

# HOLISTIC SUPPORT FOR RECOVERY

Supporting soldiers and veterans on their road to recovery was more important than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic when so many of them were prevented from seeing their loved ones.

Last year we awarded the Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS) a further grant of £200,000. This supports a network of welfare officers who work within 11 NHS Trusts providing practical and emotional support to patients in the Armed Forces community and their families.

Welfare officers have specialist expertise in military organisations and the services that are available to veterans. They also provide a single point of contact between the patient and the many health and social care organisations that play a role in their recovery.

## Reducing pressure on our NHS

Welfare officers are specialists in helping patients navigate the recovery pathway, which reduces the pressure on the NHS. With the welfare officer focused on unlocking the solutions that will enable independent living, clinicians are able to focus on providing the very best medical care. And by identifying the support needed when the patient returns home, the discharge process is made more efficient and unnecessary readmission is avoided. This in turn improves bed flow in the hospital.

OVER **5,500** individuals have already benefitted from our partnership with the DMWS



“Working in partnership with ABF The Soldiers’ Charity has enabled the Defence Medical Welfare Service to optimise support to those that need it most. It is at extraordinary times like these that both organisations step forward and make a real difference on the ground.”

Paul Gaffney, CEO, DMWS

Welfare officers play a proven role in improving a patient’s experience and recovery outcomes.

**75%** of patients accessing the DMWS reported an improvement in wellbeing



# How we helped Clyde recover in his own home

Scots Guards veteran Clyde needed our help when he was preparing to return to his flat after a stay in hospital with a broken leg. Clyde’s flat had become uninhabitable. He suffered with PTSD, depression and alcoholism and lived alone with no community support.

Concerned for his welfare and the high possibility of readmission due to neglect or infection, the hospital discharge team referred him to the DMWS and he was assigned a welfare officer called Jan.



“I am so grateful for everything Jan has done for me. I feel like a different man from the one who was admitted to hospital and am optimistic about the future.”

Jan visited Clyde several times to talk about how he was feeling and what support he needed. She organised a series of home visits with a volunteer from Age UK Veterans' Service and liaised with social services to get his flat cleaned ready for his return. She even managed to obtain a new set of bedding to ensure he would be clean and comfortable as he recovered.

As Clyde’s mental health improved, he became more confident about asking for the support he needed. He was able to recover from his injury at home, with the dignity and companionship he deserved.

PLEASE HELP OUR BRITISH SOLDIERS, PAST AND PRESENT, NAVIGATE THE ROAD TO RECOVERY.

✉ Complete and return the donation form

☎ Call 020 7901 8912 🌐 Visit [soldierscharity.org/mattersmost](https://soldierscharity.org/mattersmost)

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ABF  
THE SOLDIERS’  
CHARITY  
The Army’s National Charity

# FAMILY FOR LIFE



# SUPPORT WHEN IT MATTERS MOST



## WHENEVER THAT CRITICAL TIME MIGHT BE...

**As the Army's national charity, we support serving soldiers, former soldiers and their immediate families at critical times in their lives.**

The overall scale, breadth and range of our support is vast. We help very young serving families cope with a sudden bereavement or traumatic loss. We provide wide-ranging support to wounded soldiers, many of whom will need increasing financial assistance for decades to come. We provide help with housing, education and training for employment for soldiers and veterans of all ages. We are there for older veterans and their widows or widowers when they find themselves lonely or isolated.

In the last financial year our charitable expenditure was approximately **£8.3 million**, ensuring a complete spectrum of support to more than **60,000 members** of the Army Family across 63 countries. The youngest person we supported was **two years old**, and the eldest was **103**.

Demand for our support is expected to increase significantly as a result of COVID-19. Finding employment at a time of recession is particularly



hard for some of our veterans and many would have been faced with homelessness if we hadn't stepped in.

The anxiety and isolation of the past year has taken a real toll on those who already suffer with poor mental health. Furthermore, lockdown restrictions have made it very challenging for those in need to access community services that are vital to their recovery, and there are now long waiting lists. Thankfully our staff have been able to remain fully operational and continued to provide grants in a timely manner to all those in need.

**But only thanks to your continued support, for which we, and everyone we have helped over these incredibly challenging times, are extremely grateful.**

## How we helped Simon stay connected with his family

**"Sara and Julie were funny and caring and determined to make things better for our family."**

Royal Engineer Simon joined the Army in 1996 and completed tours of Bosnia, Iraq, Kenya and Canada. A keen bodybuilder, Simon was instrumental in establishing the Forces Strongman competitions around the UK and has taken the annual title three times.

Simon's life changed dramatically when an accident at home during lockdown saw him paralysed from the shoulders down. He spent six weeks in intensive care after a nine-hour operation to fuse his spine back together and now needs 24-hour personal care.

Due to the pandemic Simon's wife Leanne and his two children



were unable to visit him in hospital. This, he says, really took a toll on him mentally.

A team of two DMWS welfare officers, Sara and Julie, were assigned to assist Simon and his family with his recovery. They visited Simon daily and got him set up on FaceTime so he could re-connect with his family.

Sara and Julie liaised with the hospital to allow Leanne to visit and organised accommodation for her to stay in nearby. As Covid restrictions eased, they even arranged for Simon and Leanne to renew their wedding vows in hospital with their children present. This took place on their 20th wedding anniversary and Simon says it played a huge role in rebuilding his self-esteem and bringing the family even closer. The reassurance that his beloved family were being well supported while he was apart from them was an enormous relief to Simon.

**"Leanne was given a lot of support from Sara and Julie and she felt comfortable offloading her frustrations and anxieties to them. This meant the children benefitted too because she was able to de-stress."**

## How we helped Tony regain hope for the future

**"Without Justine's constant support and advice, I would have taken my own life."**

Tony joined the Army aged 16 and served for 14 years when a traumatic experience while serving in Northern Ireland left him struggling with his mental health for many years. His family found it increasingly difficult to understand his behaviour and he turned to alcohol to cope. Tony found the isolation of lockdown particularly hard. This was intensified as he was living with his ex-partner, meaning he was mostly confined to his bedroom. It was only after a suicide attempt that he was eventually diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Tony also has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which affects his mobility.



Tony's GP referred him to DMWS and he was assigned a welfare officer called Justine. Justine helped him find his own accommodation so he could move out from living with his ex-partner, organised the installation of a new shower and encouraged him to apply for a war pension. But it is the emotional support that Tony values most. In fact, he says she saved his life.

**"Justine has simply been fantastic. When I was a bit flat or worried about something she was always a safe person to turn to - and she always makes me laugh. She is also one of the only people I have spoken to about my PTSD."**

**"I now have hopes and plans for the future, something I never thought was possible. Without Justine's constant support I wouldn't be here today."**

Tony now wants to use his life-changing experience to raise awareness of the welfare officers amongst other soldiers and veterans who could benefit from support.

PLEASE HELP US TO RESPOND WHEN IT MATTERS MOST

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... WE AIM  
TO RESPOND  
IN 48 HOURS