150 languages through an interpreter service.



0808 800 8000

(weekdays 9am-9pm)



helpline@mssociety.org.uk

About this resource

With thanks to all the people affected by MS who contributed to this booklet.

The MS Society would also in particular like to express its thanks to those families that shared their holiday pictures!

If you have any comments on this information, or if you would like to share additional resources, please send them to:

 resources@mssociety.org.uk

or you can complete our short online survey at

 surveymonkey.com/s/MSresources

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.

References

A list of references is available on request, and all cited articles are available to borrow from the MS Society library (there may be a small charge). Contact the librarian on 020 8438 0900, or visit

 mssociety.org.uk/library

The MS Society provides this information free of charge but if you would like to help cover the cost, which will help towards our essential work, please call 0800 100 133 or visit the fundraising section of our website to make a donation. Anything you can give will be greatly appreciated.



Multiple Sclerosis Society

Contact us

MS National Centre

 020 8438 0700

 [www.mssociety.org.uk/
publications](http://www.mssociety.org.uk/publications)

MS Helpline

 Freephone 0808 800 8000
(weekdays 9am-9pm)

 helpline@mssociety.org.uk

Online

 www.mssociety.org.uk

 [www.facebook.com/
MSSociety](http://www.facebook.com/MSSociety)

 twitter.com/mssocietyuk

MS Society Scotland

 0131 335 4050

 msscotland@mssociety.org.uk

MS Society Northern Ireland

 028 9080 2802

 information@mssociety.org.uk

MS Society Cymru

 mscymru@mssociety.org.uk

 0208 438 0700

Reference code GI26

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