

<b>Domain 1: Research team and reflexivity</b> Personal Characteristics	
1. Interviewer/facilitator Which author/s conducted the interview or focus group?	FD conducted all of the interviews. FD led the focus groups and FW acted as assistant moderator.
2. Credentials What were the researcher's credentials? E.g. PhD, MD	FD has MB BCh MRCGP FW has PhD in medical sociology
3. Occupation What was their occupation at the time of the study?	FD works as an academic GP. FW is a university senior lecturer.
4. Gender Was the researcher male or female?	Both researchers are female
5. Experience and training What experience or training did the researcher have?	FD has previously performed qualitative data analysis as part of her role as an academic GP. She undertook additional training in qualitative data collection and analysis for her role in this research. FW is an experienced qualitative researcher who supervised the data collection and analysis process.
Relationship with participants	
6. Relationship established Was a relationship established prior to study commencement?	None of the participants were known to the researchers prior to the study
7. Participant knowledge of the interviewer What did the participants know about the researcher? e.g. personal goals, reasons for doing the research	The participant information explained that we wanted to find out about how the levels of support and information participants required had changed as time progressed. We explained that the purpose of the study was to gather information to improve the level of support available for people with MS in the future.
8. Interviewer characteristics What characteristics were reported about the interviewer/facilitator? e.g. Bias, assumptions, reasons and interests in the research topic	The research was carried out at the request of our funders the MS Trust.
<b>Domain 2: study design</b> Theoretical framework	
9. Methodological orientation and Theory What methodological orientation was stated to underpin the study? e.g. grounded theory, discourse analysis, ethnography, phenomenology, content analysis	The methodology was based upon social constructionism which emphasises that the meaning and experience of illness is socially constructed, based on how individuals come to understand and live with their illness and shaped by cultural and social factors(18).
Participant selection	
10. Sampling How were participants selected? e.g. purposive, convenience, consecutive,	A purposive sample of patients with MS was sought using the data available from the clinical

snowball	database. Carers were recruited by snowballing.
11. Method of approach How were participants approached? e.g. face-to-face, telephone, mail, email	Patients were approached by postal invitations. Patients nominated carers who were subsequently sent postal invitations. 4 carers were recruited face-to-face by the researcher, when they met the researcher attending another interview.
12. Sample size How many participants were in the study?	Twenty people with MS and fourteen carers.
13. Non-participation How many people refused to participate or dropped out? Reasons?	Twenty two patients responded to the postal invitations out of seventy four invited. Two subsequently were not interviewed, one due to health problems, one due to scheduling difficulties.
Setting	
14. Setting of data collection Where was the data collected? e.g. home, clinic, workplace	Data were collected at the participants' preferred locations. This was usually at the participants' own home or the home of their relative (27). Some participants were interviewed on hospital premises to coincide with a hospital appointment (3), some at their workplace (2), and one at a coffee shop.
15. Presence of non-participants Was anyone else present besides the participants and researchers?	One patient chose to be present while her carer was interviewed (after initially participating in an interview alone). Two patients were interviewed jointly with their carers. A pair of carers were also interviewed jointly together.
16. Description of sample What are the important characteristics of the sample? e.g. demographic data, date	Demographics were collected and are presented in Tables 2, 3 and 4.
Data collection	
17. Interview guide Were questions, prompts, guides provided by the authors? Was it pilot tested?	The interview guide is provided. The guide was piloted as described.
18. Repeat interviews Were repeat interviews carried out? If yes, how many?	No repeat interviews were carried out
19. Audio/visual recording Did the research use audio or visual recording to collect the data?	All of the interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded
20. Field notes Were field notes made during and/or after the interview or focus group?	Field notes were made after selected interviews when important insights occurred. Field notes were also made at both focus groups.

21. Duration What was the duration of the interviews or focus group?	The semi-structured interviews took between 27 and 75 minutes. The focus groups lasted 79 and 88 minutes respectively
22. Data saturation Was data saturation discussed?	Yes – saturation is discussed on page 6.
23. Transcripts returned Were transcripts returned to participants for comment and/or correction?	No, transcripts were not returned but the focus groups did act as a form of respondent validation
<b>Domain 3: analysis and findings</b> Data analysis	
24. Number of data coders How many data coders coded the data?	Initial open coding was undertaken by two coders, coding 4 transcripts each. Following this a codebook was agreed upon and the remaining transcripts were coded by a single coder, making inductive additions to the codebook where necessary.
25. Description of the coding tree Did authors provide a description of the coding tree?	The codebook, together with a description of how the key themes were derived from the codes is provided in Appendix 1.
26. Derivation of themes Were themes identified in advance or derived from the data?	Themes were derived inductively from the data
27. Software What software, if applicable, was used to manage the data?	NVivo 10 was used to manage the data
28. Participant checking Did participants provide feedback on the findings?	Yes – during the focus groups
<b>Reporting</b>	
29. Quotations presented Were participant quotations presented to illustrate the themes / findings? Was each quotation identified? e.g. participant number	Quotations are presented in Table 5 which support the themes and each is identified by participant number.
30. Data and findings consistent Was there consistency between the data presented and the findings?	We feel that data we present is illustrative of the findings.
31. Clarity of major themes Were major themes clearly presented in the findings?	We feel these are clearly presented and well represented by the data provided.
32. Clarity of minor themes Is there a description of diverse cases or discussion of minor themes?	We ensure that we discuss if themes were less evident in one of the datasets. For example, on page 9 we state that “The ‘realisation’ theme was less evident in the carer data”.