

MSI

MUTUAL SUPPORT

ARMED FORCES MULTIPLE
SCLEROSIS SUPPORT GROUP

December

e-newsletter

2023



Multiple Sclerosis Society. Registered charity nos. 1139257/SCO41990.
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Cover Photo:

Wishing you a very Merry Christmas in 2023 and our utmost Mutual Support throughout all of 2024.

FOREWORD

Hello fellow Mutual Supporters.

How could I not mention how absolutely made-up we are about **WINNING** the [Soldiering On Awards 2023](#) in the Family Values category. Julie Russell, Jill Watson and Silke Land donned their best bib and tucker to attend the awards ceremony at the Park Plaza Hotel, Westminster on Wed 23 Sept. Who better could we have sent to let everyone know that Mutual Support is a real 'tour de force' within the military community. We three husbands are so proud of our wives. Read Jill's write-up on p6 and p7. See the highlights of the evening [here](#).

We are very saddened to receive news that one of our founders **Sue Smith MBE** passed away on 13 Oct 2023. Sue was a committed Christian and wrote a touching verse in her RN Payer Book. See Sue's verse and the tributes to her on p12 & p13.

At the age of just nineteen I experienced a few weird symptoms all at once, this concerned me enough to visit the Medical Officer. The upshot of which was being excused from duties for a few days with a diagnosis of 'Glandular Fever'. In hindsight I now recognise those weird symptoms to be the typical effects of MS that I am all too familiar with today. Researchers have explored a theoretical link between Glandular Fever and MS for several decades, and now scientists have again found evidence to support the theory. Read about it on p11.

Advance notice: The spring S&R weekend is booked for **29 - 30 March 2024** at the [Hayes Conference Centre](#), Derbyshire. We will send you an invitation and details of the event in plenty of time just as soon as the arrangements have been finalised.

The King's speech for the state opening of parliament last month announced the construction of a national [Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre](#) in Victoria Tower Gardens, Westminster. Please remember Holocaust Memorial day is on **Sat 27 Jan 2024**. On his 75th birthday on 14 Nov, King Charles announced the creation of the [Coronation Food Project](#), an initiative that seeks to tackle the gap between food waste and food need in the United Kingdom.

I'm always on the hunt for articles of interest that I hope may be of some use to you. Almost everywhere I look these days I tend to find only information aimed at those in real need of help, whether that be financial, social or health matters. I suppose this is a reflection of just how difficult so many people are finding it just to survive at a very basic level these days. As an ordinary soldier I remember just how surprisingly impactful the transition was from military life back into the civilian world was.

For most of us It doesn't matter if your service was long or short or what level of rank or status you attained. You must navigate your way through life just the same as everyone else. If you are a single person or a married couple with children, first and foremost you will need to secure a roof over your head. This is not easy these days but fortunately, we as veterans do have a few more options available to us. Please have a look at p23. Knowledge is Power!

We have some interesting vacant posts on the coordinating team. You may think that volunteering is not for you, but we would like to encourage you to reconsider, as being a member of Mutual Supports team is a genuinely rewarding experience.

Please have a look at p14 for details.

Bill Land (Ed)

This e-newsletter aims to bring you greater value, many of the images and logos are live links. If you see something that looks interesting just click on it to see where it takes you.

Ministers join forces to encourage veterans to self declare to GPs

Veterans' Minister Johnny Mercer and Health Secretary Steve Barclay are urging veterans and service leavers to access specialist healthcare pathways run by NHS England and service charities.

Ex-forces personnel in England are being urged to identify themselves as veterans with their GPs

NHS England offers dedicated mental and physical health care pathways for veterans:

OpCOURAGE The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service.

and

OpRESTORE The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service.

*The new name for the Veterans Trauma Network

*The new name is intended to support improved access to and make it more identifiable to both veterans and clinicians to boost referrals and service uptake.

740 referrals have been made to Op RESTORE so far, but many more could benefit from the multi-disciplinary service.



VETERAN AWARE

Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA)

We work with NHS providers and commissioners and the independent healthcare sector, including hospices, care homes, and residential homes to improve care for the Armed Forces Community through the awarding of Veteran Aware accreditation. [FIND OUT MORE >](#)



ANDYSMANCLUB

IT'S OKAY TO TALK.

WE MEET MONDAYS AT 7PM (EXCEPT BANK HOLIDAYS)

ANDYSMANCLUB are a men's suicide prevention charity, offering free-to-attend peer-to-peer support groups across the United Kingdom and online. We want to end the stigma surrounding men's mental health and help men through the power of conversation. [#ITSOKAYTOTALK](#)

ANDYSMANCLUB - EVENTS & FUNDRAISING

[Who we are](#)

[Full list of our clubs](#)

FIND YOUR
NEAREST
GROUP



Did you know, we are also on twitter?
Follow us @ twitter.com/mss_support



Thank You to our generous benefactor



GREENWICH HOSPITAL

SUPPORTING THE ROYAL NAVY SINCE 1694

We are immensely grateful to all of our generous benefactors for recognising Mutual Support as a cause worthy of granting financial support. In the last issue we told you about the [Veterans Foundation](#). This time we would like to tell you something about **GREENWICH HOSPITAL**. We strive to bring you a first class Support and Respite residential weekend twice a year at no charge. Without grants from any of our benefactors Mutual Support would never be able to afford to organise these events that we are so pleased to provide for you.

GREENWICH HOSPITAL say “we provide support to serving and former serving Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel, and their families. Their wellbeing is at the heart of everything we do. Working in partnership with other Royal Navy charities and others, we make grants in areas ranging from education and housing to family support, health and well-being, employability, and crisis support. We fund educational bursaries and support former serving personnel through our sheltered housing schemes.” [Read more about our work >](#)



The Royal Charter of William and Mary of 25 October 1694 established the Royal Hospital for Seamen. Following the naval battle of La Hogue in May 1692, with horrific casualties amongst mariners, Queen Mary determined to create a Hospital (refuge) for disabled seamen at Greenwich.

The first Pensioners arrived at Greenwich in 1705, at what is now known as the Old Royal Naval College. At its height, more than 2,000 pensioners lived at the Hospital. As social conditions changed, the focus moved to other forms of support and the last pensioner left in 1869.

Greenwich Hospital has been providing support to serving and former serving Royal Navy and Royal Marine personnel and their families for over 325 years. Their wellbeing is at the heart of everything they do, as they aim to make a real and lasting difference to the lives of those in need of support.





Run the Berlin Marathon 2024 for the MS Trust

We're excited to have places in the Berlin Marathon for the first time. This fantastic, flat course will take you past some iconic sights and is perfect for those looking to do their first marathon, or seeking a new personal best.

We have a limited number of places available so make sure to apply today. Could it be you running the streets of Berlin to support people with MS on 29th September 2024?

[Apply here](#)

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We are a UK charity that helps make sense of MS. For the last [30 years](#) we have been here for everyone affected by multiple sclerosis, from the moment of diagnosis and throughout their journey.

Keep up-to-date with the latest MS news [Sign up here](#)



Cost of Living Grants

We know how tough things are at the moment, especially with the very large increases to the cost of living we are experiencing.

Because of this we have launched the Cost of Living Grants Programme. This programme is designed to allow us to assist people who need help in a quick and easy way with everyday essentials such as kitchen appliances, clothes, and energy costs.

This programme is open to anyone who is [eligible for our support](#) struggling to pay for items and services they need. And you can apply online with the link below. We aim to assess your application within five days of submission.

Apply for the Cost of Living Grant: [Apply Here](#)



Lightning

Apply for the Cost of Living Grant using the Lightning Reach portal. This platform is provided by our trusted partner, [Lightning](#) Reach.



Call 0808
802 8080

8am to 8pm, 7 days a week



Online chat

[Launch online chat](#)

8am to 8pm, 7 days a week



Get local help

[RBL near you](#)



Mutual Support has just had one family join us since our September newsletter – a very warm welcome the Ellison family, living in North Yorkshire.

The new members are:

Barry and Stephanie Ellison

Barry is still serving with the Army. Welcome once again to all of you and to all the 1170 members, which includes those with MS, their partners and dependent children.

Graham (*Hunkie Dunk*) Duncan
Membership Volunteer

If you move home, please let me know your new details. It's essential to keep our records accurate, not only for the Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) reasons, but so we don't lose track of you.

I also have a I also have a
new email address shown below (however the old one will still function).

Membership@mutual-support.org.uk

Sincere Condolences

We have received very sad news from John Northcott to let us know that his beloved wife Val passed away on the 16th September 2023 after living with Cancer for 10 years. John says **“We are now finding our new normal after the initial shock.”**

This kind of loss is never easy whatever the circumstances. All of us at Mutual Support send John and the family our whole hearted condolences at this difficult time. RIP Val.

With great sadness we must pass on the news that Sue Smith MBE has passed away peacefully in Dorset County Hospital. Her funeral was at St Mary's Church, Swanage on Tuesday 14th November 2023.

We send our most sincere condolences to Sue's family and friends. RIP Sue.

This is especially difficult to report as Sue was one of our original founder members. Please read the tributes to her on pages twelve and thirteen.



Be sure to visit our Mutual-Support Facebook group for the latest news and views.



Mutual Support Winners of the Soldiering On Awards 2023



On Wednesday 27th September 2023 the three of us, Julie, Silke and myself set off from Leamington Spa Train Station heading to the Big Smoke for the 2023 Soldiering on Awards. We arrived at the venue (Park Plaza) and after a minor room hiccup, we got ourselves settled, this may or may not have consisted of a bottle (or two) of some fizzy stuff!! I am saying nothing....

We got ourselves ready for the first drinks reception which saw us 'schmoozing' with some truly amazing people and I even decided I was adopting Archie, one of the Chelsea Pensioners. He was just so humble to be there that when we were just having a chat he suddenly started to cry so after a hug he told me not to worry as they were his 'incontinence' tears!! Once the drinks reception was over we headed into the main room to find our table (right at the back I might add, making me think the organisers had heard what we were like?!)

Anyway, the compere was Jeremy Vine and he introduced all categories very well and the stories behind each award were truly deserving nominations, all of them.

The food was delicious and the company around the table was lovely, with people asking who we were, what we did, who we represented but most of all, the wishes of 'Good Luck' Archie popped over to wish us luck and you guessed it, the incontinence



tears showed up again. Now it was our category, I think I speak on behalf of Julie and Silke in saying we were all nervous and waiting in anticipation, Jeremy read through the nominations and each one as deserving as the other but there could only be one winner.....and IT WAS US!!!! The cheers of delight resonated from our table as we all stood to make our way to the front to collect this most prestigious award, we had done it but not only for us three there on the night, but for ALL of you!

Yes, Archie came straight back over and you guessed it, the 'incontinence' tears appeared again.

We headed home on the Thursday after having had a hearty breakfast, still buzzing from the fact we had won! I still get butterflies when I watch the video back, just so very proud of us.



We are a unique bunch, a great group and testament to the founders of Mutual Support, Kim Bartlett and Suzanne Crighton. I think Julie summed this up on the night.....we are merely custodians of this award, ready to take it through its next journey. We couldn't have done this without you and the families behind you, supporting Mutual Support all the way whether that be raising funds, spreading the word or attending the fantastic support weekends. So Thank You all for being a part of the Mutual Support family, who, let's face it, wouldn't know each other if it wasn't for MS xx



Jill Watson
07506 272916
eventsmanager@mutual-support.org.uk

Some more pictures of an excellent evening:



Talent Solutions Right Management

ManpowerGroup®



"Right Management is proud to support the Family Values Award, recognising the crucial role that families play in the Armed Forces community. We salute the unwavering support, sacrifice, and strength of these families, who demonstrate the true meaning of resilience."

Adrian Peters, Right Management

EUAN'S
GUIDE

THE ACCESS SURVEY

Disabled Access - Have your say



Euan's Guide is the award-winning disabled access charity best known for [EuansGuide.com](https://www.EuansGuide.com), the disabled access review website supported by Motability Operations, which holds thousands of reviews and is an invaluable tool for many disabled people. Now in its ninth year, the Euan's Guide Access Survey is the largest and longest running survey of its kind.

The 2023 survey topics include disabled access in general at all types of venues, from pubs to castles and stations, as well as the essential matter of accessible toilets and parking. This year's survey covers the cost-of-living crisis for a second year. Have your say at www.EuansGuide.com/AccessSurvey.

Make your voice heard by taking part in the 2023 Access Survey. Together we can make a positive difference to the lives of disabled people.

[Take the Survey](#)

[Sign up to the Euan's Guide newsletter](#)

[Sign up](#)



discounts for carers
Our members can
save £2,262 per year

We deliver discounts to the people who
deserve it the most.

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LOOK

Start Saving Now

Our members
save on average
£2,262 a year!*

Join Free

Source: Network's survey of 1,000 healthcare workers, carers, and volunteers conducted between 17 March 2022 and 13 April 2022.

ssafa

the
Armed Forces
charity



Trinity House help Naval and Royal Marine Veterans

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, is grateful to Trinity House for its generous donation to assist Naval and Marine veterans and their families to access a SSAFA caseworker in their times of need.



Do you need our support?

0800 260 6767

Chat



Military In Business®

The business magazine engaging with the public, private, and third sectors in the military community

October 2023
Issue 6

The themes explored in the new issue of Military In Business® magazine developing people and communities, social value, and mentoring - are critical in the post Covid era we are living through.

With reports of mental health worsening over the last couple of years, especially in those just starting their working lives where the statistics from national to global studies are stark, it is more important than ever for communities to create a sense of belonging.

Personal growth, in a world that may look less than positive at the moment, is all about developing people, communities, and building resilience to be able to take the knocks and setbacks.

There is no doubt, as proved by countless Veterans and members of the Service community, that an ethos of 'giving back' or 'serving others', building social value, gives you a sense of worth that builds confidence and resilience, individually and as a community. It has rarely been more important.

Enjoy reading the magazine and, as ever, we'd be delighted to hear your thoughts.

Lt General Richard Nugee, CB, CVO, CBE.

[Read Now - Military In Business® Magazine](#)

We are delighted to present the sixth edition of **Military In Business®**.

The magazine engaging with the public, private and third sectors in the military community.

As ever, we've worked with individuals and organisations across the spectrum to bring you news, insight, advice, and knowledge.



In this issue:

- What does mentoring mean to you? Personal insights from Mark Neill of Landmarc Solutions.
- The Social Value Act: worthwhile or worthless? A deep dive by GKN Aerospace VP Mark Miller.
- Professor Gary Packham completes his report card on enterprise and entrepreneurship in education.
- Soldiering On Awards 2023 - meet the very best of the Armed Forces in business.
- Tapping into underrepresented groups to deliver a greener and more inclusive future.

And Much More!

Veterans' into Logistics



At [Veterans into Logistics](#), we know the value veterans can bring to the logistics sector. We provide HGV training followed by employment opportunities to place veterans into well-paid, driving careers with respected logistics companies.

The UK has a chronic shortage of HGV drivers. If you are a veteran looking for a career or a logistics company needing loyal, hardworking drivers, then contact us today! Complete our Enquiry form here:

Contact Us

Say hello!

Phone: [0330 111 9320](tel:03301119320)

General enquiries: info@veteransintologistics.org.uk

We are honoured to be a beneficiary charity of the [MCFC Military Veterans Supporters Club \(MVOSC\)](#).



A Spectacular Christmas at Blenheim Palace

Fiona Dangerfield feels privileged to work at [Blenheim Palace](#) in Oxfordshire after recently retiring from the British Army. In mid November Silke Land and daughter Andrea were invited to join Fiona and her wife Rachel Harris for a magnificent evening at Blenheim Palace to see the brand new illuminated light trail and exquisitely themed Palace interior where Christmas memories are made.



There's so much to see, it's just magical. Not only the incredible spectacle of it all, but shoppers and foodies can escape the bustle of the high street and stock-up on festive goodies at the Christmas Market in the Great Court.



What an incredible experience we had, thank you so much Fiona and Rachel for inviting us, we will never forget how spectacular it was. Silke and Andrea xxxx



Is there a link between Epstein Barr Virus and Multiple Sclerosis?

This question has been explored for decades. Now a study from researchers at [Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#) provides more evidence to suggest [Epstein Barr Virus \(EBV\)](#) infection plays a role in the development of MS.

EBV, also called infectious mononucleosis or 'mono' and commonly known as '[Glandular Fever](#)' is transmitted from person to person in saliva so it is also referred to as the 'Kissing Disease'. EBV infection isn't enough to cause MS on its own. But researchers think it's an important factor in increasing the risk of developing MS.

Glandular fever is common, it mostly affects teenagers and young adults which fits well with the 'kissing disease' label. It usually gets better without treatment, but it can make a person feel very ill but usually only lasts for a few weeks. However, most people only ever experience very mild flu or cold like symptoms and may not even be aware that they have even contracted EBV. Usually people get better with no problems. But sometimes glandular fever may lead to other problems like:

- Mild liver inflammation ([hepatitis](#)), which causes yellowing of the skin and to the whites of the eyes ([jaundice](#)).
- Low levels of blood cells called platelets ([thrombocytopenia](#)).
- Neurological conditions, such as [Guillain-Barré syndrome](#) or [Bell's palsy](#).

Please be assured that these problems would only ordinarily ever develop in very exceptional circumstances.

The [MS Society](#) is leading a project to discover how EBV could trigger MS and how EBV infection is different in people with MS.

The project will also provide a clearer understanding of how MS is caused. This is an important question for people affected by MS because EBV vaccines are being developed. If MS is caused by EBV, vaccination could help prevent the development of MS in the future.

Explore how the [MS Society](#) is driving this important research [Here](#)

The [Harvard](#) study published in the [journal of science](#) adds to the evidence that EPV is a prime culprit in the later development of MS. It concluded that an EBV infection preceded the first symptoms of MS by as much as 10 years in a study of 955 US military personnel. Having an EBV infection increased the risk of an MS diagnosis by 32 times.

The delay between EBV infection and the onset of MS may be partially due to the disease's symptoms being undetected during the early stages and partially due to the evolving relationship between EBV and the host's immune system, which is repeatedly stimulated whenever the latent virus reactivates.

Another key insight from the study found that MS does not appear to be linked to another virus known as cytomegalovirus (CMV) used in this study as a comparison. This is important, the researchers noted, because it suggests that the **link between EBV and MS is specific** and not just a general association with other viral infections.

Read more compelling evidence at: [Psychiatrist.com](#)



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Chaplain of the Fleet
D/C of F/7/2(337)

PRAY WITH THE NAVY

(Revised 1979)

A Book of Prayer and Readings Authorised for Use in the
Royal Navy, Royal Marines, WRNS and their Associated
Organisations only.



Sue Smith MBE

Sue was a founder member of Mutual Support back in 1991, She always played an active role in the group, and maintained a keen interest in the activities of the group right up until her latter days.

Her brother Chris came across Sue's Royal Navy Prayer book and says: "Although now a little battered Sue kept her Navy Prayer Book and wrote these words inside the first page. It very much expressed her attitude to life and her Christian faith and I hope these words may inspire others."

A New Day

This is the beginning of a new day.
God has given me this day to use as I will.
I can waste it or use it for good,
but what I do today is important,
because I am exchanging a day of my life for it!!
When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever,
leaving in it's place something that I have traded for it.
I want it to be gain and not loss,
good and not evil,
success and not failure,
In order that I shall not regret the price
that I paid for it.

Sue was a popular woman, highly intelligent, with a great sense of humour. Anyone who knew Sue will tell you that she would always make time for other people and was always genuinely interested in what others had to say. It's not surprising that after finding out that she has MS her thoughts automatically turned to how to support service people in the same situation, and so Mutual Support was created.

Sue's commitment to finding the support needed for the Armed Forces family living with MS is her legacy which was fittingly recognised by the Soldiering on Awards this year.

Kim Bartlett and Suzanne Crighton from the Royal Air Force, both of whom had received a recent diagnosis of MS joined Sue in the formation of Mutual Support in 1991. Read tributes from Kim and Suzanne on the next page. Mutual Support will always remember and be grateful to her.

Without Sue Smith, Mutual Support simply would not exist. I first met Sue in the 80s at Green Park tube station, up until then our only communication had been through the military telephone network. I arrived at the prearranged location looking for a lady also looking for an unknown contact. After a shaky meeting. I suggested Sue accompany me to the RAF club on Piccadilly, we went to the Club's 'Running Horse Bar' where we talked about problems we had battling MS and service. Our second meeting was at my married quarter in Stanmore, where we went through a few ideas of names for our new group, none of them proving suitable, when Sue said, "What we are trying to provide is a helping hand for others like us with MS, sort of Mutual Support." So with that almost flippant throwaway remark Sue effectively created the group, a name that had Multiple Sclerosis hiding in plain sight. Sue may have lost her battle with breast cancer, but her legacy will live on and continue to help those who will in the future be told they have MS; God Bless LMET WRNS Sue Smith MBE

Kim Bartlett



Sue Smith MBE Leading Wren (Wrens) WRNS

Sue died from breast cancer which spread and adversely affected her liver. Her good friend and brother Chris were with her as she peacefully passed away after a very short stay in hospital. It is very cruel that someone as kind and generous of heart as Sue should get both MS and cancer but Sue dealt with her hand with grace, not even telling her family until the day before she died.

Her funeral was on 14th November at St Mary's Church, Swanage. Sue very appropriately had a white ensign on top of her coffin, and to bring a smile to the faces of those who knew her well, Sue had both Noddy and Big ears inside the coffin to accompany her on her final trip, Sue collected bears!!

Some of you will remember Sue as one of the founder members of Mutual Support following a meeting with Kim Bartlett in the late 80s. Kim was looking to meet other people in the military with MS and was passed Sue's details – they later met on a train station platform. In the following months between them they came up with the idea of forming an MS support group specifically for military people and from that idea, the Mutual Support we know today was born.

We must thank Sue for her legacy – we owe her a great deal and can only wish her, Noddy and Big ears a safe journey over the horizon and hope she is at peace when she sees her Pilot face to face when she has crossed the Bar.

Suzanne Crighton



All change on the Team



It is with regret that we must tell you Scott Johnson has stood down from his role as Group Coordinator and Lead Support volunteer, due to health reasons.



Daryl Carr has had to stand down as our fundraising volunteer in order to concentrate on other more pressing responsibilities.



Laura Laurence has stood down from her role on the events team as the speakers coordinator to concentrate on her college course and family commitments.



Emily Oxley has stood down as the publicity volunteer as her life has become very busy and she has been suffering with her health lately, so she has must devote her time to these things.



We are grateful to all of them for giving their commitment to these roles, they have each been an asset to the team, but life commitments and health concerns must always come first. We wish them well for the future.



We are pleased to welcome Fiona Dangerfield who has taken on the role of Speakers Coordinator. We know that Fiona's management skills and cheerful personality will make her ideally suited to the role. Thank you Fiona.

Vacancies: Do you enjoy being a team leader? Then you may be interested in becoming our [Group Coordinator](#). Mutual Support offers varied support to its members and dependants with their transition from the military back into civilian life. Perhaps you're an 'ideas person' who can support our members with their various fundraising activities, the [fundraising volunteer](#) is an interesting and enjoyable role within the team. Keeping the profile of Mutual Support known to anyone that may potentially need us is fundamental to our ongoing success. If you would like to 'fly the flag' for our incredible group then the role of [Publicity Volunteer](#) may be just what you're looking for. We have kept 'on trend' and have a good presence on Social Media with Facebook, X formally known as Twitter and Instagram, could you spare a few minutes a day to keep our socials current? This is a new role that would suit someone who understands the importance of maintaining our profile on social media so that we can reach out to those who really need us the most.

All volunteers on our friendly coordinating team are valued members, we work well together, we know your time is precious and you have other commitments. As we are a national group we rely on virtual communications to stay in the loop and generally meet face to face twice a year at our support & respite weekends.

For full terms of reference or if you have any questions about any of the above vacancies please contact Julie Russell: admin@mutual-support.org.uk



The MS Society turns 70!

In 1953, our founders Richard and Mary Cave were frustrated at the lack of treatments and support available for Mary's MS. They decided to do something about it and had their first meeting, a few people attended and the MS Society was born.

We'll be celebrating the first meeting of the MS Society on 2nd December.

Personal Assistants: Could You Be Eligible?

By Katharine Sims



When I first heard about support care workers, I assumed I either wouldn't be eligible, or they wouldn't be available in my area. Since then I have discovered so much more, and now even have a Personal Assistant (PA) of my own.

Firstly you have to be assessed by your local social services - simply give them a ring and state you would like to talk to someone about getting a PA. This is a big mental challenge in itself. Admitting you

need help is always difficult, but we need to remember that it's always okay to ask for support. It is also important to request a home visit from the social worker, together you will discuss your day and week to decide what you need help with. Remember to talk about your worst days and what your family help you with. They will calculate how many hours you will potentially require a PA. You will be financially assessed, and that is council dependant. Sometimes you don't have to contribute.



Next, you have to find someone. This is area dependant, so be guided by your local social services. My PA is self-employed and she joins me for 11 hours a week. This is a real security blanket for me and my family as my husband works away and my children have now moved out. The tasks of a PA can be varied: Mine include helping me get to and from the gym, ironing, help with shopping and plenty more. My PA is paid through the local council here but other areas may be different. For me, having help around the house saves my 'spoons' of energy for things I want to do instead of spending them on things I have to do. The best advice I can give? Ask! If you don't, you'll never know.



Holly, Katharine's PA said "Working as a personal assistant is a fantastic career as you can build great relationships with the people you support as well as providing important help tailored to someone's needs."

Angie Duncan said "We couldn't manage without our PA she's absolutely fantastic does lots of things and helps Graham out a lot with me when I can't do things."

Margaret Sheperd said "I too thought I wasn't eligible until I broke my back the first time three years ago ... I was sent a social worker by the hospital who turned out to be a godsend. She was amazed that I had MS and had never applied for help (ex-forces, too bloody stubborn!!). I found it very hard to admit that I had no life really as all my energy was used up doing basic stuff despite having a very supportive family, I finally agreed to admit the truth (to myself more than her) that I need assistance! As I am at a high risk of falls I get help with all housework, shopping, cooking and meal preparation. Basically anything I can't do myself. Good luck all, it's worth applying as you won't lose anything by trying and it will give you more quality time.



Katharine Sims



Autumn Support & Respite Weekend 2023

Another very successful, informative, entertaining and supportive weekend was had by all in early November.

Fascinating speakers gave us the opportunity to learn something new and useful. Saturday night entertainment was provided by the most excellent Russ Makinson and his guitar with a medley of popular tunes. It was especially good to see some very special children who attended with their mums and dads. The children made wonderful candle lit tributes to Mutual Support and in remembrance of our fallen comrades. Julie, Silke & Jill were proud to show off the trophy awarded to Mutual Support as winners of the Soldiering On Awards in the Family Values Category.

One of the children wrote this lovely poem:

In the fields of war the poppies grow,
the past and the present give their sorrow.

In the soil and grass beneath them lie
the past and the present, did painfully die.

The sandy beaches and the mossy hills,
when we read their history we all get chills.

It was good to see so many new faces as well as the familiar ones. If you've not been before, you really should come along, you will be very welcome. Advance notice: The spring S&R weekend is booked for 29th - 30th March 2024. We will send you an invitation and details of the event in plenty of time just as soon as the arrangements have been finalised.





HOW WOODY'S CAN HELP YOU

Support for Veterans and Emergency Service leavers

Woody's Lodge is a meeting place for those who've served in the Armed Forces or Emergency Services. At Woody's Lodge you will find expert advice & support, friendship & camaraderie as well as like-minded people who have similar experiences to you. With locations in North, South and West Wales, we provide Armed Forces support across Wales.

Woody's Lodge are also on hand to help the families and loved ones of those who have served. It can take some time and compromise to re-adjust to normal life after active service has ended. Our meeting spaces provides a neutral place to get the help veterans and their families back on track.

Woody's Lodge can help with [Housing & Support](#), [Benefits, Pensions & Finance](#), [Agency & NHS Referrals](#) and [Socialising & Friends](#). From one-to-one assistance with form-filling with a brew & a biscuit to Family Days and activities, our team are on-hand to ensure you receive the help and support that you need.

[CONTACT US](#)



Are you ready to become unstoppable?

Wheel Warriors is a free fitness community for wheelchair users that offers:

Courses, group coaching, and mindset training to help you lose weight, gain strength and maximise independence.

We know what it's like to have to fight for every inch of progress, which is why we're dedicated to helping you find the resources you need to overcome any obstacle in your way.

Whether it's an injury, a physical limitation, or simply not having enough time on your hands to devote yourself fully to working out... we've got your back!

Why Join?

Our courses and group coaching are designed specifically around wheelchair users' needs:

Nutrition training specific to wheelchair users, exercises that don't require much space, work-arounds for limited mobility and tools for building a relentless mindset so you can keep going when everything seems stacked against you.

100% Free to join

[Join Wheel Warriors](#)

(100% Free)

Our goal is simple: To help **YOU** succeed!





Do you live in Staffordshire?



Staffordshire Network for Mental Health snfmh.org

We work in partnership with many organisations to insure we reach those most in need within the services and their families. Outcomes have included accessing prevention services, self-help support, and making positive life choices preventing mental illness and distress.

Our Current Projects



Free Support for Veterans and families using Toolbox, Self Management Workshops, Volunteering and help

[Learn More](#)



Free Emotional wellbeing workshops delivered in various locations around Staffordshire.

[Learn More](#)



We have developed a meaningful and innovative volunteer project. Where volunteers will be trained and supported

[Learn More](#)



EMAIL: toolbox@snfmh.org Need more urgent support? [Click Here](#)

For free support call us: **07591 924 728** You can leave us a message 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

[Need Free Support?](#)

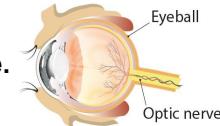
SNFMH, Lichfield Council Offices, 20 Frog Lane, Lichfield, WS13 6HP

www.snfmh.org/urgent-help

Optic Neuritis - Seeing Stars

By Bill Land

Optic neuritis is the name for inflammation of the optic nerve. This is the nerve that carries messages from the eye to the brain.



Optic Neuritis is a common symptom of MS and can often be the first indication leading to a diagnosis of MS.

This is certainly true for me (Bill), As a young soldier while serving in Germany I developed a problem with my eyesight that I can only describe as pixilation. It cleared up after a couple of weeks but it revisited me occasionally over the years.

A few years after I left the Army in 2005 it happened again, but this time it was a lot worse, I could hardly see a thing. I went to visit a high street optician who promptly referred me to an NHS Ophthalmologist. It was so bad I had to give up work and I was scared of going completely blind.

Over the next few months I started to find it hard to walk, I had pins and needles, fatigue, bladder weakness and a few other problems. Obviously I was soon diagnosed with MS.

Something I really missed was being able to see the stars in the night sky, it took over a year for my sight to improve, although I can see a lot better now, my eyesight is still quite poor. But I can at least now see some of the stars again.

I appreciate the beauty of nature and so many other things now that I perhaps took for granted before.



Read more about Optic Neuritis and other MS related eye sight problems on the MS Society website.

[Find out more →](#)

Or download the pdf information booklet ***MS and your eyes***

 [Download PDF](#)

You may also be interested in:



MS eye and vision problems

MS can affect the eyes in different ways and many people with MS have trouble

Tips for managing MS sight problems

MS can affect the eyes in different ways and many people with MS have trouble with their vision.

What causes MS eye problems

Eye symptoms with MS can be caused by the effects of MS on your brain or your optic nerve. Some MS treatment side effects can also cause eye problems.



Questions about MS?

0808 800 8000

MS-UK Choices

Diagnosis

New Choices Booklet

Diagnosis

The initial signs of **multiple sclerosis (MS)** can present with a variety of symptoms in different people at different times and the process of diagnosis can occasionally be a lengthy one.

Don't jump to conclusions until you're told you have MS by an experienced neurologist.

[Download Diagnosis Choices booklet PDF](#)



Motability

November 2023

Expert car picks from the new Motability Scheme price list

Motoring expert Richard Aucock reviews his top new car picks from the Motability Scheme's latest car pricelist for 2023. From eye-catching electric cars to roomy estates and SUVs, there's something for everyone - no matter your needs or budget.

[See his picks ➡](#)



Two New MS Society Shops



The **MS Society** has carefully researched the market and found that more people are now visiting charity shops. The demand for good quality, pre-loved items is on the rise.

So, they now plan to open two new charity shops in Sale and Hale, Greater Manchester by the end of 2023.

The MS Society are looking for two proactive individuals to oversee the management of the two new charity shops. The positions are Full time and the salary is £20,454 - £21,915 plus excellent benefits. Find out more [HERE](#).

THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT FUND TRUST

Funded by HM Government

Veterans' Capital Housing Fund launches first programmes

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (The Trust) are delighted to announce two exciting new programmes under the Veterans' Capital Housing Fund that will help increase the stock of housing available to veterans.

No veteran should be homeless. Many more inroads have become available to veterans and their families to find decent affordable housing.

Find out more about many available opportunities [NOW](#):



Cobseo
The Confederation
of Service Charities

Stay up-to-date
With the latest:

[NEWS](#)

Learn about the [Veterans' Capital Housing Fund](#) and the new [Veterans' Career development Fund](#):

[READ MORE](#)

Haig Housing - current availability of homes



Haig Housing has vacancies in the following areas for Veterans and their families who are in housing need. If you know of any individuals or families who need a home please contact housingoptions@haighhousing.org.uk or call **020 8685 5777**

Details of available homes and eligibility are [here](#):

<https://www.haighhousing.org.uk/apply-for-housing/how-to-apply/>

Birmingham – 2 bed house

Cardiff – 3 bed house

Isle of Wight – 2 bed bungalow

Leicester – 2 bed house

Morden (London) – 2 bed ground-floor flat with wet room

Sunderland – 3 bed house

MUTUAL SUPPORT COORDINATING TEAM & VOLUNTEER LIST

VACANT Group Coordinator	co-ord@mutual-support.org.uk
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Jack Russell Finance Volunteer	07855 434 921 finance@mutual-support.org.uk
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Jill Watson Events Volunteer (Manager)	07506 272916 eventsmanager@mutual-support.org.uk
Anita Rose Events Volunteer (1)	events1@mutual-support.org.uk
Silke Land Events Volunteer (2) Hosting	07746 603 711 events2@mutual-support.org.uk
Allocated Events Volunteer (3) Childcare	events3@mutual-support.org.uk
Fiona Dangerfield Events Volunteer (4) Speakers	07393 854 330 events4@mutual-support.org.uk
Rachel Harris/Fiona Dangerfield Events Volunteers	07393 854 330
Bill Land Comms Volunteer (Newsletter)	07565 82 62 09 comms@mutual-support.org.uk
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VACANT Comms Volunteer (Social Media)	
VACANT Fundraising Volunteer	fundraiser@mutual-support.org.uk
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