



Patrons

Dr Faraz Jeddi MBBS, MRCS(Ed), AFRCS(Ire), Pd Dip in RM
Dr Anita Rose B.A. (hons), D.Clin Psy., AFBPsS, C. Psychol

President

Air Commodore Mike Barter CBE

Honorary Life President

Air Vice Marshal TB Sherrington CB OBE

Vice Presidents

Col Paul Cummings
Air Commodore R Merry MB BS FRCP MRCPsych RCOG

Honorary Members

Roger Langdon MBE
Lieutenant Colonel C S MacGregor KRH
Stephanie Millward MBE
Alastair Hignall CBE
Simeon Grundy

News Articles to be sent to:

comms@mutual-support.org.uk

Newsletter Deadline:

Saturday 31st March 2026

Please see the link to the new Mutual Support [website](#).

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

Group Coordinator Update

I hope everybody has recovered from the festivities. This winter has seen the usual seasonal increase in people getting flu. Please remember that people with MS and their carers are entitled to receive the flu jab, free of charge.

2026 promises to be an exciting year for Mutual Support for several reasons. We have been lucky enough to secure the services of Mike Nye as our new Web Manager. Mike has a lot of experience as an RAF Photographer and later Cartographer. Why is this important you ask? Well, the skills he has learnt; keen eye for detail, artistic flair and digital skills have been put to good use in producing a new website. Our previous website wasn't maintained by anyone with the required experience, the company that built it were too expensive and didn't carry out the work required to keep it going. Mike has worked with a company (who he rates highly) to produce an outstanding site that I hope you agree grabs your attention and provides lots of information and links. Please have a look at the [link](#).

2026 also sees us expand our services as we look to support the wider family with a great package of activities for younger members at the Wellbeing Weekend in Derby (17-19th Apr). On Saturday 18th Apr, members of the team will take young people to Lea Green for a day of activities including cooperative games and low ropes. For more information click on this [link](#). We hope this encourages more young families to come to the Wellbeing Weekends. It is free to you; civvies would pay a fortune for this. All staff members of Lea Green and the Coord team will be DBS certified.

2026 is also our 35th anniversary year. Jill Watson (Events Manager) and the Events Team are working hard behind the scenes to put on a Gala Style event at our September event at High Leigh (Hertfordshire). More details will follow in due course.

Despite the outstanding efforts of the team, take up remain low. We book these events for 70 people, so far only 45 adults and 7 young people. We don't know why we aren't getting the numbers. These events offer so much. Please get in touch if you want to offer a reason or need help attending. It could be that you don't have transport or need help getting to them. Someone in the group might be able to help you attend.

Thank You – Jason Wimpenny (Social Media Member) recently stepped down from the team. I would like to thank him for his efforts and wish him well. The coord team recognises that many people access social media as their prime media for information. However, you will notice from Grahams' report that there's been a distinct reduction in the number of people engaging with Facebook. Therefore, we need to find someone to take on as quickly as possible, so that we can evolve to meet all our member's needs.

This leaves the following positions available on the coord team:

- Support Team Contact
- Events (Speakers)
- Newsletter Volunteer
- Social Media

We need your help, some of our team have been performing roles for many years, have full time jobs, are covering multiple roles and could leave any time. This could make the group unsustainable as we couldn't ensure compliance with MS Society rules or achieve our mission.

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. Contact members a minimum of three times per year 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 Wellbeing Weekends. Duties include:

- a. Selecting and inviting suitable speakers to the residential weekends.
- b. 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.
- c. Liaising with the Events Manager to ensure that any equipment required for presentations is made available.
- d. Ensuring that letters of thanks are sent to all visiting speakers after each event.

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.

Social Media Volunteer - The Social Media volunteer is responsible to the Group Coordinator for maintaining and updating the media sites. Duties include ensuring that due regard is given to accuracy, copyright requirements & security of personal information (unless already in the public domain) for all information displayed on the site. Ensuring the media outlets contain interesting and relevant articles. Ensuring the social media is kept current, user friendly and is used appropriately to engage the membership and to better publicise the Group outside the membership.

Membership Report Jan 2026

There has been very little membership activity this winter, so as of 13 January 2026, the membership consists of the following:

- There are 1203 members in total, with 542 members having MS.
- Among the 542 members with MS, 55 are currently serving.
- 378 members are former serving personnel.

- 101 members are dependents with MS.
- Eight honorary members with MS are civilians.
- The membership includes 224 females and 318 males with MS.
- There are also 661 children, spouses, and partners without MS.

Welcome to the four new members who joined Mutual Support since September 2025.

The new members are:

Robert Gillett
Emma and Richie Millham
Martin Wright

Facebook

There are 394 members who belong to our Facebook page, with 208 being active members, a significant drop during the previous month. Ladies contribute 53% whilst the gentlemen providing 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)

Grant Applications

It's that time again, grant applications.

Before I start applying for grants I need to point out that I usually bid for funding for 70 delegates, a drop of 30 since pre pandemic numbers. The grants I apply for are provided mainly by military charities and they take a lot of time and effort to complete. Each application is individual with different conditions, application forms and questions, so one size does not fit all. Equally, it takes a lot of time and effort to feedback to our benefactors post events so that they can see that their money is being spent wisely.

Applying for grants is the main funder for our weekends with additional contributions from smaller benefactors such as the recent donations from two, local to Lincoln, Masonic groups and of course the fundraising that goes on within the group.

My question before I apply, is why has interest in attending meetings dropped so much and do I need to reduce numbers further in my grant applications and ultimately the number sizes for the well-being weekends?

Please feedback to the team and myself as we really do need to know.

Furthermore, we really need volunteers to step up and help us out. We as a team, are juggling so many plates to cover the vacant posts as well as our own that it's becoming untenable. Personally, all the roles and emails that I am overseeing are going to have to take a back burner whilst I crack on with applications, so don't be cross if there is a bit of radio silence while I'm prioritising grants.

I know this is a long message and thank you for reading thus far.

Mutual Support has been supporting members for 35 years now but this is OUR group and we ALL need to look after it.

Mutual Support definition:

Mutual support is when people help each other, sharing resources, emotional encouragement, and practical aid, often within groups facing similar challenges (like recovery or health issues) or professional teams to improve performance and well-being, built on cooperation, understanding, and shared responsibility, seen in groups like AA or teamwork training. It emphasizes that members gain by giving, providing a vital lifeline for those needing non-professional, peer-led assistance.

Julie Russell

Mutual Support Secretary

Financial Report

In 2025, Mutual Support has managed to raise a whopping £17,531.21. This come from donations and fund raising events. This is fantastic, part of this huge figure was £4455.41, which was received from the Gift Aid receipts. 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. There is a caveat of course; it is only available to UK tax payers and is paid on any donations/funds raised. We also receive a sum of monthly interest from our bank account through the MS Society.

It would also be remiss of me to not note the fantastic support we receive from the grants that Julie applies for. The monies raised are 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.

Fundraising Report

Heather Yendle has recently taken over as the Fundraising Manager and settling into the role. The coordination team will be working with Heather to look for fundraising opportunities. In the meantime please feel free to contact her if you have any ideas or would like advice on fundraising matter.

Since the last newsletter, we have secured £1500 in donations from the Freemasons from two Lodges in Lincolnshire (£1000+£500). Jill Watson (Events Manager) works for the Post Office and got talking to one of her customers Ivor, who is a Freemason and he managed to secure two separate donations, totalling £1500. Thanks go to Stephen Hallberg (Provincial Grand Master) and Mike Bull from the North Midlands District of Royal

and Select Masters for presenting the cheques. Excellent work Jill! These funds will be used to pay for our young people to take part activities at Lea Green in April.



Never one to miss an opportunity Jill and the Group Coordinator were invited to the Masonic Lodge in Lincoln on 15th December for a tour and cheque presentation. We were also lucky to meet the Provincial Grand Master for the Provincial Mark Grand Lodge of Lincolnshire.

The Masons are a fantastic organisation who do amazing work and never boast about it. I know from speaking to them that they are regularly the first to offer funds for disaster relief, such as the hurricane in Jamaica. Thank you the Masons, we are very grateful. For more information about the Freemasons and specifically the Lodge we went to, go to: markmmlincs.org.uk

How to donate to Mutual Support

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

By cheque: Payable to MSS Mutual Support
Mutual Support
4 Church Green, Formby
Merseyside, L37 2LN

Apr 2026 – Wellbeing Weekend

This is a reminder that the applications for the April Wellbeing Weekend have gone out. So far, we have around 45 adults and 7 young people attending. We have space for 70 in total (young people count as half an adult place 😊). As has already been said, this will be amazing, especially for young people attending Lea Green activity centre. I was recently sent the following feedback from a member after attending our last Wellbeing Weekend:

“It has been an incredible weekend, thank you all for your brilliant organisation. Just saddened that we have so many members, but so few come along – I cannot help but wonder why. The weekends are magical, fun and supportive. Exchanging information of symptoms and treatments is such a valuable tool”.

As a coord team, we know everyone’s personal circumstances are different, but we standby to assist anyone who wants to attend but may need support in doing so. Please get in touch and if we can help, we will try. Contact eventsmanager@mutual-support.org.uk if you need the form resending or help with it.



Our family's holiday to St Brides Castle, Pembrokeshire - access guide



ST BRIDES CASTLE, PEMBROKESHIRE



For a summary of the aims of the Access Guide please [click here](#). Please remember to discuss your specific requirements with HPB booking staff before confirming any HPB holidays as we can only provide a general guide in these pages.

Do I qualify?

Serving and Ex-RAF personnel who are disabled, or whose dependent is disabled, can apply for an accessible holiday with the Disabled Holiday Trust.

Our eligibility criteria for the Disabled Holiday Trust are:

- The qualifying person has a disability that prevents them from using 'standard' hotel accommodation and meets one of the below:
 - Receive the higher rate of DLA/PIP Mobility.
 - Receive the War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement.
 - Receive an on-going Guaranteed Income Payment for having a permanent disability causing an inability or significant difficulty in walking.
 - Receive Attendance Allowance.

They offer holiday accommodation free of charge to those who meet the disability criteria and are on a means tested benefit.

Means tested benefits include:

- Pension Credit
- Universal Credit
- Income Support
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income based job seekers allowance
- Housing benefit
- Working and child tax credits

This must be evidenced by 3 months of bank statements or an entitlement letter (less than 3 months old) in line with the Funds welfare policy.

Those who are not on a means tested benefit will be asked to contribute a nominal amount towards the cost of the holiday. It is a condition that the qualifying person goes on the holiday.

Trip Report – Our holiday to St Brides Castle, Pembrokeshire - [access guide](#)

Because we met the eligibility criteria for the RAF Disabled Holiday Trust, we thought we would go and check a location. So, in August 2025, we decided to go on a lovely family holiday to Wales. The RAF Disabled Holiday Trust believes everybody deserves a stress-free holiday, free from the worry of whether accommodation is accessible or not.

On our arrival, we were all amazed at the castle and its facilities and we couldn't wait to do some exploring.



Accommodation & Accessibility

We stayed in Cottage 44 (Montgomery) with a max sleeping capacity of 6, views overlooking the bowling green and a short walking distance from the car park.

Once we unloaded our things we appreciated the cleanliness and peacefulness of the Pembrokeshire coast plus watching the Swifts and House Martins zipping around the castle grounds.

Living Area & Comfort

On the Ground floor, there was a twin bedroom with en-suite wheel-in shower room and a second twin bedroom with en-suite bathroom, separate shower room. All were fully accessible for wheelchair or stroller device users. There was Wi-Fi plus a Smart television, so the entertainment was available if required.

Kitchen & Dining



We had an open plan kitchen/dining/living room with double sofa bed. It was self-catering with the option of eating at their 'Dylans Restaurant' or ordering their takeaway. The dining room had clean cutlery and suitable cooking appliances. If the weather was nice outside, you could eat your meal whilst watching people playing bowls which was freely available.

During our 7 nights stay the family enjoyed the castle's on-site activities which included:

- Indoor swimming pool
- Sauna and steam room
- Small exercise room
- All-weather bowling green
- Three tennis courts
- Children's play area
- Pitch-and-putt
- Croquet lawn
- Games room and pool table
- Table tennis
- selection of DVDs and games
- Library
- Snooker room
- Reception area: tourist information
- Internet and Wi-Fi facilities
- Bondholder laundry
- Bike racks and shed
- Dylan's Bistro and Bar
- Small shop
- Food pack
- Newspapers available from reception
- Massage and reflexology
- Organised activities on-site day and evenings



Trips Out



During the week, we went for a short drive to Broad Haven to experience the Welsh coastline a bit more. It was all very wheelchair friendly, and the fish and chips were amazeballs!

Final Thoughts

This break provided the family with a relaxing holiday that provided lots of activities to keep us entertained. We took our 13 and 10 year old boys who enjoyed going swimming and playing tennis, they seemed ok if I just needed to sit on our patio with a brew and a book. Fortunately, the weather was amazing with temperatures around 27°C, which also provided us with a spectacular midnight lightening display as seen in the pictures. The cottage we stayed in was great for disabled people as well as able-bodied as everything was accessible with no stairs.

If you meet the criteria for going on one of the RAF Disabled Holiday Trust breaks, I would highly recommend it as their communication and administration ensured that our holiday was free of any problem. Thank you.

MS Society News

Project Mead becomes MS Help in Spring 2026. Project Mead ran for over a year and was a project looking at how the MS Society could improve the services they provide to help Group volunteers and people affected by MS. The Group Coordinator and Publicity Member (Stuart Davey) were involved in some of these workshops.

The MS Help Hub

We're introducing the MS Help Hub to bring together everything service users need to manage their MS or support and care for someone living with MS. Whether it's information about MS, emotional support, self-serve and digital resources, or signposting to specialist and local services, they'll find it all in one place when they contact the MS Help Hub.

What impact will the introduction of the MS Help Hub have?

This will unfortunately lead to a slight reduction in the MS Helpline operating hours, now 0900 – 1700hrs, Monday to Friday. This is due to the requirement for internal moves and resource allocation.

Programme REFUEL-MS

The MS Society has previously sought volunteers to take part in Programme REFUEL-MS. Data from the [UK MS Register](#) shows 90% of people with MS experience fatigue. But less than a third of people have been offered treatment for their fatigue as part of their routine care.

Some people with MS find existing drug treatments, like amantadine, help their fatigue. But these don't work for everyone. They often come with side effects and some evidence suggests non-drug treatments can make a bigger difference to fatigue levels.

Research shows doing physical activity can improve fatigue. And we also know fatigue can be improved by exploring how you think and feel about your fatigue. For example, being self-critical can worsen fatigue.

So, the new online programme will include physical activity as well as cognitive behavioural therapy. Physiotherapists and occupational therapists will also provide guidance alongside the programme.

People with MS will discuss their thoughts, feelings and actions that may make fatigue worse. And researchers will use this knowledge to develop new personalised ways of managing fatigue.

Most non-drug programmes for MS fatigue aren't designed to factor in how the NHS will deliver them; this programme will be different. The MS Society hope that if successful this should be widely available as routine NHS care.

Source: [REFUEL-MS: Can a digital intervention help to improve fatigue in people with MS? | MS Society](#)

MUTUAL SUPPORT COORDINATING TEAM & VOLUNTEER LIST

Jim Watson Group Coordinator	07951 037008 co-ord@mutual-support.org.uk
Julie Russell Administration Volunteer	07812 738 607 admin@mutual-support.org.uk
Jack Russell Finance Volunteer	07855 434 921 finance@mutual-support.org.uk
Graham Duncan Admin Volunteer (Membership)	01993 844 136 membership@mutual-support.org.uk
Jill Watson Events Volunteer (Manager)	07506 272 916 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)	events3@mutual-support.org.uk
VACANT Events Volunteer (4) Speakers	speakers@mutual-support.org.uk
Events Volunteer	Vacant
VACANT Comms Volunteer (Newsletter)	comms@mutual-support.org.uk
Stuart Davey Comms Volunteer (Publicity)	07799 764876 publicity@mutual-support.org.uk
VACANT Comms Volunteer (Social Media)	socials@mutual-support.org.uk
Heather Yendle Fundraising Volunteer	fundraiser@mutual-support.org.uk
VACANT Support Volunteer	stc1@mutual-support.org.uk
Helen Spear Support Volunteer	stc2@mutual-support.org.uk

Thank you to all of our benefactors

