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News Articles to be sent to:

comms@mutual-support.org.uk

Newsletter Deadline:

Saturday 31st December 2025

Please see the link to Mutual Support on the MS Society [website](#).

Mutual Support exists for serving and ex-serving members of the Armed Forces and Reserves, their dependents and carers affected by MS.

Dear all,

I hope everyone has had a good summer and the heat hasn't affected too many of you. Everyone is different but my other half always feels better with a bit of Vit D and the heat.

The Coordination team work tirelessly behind the scenes to provide the wellbeing weekends and support for newly diagnosed members. This often comes at a cost to us in terms of our Mental Health at a time when some of us already face the challenges of having a long term condition.

Thank You - I would like to place on record my heartfelt thanks to Andrew Williams, Fiona Dangerfield and Rachel Harris who have stepped down from their roles. Andrew has been a Support Team Contact (STC) for many years and has made himself available to support newly diagnosed members with compassion and understanding. Fiona has brought a blend of humour, initiative and excellence in her role as Speakers Volunteer. It is thanks to her that we have enjoyed some excellent activities and speakers at our wellbeing weekends. Finally, Rachel is standing down as one of the events team. Her and Fiona have been responsible for the evening entertainment, be it Bingo or Quizzes. Rachel also spoke brilliantly about her trip to Mexico and has inspired others to do similar challenges. All of them have been brilliant to work and socialise with, if any of you see Rachel at our events don't forget to give her a cuddle, she loves them!

This leaves the following positions available on the coord team:

- STC
- Events (Speaker)
- Events Team
- Newsletter Volunteer

The second weekend is taking place this month and this is the first weekend we have hosted at High Leigh in Hertfordshire for a long time. We have listened to feedback regarding trying to host events in different locations. The numbers of attendees is a little below what we would like, which could be down to it being at the back end of people taking holidays or nervousness regarding accessibility. The coordination team are also willing to listen to ideas.

Future Improvements to the Wellbeing weekends - Earlier this year we visited [Lea Green](#) an outdoor learning and development centre for young people. This came after we discussed ways that we can support members with young families. Jill (Events Mgr) and Julie (Admin Volunteer) have been in discussions with the MS Society regarding Safeguarding and are pleased to report that the MS Society are content that the venue and staff are suitable for us to use. Our younger members will be able to spend the day at the centre and will enjoy many different activities facilitated by trained staff. Jill will provide more information in the next newsletter.

Jim Watson

Group Coordinator

Coordinating Team Updates

We are still looking for the following volunteers to join our coordination team. Please contact me at: Co-Ord@mutual-support.org.uk

Newsletter Editor – The Newsletter Editor is responsible to the Group Coordinator for the compilation and dissemination of the newsletter to all members. Duties include: -

- Submit a draft of the newsletter to the Group Coordinator or Deputy for final approval. Once approved, send an email copy for distribution.
- Clearly define whether submitted articles are personal views, experiences, or statements of fact. Verify the accuracy of factual statements.

Support Team Contact – Duties include contacting new members within one week of being notified. Aim to respond to queries from members within 48 hours. Make contact with members a minimum of three times per year at regular intervals to check if they need assistance and to confirm contact details are up to date and informing the Membership Secretary of any changes.

Events (Speakers) – The Speakers Organiser is responsible to the Group Coordinator for selecting speakers for the Support and Respite weekends. Duties include:

- . Selecting and inviting suitable speakers to the residential weekends.
- . Greeting speakers on arrival at the venue and ensuring that they are introduced to the Group Coordinator and hosted appropriately including taking care of any expense claims that may arise.
- . Liaising with the Events Manager to ensure that any equipment required for presentations is made available.
- . Ensuring that letters of thanks are sent to all visiting speakers after each event.

Events Team Volunteer – Events team members assist the Events Team Manager. Duties include; finding a suitable venue, organising dates, contacting the venue to prioritise and organise rooms (including those requiring fully accessible rooms), hosting speakers/VIPs, resolving issues such as food, rooms, entertainment, equipment, carers etc.

These are all essential roles that need filling. I would suggest anyone wanting a role without too much responsibility or workload starts with the Events Team as it's a great way to see how the team organise events.

Membership Report Sep 2025

As of 4 Sep 2025, the membership consists of the following:

- There are 1202 members in total, with 542 members having MS.
- Among the 542 members with MS:
 - 55 are currently serving personnel of the Armed Forces.
 - 379 members are former serving personnel.
 - 101 members are dependents with MS.
 - Seven honorary members with MS are civilians.
 - The membership includes 228 females and 314 males with MS.
- There are also 688 children, spouses, and partners without MS.

Welcome to the nine new members who joined Mutual Support since March.

The new members are:

Caroline Millar

Karoline Prockter

Michelle Richards

Miranda and Andrew Sargent

Facebook

There are 392 members who belong to our Facebook page, with 296 being active members. Females contribute 53% whilst the gentlemen are a bit quieter at 47%. If you haven't joined our Facebook page, search for 'mutual support - the armed forces uk ms charity' and I'll process your application promptly.

Please contact me with any changes to your address, email, or phone number so I can update our membership list.

Graham (Hunky Dunk) Duncan

Membership Volunteer

(membership@mutual-support.org.uk)

Trip Report – Accessible Holiday Cottage Stay – Treworgans Farm Holiday.

After consulting the 'Wheelchair Accessible Places and Activities' Facebook group regarding appropriate holiday destinations for myself and Angie, multiple members recommended Treworgans Farm. This location offers two fully accessible cottages available for rent. Our recent trip to a rustic holiday lodge, at Treworgans Farm, Valley View cottage proved to be a comfortable and memorable getaway, especially adapted for accessibility needs in a modernised cottage. Angie and I went with her PA, Stacey, who proved to be fantastic in caring, great company and sharing the cooking.

David and Esme are the friendly hosts, supplying us in the weeks before plenty of online local information; then on arrival a very welcome cream tea, eggs from their own chickens, some soft drinks and a couple of local beers.

Accommodation & Accessibility

Valley View was clearly designed with accessibility in mind, entrance to the living room and en-suite bedroom was from the patio area. There was a mobile hoist and a ceiling hoist above Angie's profiling bed. One of the highlights was the spacious and practical wet room equipped with a wheeled shower chair, grab rails, and a handheld shower that also fastens to the wall. This setup made personal care much easier and safer for Angie. The interior layout of the cottage was open and airy, allowing for easy movement throughout by Angie in her powered wheelchair. The wooden floors are covered with a special "Hospitwist" carpet that is specifically designed to be easy to push wheelchairs about on, wide doorways, and the absence of steps between the main rooms helped a lot. There were also solid wooden railings on the stairway, which led to the lower floor with two en-suite bedrooms, one of which is where Stacey slept. All our activities were kept to the ground floor or patio areas.



The kitchen inventory had everything you might need to fix dinner, with the plates, pans, KFS's, salt and pepper, carving knives and even a whisk.

Living Area & Comfort



The living area featured a beautiful stone fireplace with a wood-burning stove, giving a cozy and traditional feel, however the temperature during our time there wasn't cold enough to tempt my pyromania. A mounted flat-screen TV and comfortable seating made for relaxing evenings. The furniture was sturdy and supportive, together with a riser-recliner, ideal for those who need stable seating.

The cottage included thoughtful extras like good lighting, and space for mobility aids. The exterior was private and quiet, surrounded by wooden fencing, which gave a safe and peaceful environment. There is a railway line nearby but there was no noise at all from any trains. A particularly lovely touch was the exposed wooden beams and high vaulted ceiling, which added to the charm of the place.



Kitchen & Dining

The kitchen was well-equipped with a microwave, fridge/freezer, toaster, kettle, washing/dryer machine, oven, ceramic hob and dishwasher (tablets for the dishwasher and washing machine were thoughtfully provided), as well as plenty of storage. The dining table was right next to it, with a table and chairs that were easy to access. A wide stable door provided easy entry and a lovely rural touch, opening directly to a patio area where we initially unloaded our luggage. The patio was large with a table and stout chairs topped with a parasol, great to hide from the sun. Evenings were nice outdoors to look at the multitudes of stars.

Trips Out

David and Esme provided online an extensive General Information booklet, which advised us about the cottages, local shopping, take-a-ways, restaurants and pubs and also accessible places to visit – just too many places to deal with during a week's visit. On the Sunday we travelled with Stacey about 30 minutes to the Eden Project (take care when obeying the satnav – there are some very narrow lanes in Cornwall) where we enjoyed a fabulous day out there. Brave Stacey climbed onto a gantry that I estimated to be about 140 feet from the ground. She deserves a medal for her daring. On the Monday we visited the Lost Gardens of Heligan that were a delight and on the Tuesday one of our old RAF friends visited and brought delicious Cornish pasties, scones, jam and clotted cream.

Final Thoughts

This cottage proved to be a fantastic choice for a relaxing, accessible break. The thoughtful accessibility features, combined with the cozy and characterful design, made it suitable for all of us. We found this property to be ideal for those with disabilities and also those without.

Financial Report

So far this FY, Mutual Support has managed to raise a whopping £9213.57. This come from donations and fund raising events. This is fantastic, another part of the income we have received is from the Gift Aid receipts, which was another £4,305.41 (on top of the £9213.57). Such a large sum is only available to us if you tick the Gift Aid box on any fundraising events that you do take part, so please do that to make the money go further. Finally, in an effort to make best use of funds we invest it and received a healthy sum of money every month.

The money raised is essential in ensuring we can continue to carry out the two wellbeing weekends we provide a year. It costs us around £40,000 per year to host the weekends and we rely on fundraising and grants from the charities listed in this newsletter.

Assistance Dog Policy

We have been working with the MS Society to understand what we need to do as a Coord Team to protect our members with or without Assistance Dogs. The following is the guidance provided by the MS Society:

HSV: 801 – ASSISTANCE DOGS – Guidelines

Revision 3 – December 2024

Behaviour and training standards for all Service Animals in line with Assistance Dogs International

The MS Society welcomes all those with assistance dogs and assures them everything reasonably practicable will be done to ensure their inclusion at MS Society activities and events in line with Assistance Dogs International requirements.

Assistance Dogs International (ADI) is a coalition of not for profit organisations that train and place assistance dogs. The purpose of ADI is to improve the areas of training, placement and utilisation of assistance dogs as well as staff and volunteer education. ADI has a comprehensive accreditation system and members have to be regularly assessed to ensure they meet the high standards expected of assistance dog programs.

ADI believes that in order to assure the comfort and safety of people with disabilities and the general public, high standards for behaviour, cleanliness and public appropriateness must apply equally to all service animals. Any animal that can meet the existing standards should be allowed to work in public when accompanied by the person for whose disability it was specifically trained.

Public appropriateness

The animal:

- is clean and does not have a foul odour
- does not urinate or defecate in inappropriate locations

Behaviour

The animal:

- does not annoy any member of the general public
- conduct does not disrupt the normal course of business
- works without unnecessary vocalisation
- shows no aggression toward people or other animals
- does not solicit or steal food or other items from the general public

Training

The animal:

- is specifically trained to perform more than one task to mitigate (lessen) the effects of its partner's disability
- obeys the commands of its handler
- works calmly and quietly on a harness, leash, or other tether

- has been specifically trained to perform its duties in public and is accustomed to being out in public
- must be able to lie quietly beside the handler without blocking aisles, doorways, etc
- is trained to urinate or defecate on command
- stays within 24” of its handler at all times unless the nature of a trained task requires it to be working at a greater distance

Liability for damage caused by Assistance Dog

- The owner of an assistance dog is solely liable for any damage to persons, premises, or facilities including places of public accommodation, public conveyances or transportation services, common carrier of passengers, places of housing accommodations, and places of employment caused by that assistance dog.
- An “Individual with a disability”, who uses an assistance dog shall keep the dog properly harnessed or leashed, and a person who is injured by the dog because of an “Individual with a disability”, failure to properly harness or leash the dog is entitled to maintain a cause of action for damages in a court of competent jurisdiction under the same laws applicable to other causes brought for the redress of injuries caused by animals.

Standards for Assistance Dogs Partners

The assistance dog partners will agree to the following partner responsibilities while in public:

1. Treat the dog with appreciation and respect.
2. Maintain the dog’s proper behaviour in public and at home.
3. Carry proper identification and be aware of all applicable laws pertaining to assistance dogs.
4. Keep the dog well groomed and well cared for.
5. Abide by all lead and license laws.
6. Arrange for the prompt clean up of dog’s waste.

Related documents

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Northern Ireland) copies can be found [here](#)

Equalities Act 2010 – sections (rest of UK) copies can be found [here](#).

Assistance Dogs International website: <http://www.assistedogsinternational.org>

How to donate to Mutual Support

By Bank Transfer

By cheque: Payable to MSS Mutual Support

MSS Mutual Support
Acct No: 40714887
Sort Code: 20-82-94

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4 Church Green, Formby
Merseyside, L37 2LN

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