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News Articles to be sent to:

comms@mutual-support.org.uk

Newsletter Deadline:

Saturday 30th September 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.

Dear all,

Well, it has been a while since the last Newsletter and I apologise for that. Like many of our volunteers on the Coordination Team, I am balancing a full-time job, with my caring role, my role as Group Coord and finally publishing a Newsletter. We continue to seek the following volunteers:

- Newsletter Editor
- Social media volunteer
- Events (Speakers) volunteer
- Support Team Contact
- Fundraising Manager

Thank you to Abigail Hiorns who has agreed to be a fundraiser for us, she will be taking collection tins and holding raffles at select events.

The May 2026 Wellbeing weekend saw us expand our services to provide an improved offer to the wider family with a great package of activities for our younger members. On Saturday 18th Apr our young people visited Lea Green for a day of activities including cooperative game and low ropes. What sets Mutual Support apart is its commitment to the whole family. Its fully funded Respite and Wellbeing Weekends are carefully designed to be family-friendly, with dedicated sessions for children, partners, and the individual. There is more information further in the Newsletter.

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).

The coord team continues to look for volunteers, with a list of roles available below. That said, I appreciate that there are reasons why people will not want to commit to doing too much. Please contact Julie (Admin Vol) or me even if you cannot cover any of these roles but could offer some assistance on the weekends themselves. Having someone to meet our speakers or entertainment would really lift some of the burden off the events team.

Jim Watson
Group Coordinator

Managing MS during Heatwaves

For many individuals with Multiple Sclerosis, an increase in core body temperature by as little as 0.25°F can cause a temporary flare-up of neurological symptoms. This is not a new relapse or a sign of disease progression—it is simply a temporary slowing of nerve conduction that resolves once you cool down.

So, what can you do to reduce the effect of a heatwave?

Active pre-cooling - Use a cooling vest, neck wrap, or ice bandana before going out. Sip ice-cold water or electrolyte-replacement fluids continuously. Do not wait until you are

thirsty. Enjoy ice pops, frozen fruit slices, or chilled smoothies throughout the day to lower internal temperatures.

Environment Control - Air Conditioning: Keep central air active or establish a designated "cool room" with a robust window unit. Solar Blocking: Keep curtains, blinds, and thermal shades completely closed during peak daylight hours (11:00 AM – 4:00 PM). Cool Showers: Take tepid or cool baths/showers. Completely avoid hot tubs, saunas, and hot baths.

Smart wardrobe choices - Breathable Fabrics: Opt for loose-fitting, lightweight garments made from natural fibres like cotton, linen, or sweat-wicking athletic blends. Light colours: Wear whites and light pastels that reflect solar radiation rather than absorbing it. Sun Protection: Wear wide-brimmed hats and polarized sunglasses when stepping outside.

Pacing and Scheduling - Shift Daily Activities: Move exercise, grocery shopping, or gardening to early morning (before 9:00 AM) or late evening. Enforced Rest Breaks: Build structured rest periods into your day. Heat exhaustion can compound rapidly without physical cues. Delegate Strenuous Tasks: Avoid heavy cooking or cleaning on extreme heat days.

Source: Managing MS During Heatwave-v3.pdf

Employment Rights Bill

The Government passed the Employment Rights Bill meaning it becomes law from 6th April 2026. One element of the bill is that the previous 3 day waiting period to qualify for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) will be gone. People can now claim SSP from day one of absence. The lower earnings limit has also been removed meaning it is now accessible to all regardless of salary.

Many people with MS need time off work to manage their health. Having to take unpaid time off work for sickness increases stress and can often worsen your MS. It can often be the difference between staying in work and compromising your health or being forced out.

Not everything has been rectified by the bill. SSP can only be paid up to 28 weeks in a three-year period, either in one period of sickness, or in several linked periods less than eight weeks apart. This is not helpful for people with MS, which fluctuates and the MS Society continues to lobby for an extension the period someone can claim and change how different periods of sickness are linked. Also, the SSP is for full days and not hourly, making a gradual return to work more challenging. Finally SSP is only £123.25 (as of 6th Apr 26).

Source: [What will the Employment Rights Bill mean for people with MS? | MS Society](#)

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 if you are interested in any of the roles.

Fundraising Volunteer - The Fundraising Team Manager role is responsible for the planning, organisation and coordination of all fundraising conducted on behalf of Mutual Support. Duties include:

- Issue, monitoring and control of collection containers and recording accordingly.
- Recruiting volunteers specifically to help organise fundraising events.
- Ensuring with the Publicity Volunteer that supplies of publicity material are made available to support fundraising events.
- Encouraging the membership to actively involve themselves in fundraising activities for the Group, and to support and advise all members on fundraising activities.

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 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 is a fantastic way to see how the team organise events.

Social Media

We are looking for an individual to help us expand our social media impact. Julie Russell currently provides a lot of information regarding events, activities (sport), and general updates on Facebook. I am looking for someone to take that responsibility away so she can concentrate on her primary role on the Coord team. We should also be looking at other ways we can use Facebook and Instagram, Tik Tok etc.

Membership Report July 2026

There has been some more membership activity since our last newsletter; the membership consists of the following:

- There are 1228 members in total, with 549 members having MS.
- Among the 549 members with MS, 60 are currently serving personnel of the Armed Forces.
- 388 members are former serving personnel.
- 101 members are dependants with MS.
- There are also 671 children, spouses, and partners without MS.
- There are 15 Patrons and Honorary members, eight of whom have MS.

Welcome to the 25 new members who have joined Mutual Support since February 2026. The new members are:

Sarah and Christopher Adams
Lauren and Carys Beardall-Jones
Ashley Carr
Fi Cusick and Alison Handley
Shane Edgar and Maggie Bonnell
Adam and Rebekah Foster
Rik Francis and Safia Kukaswadia
Luke Hamilton
Leigh Horton and Judie Hewlett
Martin Jefferies
Cheryl Lord and Sarah Mahon
Karen Richardson
Jayne Simpson and Ryann Panozzo
Dougie Whiteford and Lorna Whiteford
Jack Williams.

Facebook

There are 410 members who belong to our Facebook page. If you have not yet joined our band of brothers and sisters on FB and would like to, just search for us or click on the link:

[Mutual-Support | Facebook.](#)

Grant Applications

Veterans Foundation Grant application has been successful and we have been awarded £30k over 3 years to be paid each year from September 26.

RNRMC - we are through to the second level for this grant which is now being completed.

A message from your admin volunteer Julie Russell:

I am completing grant applications at the moment and if successful, I will need to send evidential feedback about the impact our group and it's events has on its members young and older.

The grants I'm applying for are entitled: Mental Health, Well-Being and Resilience They'll be looking qualitative data in the form of case studies and quotes for the following outcomes:

Outcome 1 Mental Health is improved or sustained.

Outcome 2 Beneficiaries will feel less lonely or be less socially isolated.

I will also be collating quantitative data from the feedback forms that we issue at each well-being weekend so it's extremely important that I get as many completed forms as possible after each event. 🙏 These grants enable a large part of our events and so are really important for the continuation of our wonderful well-being weekends. As ever, all information will be anonymised so no worries on identification and everything remains within my computer and the grant forms. I've written mine but I'm sure they are all sick of hearing about the impact the group has on Jack and me and the reason why we have volunteered since the early days of our attendance at an event.

Thank you so much in anticipation of your assistance 🙏

admin@mutual-support.org.uk

Financial Report

In 2026, Mutual Support has managed to raise a whopping £11,383.34. This come from grants, donations (£5000) and fund raising events. Part of this huge figure was £217.37, which was from the interest raised on the funds within our account. There is no indication of how much we will receive from Gift Aid but it has been significant in the past. So, please tick the gift aid box if you are fund raising for us (you must be a UK tax payer).

It costs us around £40,000 per year to host the weekends and we rely on fundraising and grants.

Fundraising Report

Taz Taylor Captain's Day at Colmworth Golf Club – As this year's Captain, Taz is proud to announce that all funds raised during Captain's Day at Colmworth Golf Club will go to Mutual Support. Taz has been living with MS for 25 years, and knows first hand how important support, research, and community are. Taz has raised £3k so far with another event to come. Thank you so much Taz, this will make such a difference.

Helen Spear - ongoing fundraising making and selling bags **and now dog bandanas**.

She is so talented. 🙌

Stacey Denyer - is doing a 40th birthday (birthday is August) fundraiser for 7 charities. We are one of them.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/my-40th-record-breaking-birthday/fb/o?>

Stuart Davey's Mum We were incredibly honoured when Stuart informed us that his mum had asked for donations to Mutual Support at her wake. A collection raised £1200 **and her local over 60's Indoor Cricket Group also donated £400.**

Sincere condolences to the Davey family

Martin Nash - is doing a run in October 26 for Mutual Support

Kev Jerram - raised £2097.60 in a 12 hours walking challenge using an upright walking frame. Wow, this goes to prove the warrior spirit of someone with MS and military personnel.

The Coord team would like to thank everyone for their efforts and encourage all of our members to think about any fundraising activities they may be able to carry out. Fundraising can be done in many ways – whether that be a charity run, a bake sale, Kiltwalk – you name it! You can contact the Group Coord or Admin Volunteer if you want to discuss any ideas. You can also donate to Mutual Support directly via bank transfer using the following ways:

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

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

April 2026 Wellbeing Weekend – The Hayes

The coord team wanted to do something different this wellbeing weekend, so used the services of the local outdoor, education and activities centre, Lea Green. On Saturday 18th, young carers along with parents and a coord team representative went for a fun filled day of outdoor activities. Lea Green employ a professional team, who are DBS checked and experts in providing interesting and exciting activities for young people.

The staff from Lea Green provided our young people with space to share new experiences with people their own age and gave them an opportunity to talk to each other about what life as a young carer is like.

We hope to do something similar in the future but may have to bring providers onto the same site as we are for the weekends. The staff were brilliant and the young people, parents and members of the coord team had a really good time, as you can see from the pictures below. Jack maybe had more fun than anybody else.



4 - Sep 2026 – 35th Anniversary Wellbeing Weekend

Mutual Support was the brainchild of our three founding members: Kim Bartlett, Sue Smith, and Suzanne Crighton. Recognising a need to provide “mutual support” as the military struggled to understand the illness and how to support people through their MS journey, they established Mutual Support in 1991. Sadly, we have lost two of our incredible founding members (Kim and Sue), but I have exciting news. Suzanne and Kims’ wife, Cheryl have agreed to attend our 35th anniversary in September.

The events team have been working tirelessly to provide a weekend befitting their stellar work over many years. The weekend will take place at High Leigh, which will be our second time there. As well as having our special guests in attendance, we have the following guest speakers confirmed; Ana Pensoa (music therapy), Robert Gillert (poetry), and SE Strings. More speakers are to be confirmed.

You can hear and see some of Roberts’ excellent poems at the [beneath the tracksuit link](#).

To read more about Anna and music therapy, please visit this [link](#).

As stated and due to previous feedback, we will be entertained on Saturday evening by a trio from SE Strings. Please see this [link](#) to their work on YouTube.

The link to applications for the weekend is now on the Mutual Support [website](#). This weekend has been extremely popular with only reserve places remaining. That said, please apply if you are interested as you will put on the reserve list.

MUTUAL SUPPORT COORDINATING TEAM VOLUNTEERS

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
VACANT Events Volunteer (3) Quiz	events3@mutual-support.org.uk
VACANT Events Volunteer (4) Speakers	speakers@mutual-support.org.uk
Mike Nye Web Manager	07761 954 897 webmanager@mutual-support.org.uk
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
VACANT 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 our benefactors

Thank you to all of the charities and organisations that support us.



MUTUAL SUPPORT PATRONS: Dr Anita Rose B.A. (hons), D.Clin Psy., AFBPsS, C, Psychol; Dr Faraz Jeddi MBBS, MRCS(Ed), AFRCS (Ire), Pg Dip in RM
 PRESIDENT: Air Commodore Mike Barter CBE
 MS Society Registered Charity nos: 1139257/SC041990 & a company limited by guarantee (07451571)