



**Defence Medical  
Welfare Service  
Impact Report  
23/24**



# CEO Welcome

Our 80th year of supporting those on the frontline has been a very positive one for Defence Medical Welfare Service. Firstly, I would like to extend a huge thank you to Paul Gaffney who, at the end of this financial year, took the decision to step down as Chief Executive after seven outstanding years. I am very proud to follow in Paul's footsteps and take over as Chief Executive. This follows my seven years as Operations Director at DMWS as well as several years of frontline delivery.

In the past year, our teams have continued to work with exceptional dedication to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of those who make great sacrifices to protect our nation. We are a charity driven by our steadfast commitment to those we deliver support services to which is as true today as it has been throughout our history. We are immensely proud to have supported **13,724 people** who have served and are still serving on the frontlines. We also recognise the fundamental importance of the role of families and carers and include them across our service support.

Our clinical work continues to develop alongside a more sophisticated infrastructure to support our quality-assured delivery model to meet the requirements and challenges of the future. Professionalism, discretion, confidentiality and security forms the foundations of everything that we do. We believe that those who sacrifice the most deserve the very best in their time of need.

We look back at our achievements of 2023-24 with great pride and privilege and look forward to 2024-25 with aspiration and dedication. We will continue to be there for those who serve and have served to deliver positive and sometimes life changing outcomes, best expressed by one of our beneficiaries:

*"Without the help and support from the DMWS Welfare Officer, I would not be here now. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."*

We are exceptionally grateful to all of our supporters, funders and partners for helping make our work possible. Thank you for your continued support.



Abby Dryden, Chief Executive Officer

# Chair Welcome

I am honoured to have taken on the role of Chair of the DMWS Board of Trustees at what is an extremely busy and exciting time for our charity. Our core role of delivering medical welfare support to those who are on or have been on the frontline and their dependants is such an important mission and something that those who serve thoroughly deserve. My family were recipients of this support at the most challenging of times for us and we will always remember and be thankful for the compassionate care we received then.

This report sets out clearly just how busy and complex our environment has become and it is great credit to all that we continue to be the go to organisation in so many developing areas of welfare support. We have a tremendous amount to be proud of and I hope you will enjoy reading about it.

**Brigadier (Retd) Mike Griffiths CBE QPM,**  
Chair of DMWS Board of Trustees



## Our Strategic Aims

1

### **Put Our People and Beneficiaries First**

We will promote DMWS's values and commitment to our people to create an excellent place to work. We will continue to recruit, train and retain highly professional and dedicated staff.

2

### **Sustain, Grow and Innovate**

We will sustain effective projects and services while developing and expanding in areas of need, in response to our data and aligned to our skills, mission and aims.

3

### **Maintain and Improve Operational Excellence and Infrastructure**

We will build on our systems, processes and procedures to drive operational excellence underpinned by robust governance, confidentiality, high level security, risk management, financial management and safeguarding.

# What we do

Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS) is an independent charity who deliver award-winning services supporting physical, mental health and wellbeing services tailored to those who work in frontline roles. This includes the Armed Forces Community (serving, reservists, veterans), their families, Police, NHS staff and The Merchant Navy.

DMWS has operated for 80 years, at home in the United Kingdom and overseas, in challenging frontline environments. We deliver services discretely and always in support of those who make exceptional commitments to serve our nation.

We provide a range of non-clinical and clinical interventions to support individuals, families and carers through times of stress and uncertainty, during medical treatment at the hospital bedside, back home, and in the community or on deployed operations.

We provide practical and emotional support with an ever-evolving set of complex and sometimes distressing issues, using our own expertise and collaborating with other statutory and non-statutory organisations to ensure the right care at the right time.



## **Our Mission:**

To provide a high-quality professional and confidential medical welfare service to those who serve the nation.



## **Our Purpose:**

To help people during their most critical time of need ensuring no one goes through the worry of injury or illness alone.



## **Our Vision:**

To be the most respected provider of welfare support for those in frontline services.



## **Our Values:**

Commitment - Integrity -  
People - Working Together

## Our support is proven to help people:

- Have better experiences of healthcare and recover more quickly.
- Understand, manage and access treatment for physical or mental illness and injury, as an individual or as their family member/carer.
- Be understood and acknowledged for their unique occupational service and its positive and negative impacts on their and their families' lives.
- Reduce negative habits and behaviours to improve life chances.
- Access and navigate multi-layered service provision to maximise interactions and ensure the best short and long-term outcomes.
- Feel valued and truly at the centre of service provision.
- Feel less lonely and more connected to their communities.
- Overcome alcohol and drug misuse.
- Feel less stressed and anxious.
- Seek support when dealing with thoughts of suicide or self-harm.
- Access financial support to reduce the stress of concerns about money.
- Help to find and stay in safe housing.
- Seek meaningful employment or volunteering opportunities to use their skills after service.



“People like me need people like DMWS. I've begun to realise just how many forces personnel struggle with their mental and physical health. This in turn affects their relationships with their partners, children and wider family. They are often struggling even to understand what is wrong, let alone how to deal with it... the DMWS Welfare Officers make a real difference because they make change happen when you are in no state to make it happen for yourself.”

Image © UK MOD Crown Copyright 2020

# Our History

DMWS are proud to celebrate our 80 year history supporting those who work on the frontline. Our physical, mental health and wellbeing services have adapted over time to meet the needs of those we serve, responding to different global and national contexts, environments and crises.

Our unique role and capability means that we can respond swiftly to a civilian crisis, national emergency or military deployment.

DMWS remain the only military charity and civilian welfare organisation to deploy to areas of conflict with the Armed Forces, working alongside medical staff in the Field Hospitals in Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan.

1940

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2020

**1943**

Formation of DMWS, originally known as the Service Hospital Welfare Department (SHWD).



**1944**

Cairo - Support is given to military patients and nursing staff in Cairo.  
Europe - Welfare Officers are based across Europe to facilitate vital communication between casualties and families.

**1944-1945**

India - DMWS facilitates communication with families of serving soldiers, give practical support to troops and helping prisoners of war suffering with mental health issues.

**1946-1947**

France - DMWS helps to trace British Nationals in France to enable communications and provide supplies.

**1947-1950**

"The Swiss Scheme" - Welfare Officers accompany injured servicemen on convalescent trips to Switzerland.

**1947-2019**

Germany - Welfare Staff were stationed in Germany to provide practical and emotional support to military patients and their families based there.

**1953**

Malaya and Korea - Welfare Officers deploy to offer support and comfort to troops and locals to distribute supplies.



**1955**

Austrian Barrage Fire - Welfare Officers travel to Austria to aid injured British soldiers and support the bereaved.

**1956**

Hungarian Refugee Crisis - Help is provided during the crisis, as a total of 200,000 refugees flee from Hungary.

**1956-1957**

The Suez Crisis - DMWS distributes items to wounded servicemen and assists the evacuation of employees of the Suez contractor companies.



**Since 1963**

Cyprus - Support is provided to the Armed Forces Community when receiving hospital care in Cyprus.

**Since 1968**

Northern Ireland - Welfare Officers are deployed to support troops during Operation Banner and remain to deliver our services to the Armed Forces Community based there.

**1982**

The Falklands - Welfare Officers deploy to the Falkland Islands and are based on SS Uganda, the military hospital ship, during Operation Corporate.

**1990-1991**

First Gulf War - During Operation Granby, Welfare Officers assist in the field hospitals to support troops of all nationalities.

**1991-1992**

Lebanon Hostage Crisis - Welfare Officers support the families of Terry Wait and John McCarthy following their release from captivity.

**1992-1995**

Balkans - DMWS provides welfare support to troops serving in former Yugoslavia.

**2001**

Independent Charity  
As a result of forming an independent charity, the organisation name is changed to **Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS)**.

**2001-2011**

Afghanistan - During Operation Herrick, DMWS Welfare Officers are embedded in field hospitals supporting troops of all nationalities, the staff of the hospital, as well as Afghan Nationals.



**2003-2011**

Second Gulf War - Welfare Officers are based in field hospitals during Operation Telic. The Welfare Department came under attack but fortunately no staff were injured.

**2011-2015**

Ebola Crisis - Welfare Officers support the families of Ebola patients, recently returned from Sierra Leone.

**2011**

DMWS Training - Our Training Arm was established to deliver welfare, resilience and mental health training courses internally and externally.

**2016**

Diversification - DMWS expands its welfare support to new beneficiaries including veterans, the Police, the probation service and the NHS.

**2017**

Manchester Arena Attack - Welfare Officers support those affected by the attack including emergency services, patients, their families and the bereaved.

**2018**

75th Anniversary - DMWS are proud to have supported more than 1,000,000 patients and their families since 1943.

**2020**

Covid-19 Pandemic - DMWS maintain operational status, responding to urgent assistance from NHS, Emergency Services and the MoD.



**2020**

National Response Service - Our helpline is established to support Armed Forces beneficiaries across the UK.

**2021-21**

Expansion - Our footprint extends to over 46 hospital based welfare services across the UK and 9 in Cyprus, providing support at the bedside and back home. We continue to broaden our clinical provision for those in high trauma roles including Police and NHS. We are an integral partner to Op RESTORE, Op COURAGE and Op COMMUNITY.

# Our footprint

- Embedded in over 46 NHS Trusts and Boards across the UK, delivering support for the Armed Forces Community at the bedside, back home and with reach into local communities.
- UK-wide National Response Service helpline.
- Dedicated Ministry of Defence Hospital Welfare Service provider in Northern Ireland, Cyprus and RCDM Birmingham.
- Op RESTORE delivery partner; Op COMMUNITY Single Point of Contact: London; Op COURAGE – two-way referral partner.
- Exemplar Welfare and Psychological support to Police, Forensic Scene Examiners and NHS staff.
- Supporting accreditations from Veteran Covenant Healthcare Alliance and helping to meet the Armed Forces Covenant Duty.



From April 2023 -  
March 2024, we  
supported  
**13,724**  
people across the  
UK and Cyprus



5,553 direct  
beneficiaries

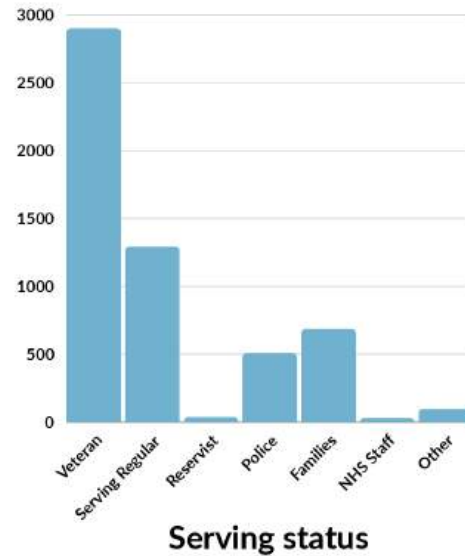
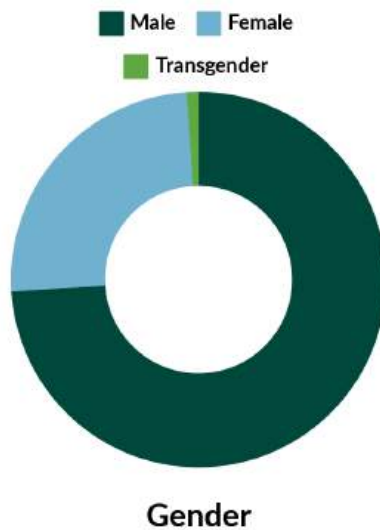
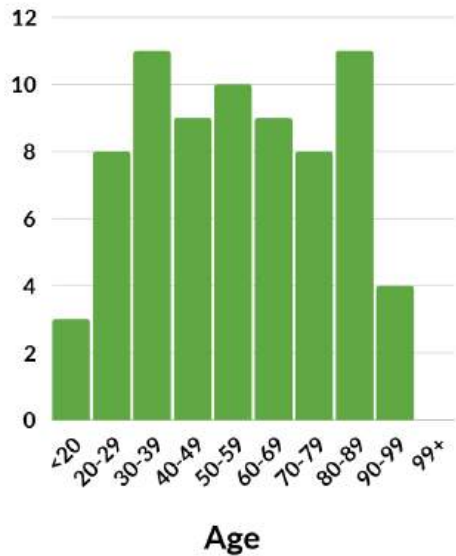


4,057 family  
members/carers



4,114 NHS staff





# Supporting complex needs



We helped **115 people** recover and see a future who had **attempted to take their own lives and/or self-harmed**.



We supported **113 people** who were **homeless to find a safe place to live**.



**24%** of people we supported were **high, severe or exceptionally complex cases**.



We provided intervention quickly, with our average referral response time being **less than 2 days**.



**“Talking to someone who understood my military lifestyle was great. I think talking to DMWS could save lives.”**

# Armed Forces Welfare Services

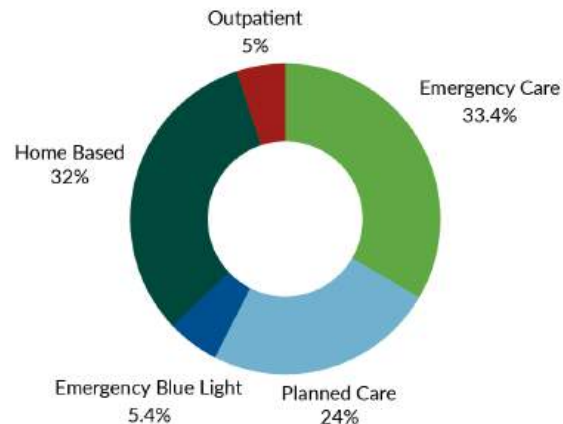
## Project highlights

Our Armed Forces Welfare Services are based in 46 NHS Trusts and Boards across the four nations. Our services are proven to deliver fantastic health and wellbeing outcomes for Armed Forces patients and their families, plus cost and time savings to the NHS.

“The benefits of having a DMWS Welfare Officer are massive. They offer expertise and have more time to spend at the bedside. They can unpick complexities and often get more disclosure from the veteran being veterans themselves. Patients may not open up to clinical staff, but they will to another veteran. We’ve found that a simple referral can also end up supporting other beneficiaries too.’

**Amanda Morledge, Discharge Education Lead & Armed Forces Clinical Champion, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust**

### Referral sources



### Complexities



# Reducing frequent hospital attendance

## Tom's story

DMWS supported Tom, a patient with complex mental health issues and alcohol dependency. There were safeguarding warnings due to mental health (diagnosis Schizophrenia) and aggressive behaviours. In a 12-month period there were eight inpatient admissions prior to the DMWS referral. These admissions averaged 7-14 days and very sadly this was 30-year pattern for Tom with a known long term history of alcohol misuse. Tom was refusing to engage with support.

DMWS started to support Tom, building rapport and trust through over 138 contacts plus coordinating eleven organisations involved in his care. With our support, Tom has been able to:

- Attend his **first ever therapy session** to stabilise **PTSD**.
- Take his **first ever prescription of medication** - previously unsafe due to his alcohol consumption levels.
- **Understand the support** on offer.
- **Feel less lonely** and get involved with **community activities**.
- **Calm his challenging behaviours** and **improve his resilience**.

\*Names and locations of all case studies have been changed or removed to preserve anonymity.



**87% reduction  
in avoidable  
admissions**



**Cost saving for  
NHS of £30,800**

“Combining DMWS and our healthcare awareness is delivering some fantastic results.”

**Professor Dave Thomas, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust's Director of Nursing Strategy and Transformation & Chief Nursing Information Officer**

## Kevin's story

"On our first meeting, Kevin looked very unwell. I took him to a café. Despite being a homeless veteran and having nothing, he offered to buy me a coffee, which always stuck with me. He shared that no one had wanted to sit with him in a public space and that I made him feel equal and "human". This was the start of his journey with DMWS and our successful engagement.

Kevin did not have the capacity to attend Op RESTORE appointments due to his drug use. So I focused on his addiction, working closely with Op COURAGE and SSAFA to complete the forms, evidence and statements needed to get the funding required for a rehabilitation programme, totalling £15,000. We were so delighted when Kevin got his place as we knew he had the drive and want for positive change.

We have kept in regular contact during his treatment, and we plan to continue to support him. His next step is a secondary programme through Tom Harrison House. Kevin opted for this as he is keen to engage with as many courses as possible and eventually give back as a support worker. This is his ultimate aim."



Kevin and Sarah Bartlett-Bond,  
DMWS Complex Case Manager.

# One year later

"Kevin has made fantastic progress, nearing the one year point since his successful rehab programme and is training for a triathlon to help raise funds for Tom Harrison House. He has actively engaged in volunteering and is also mid-course to be a mentor, living in the staff accommodation.

Kevin's relationship with his parents and family has also greatly improved. After losing his sister suddenly just two weeks after his rehab graduation, he was able to control his urges to use again. He even visited a park where he knew he could purchase drugs, but called on the support from Tom Harrison House to prevent relapse.

The community and support that surrounds him has been key to his remarkable recovery. Kevin is a valued and active part of that community now, giving him purpose and belonging which has excelled his self-worth. This radiates through his face and body language, standing tall and looking straight ahead. I never realised how tall he is as he was always trying to hide himself. His confidence has also grown, and he recently did a radio interview with BBC Merseyside to talk about his recovery.

We met again at the usual café, and this time he did buy the coffees, bringing a very warm close to our journey."

**Sarah Bartlett-Bond, DMWS Complex Case Manager**



*Kevin and Sarah Bartlett-Bond,  
DMWS Complex Case Manager.*

# NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Veterans' Support Service

In partnership with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, DMWS deliver the NHS GGC Veterans' Support Service providing welfare support to those on a clinical pathway in acute care or those trying to access specialist mental health support. Our service provides a cornerstone of support, demonstrating NHS GGC's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant Duty.

In 2023, we supported 110 direct beneficiaries with critical support, and 196 indirect family members with light touch support. Over 50% of those we served were over 60 highlighting the demand of our services for the elderly. Our service helped beneficiaries tackle issues such as mental health, social isolation, severe injury rehabilitation, inappropriate housing and low self-esteem, amongst many others.

This exciting collaboration is made possible with thanks to the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Healthcare Charity.



*Right. Sam Wilkie, DMWS Welfare Officer and Complex Case Manager.*





# Jack's Story

DMWS supported a 21-year-old male, Jack, who was serving in the Army but pending discharge. Jack presented at the Emergency Department at his local hospital following an overdose. He had been struggling with severe financial stress and was being discharged from the Army due to his mental health issues.

Jack was referred to DMWS for support. We spent time talking to him and building trust. He told us he was in a lot of debt and needed support to find housing since his financial situation was discouraging landlords. He had a lack of appetite and was struggling to sleep.



## The result

Our Welfare Officer provided a range of support to Jack. We made a safety plan in case he reached crisis again. We supported with housing contact and applications and interim accommodation until an option was secured. We also looked at employment options with Jack for after his discharge, building on his army training

DMWS found groups that interested Jack, like fishing and kickboxing, so he had a network outside of the military to make more friends, boost his wellbeing, and connect to his local community.

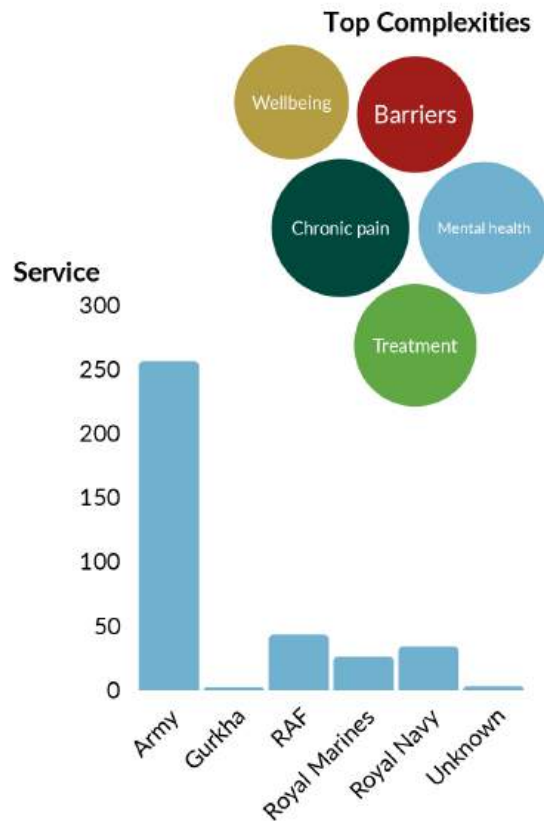
Jack is doing well and we will continue to be there for him throughout his journey, for as long as he needs us.

# Op RESTORE: The Veterans' Physical Health and Wellbeing Service

DMWS are proud to be a key partner in Op RESTORE. We identify and assist with multiple factors affecting the lives of veterans and their families, providing holistic care alongside Op RESTORE NHS services.

Op RESTORE is a service for anyone who has served at least one day in the UK Armed Forces and, as a result of their service, acquired a significant, lasting physical illness or injury.

Op RESTORE uses a network of both civilian and military consultants, along with welfare support from military charities, to support a veteran's health using a holistic approach. Whilst Op RESTORE cannot shorten NHS waiting times, it seeks to ensure the veteran 'waits well' and is seen by the most appropriate clinician for their needs.



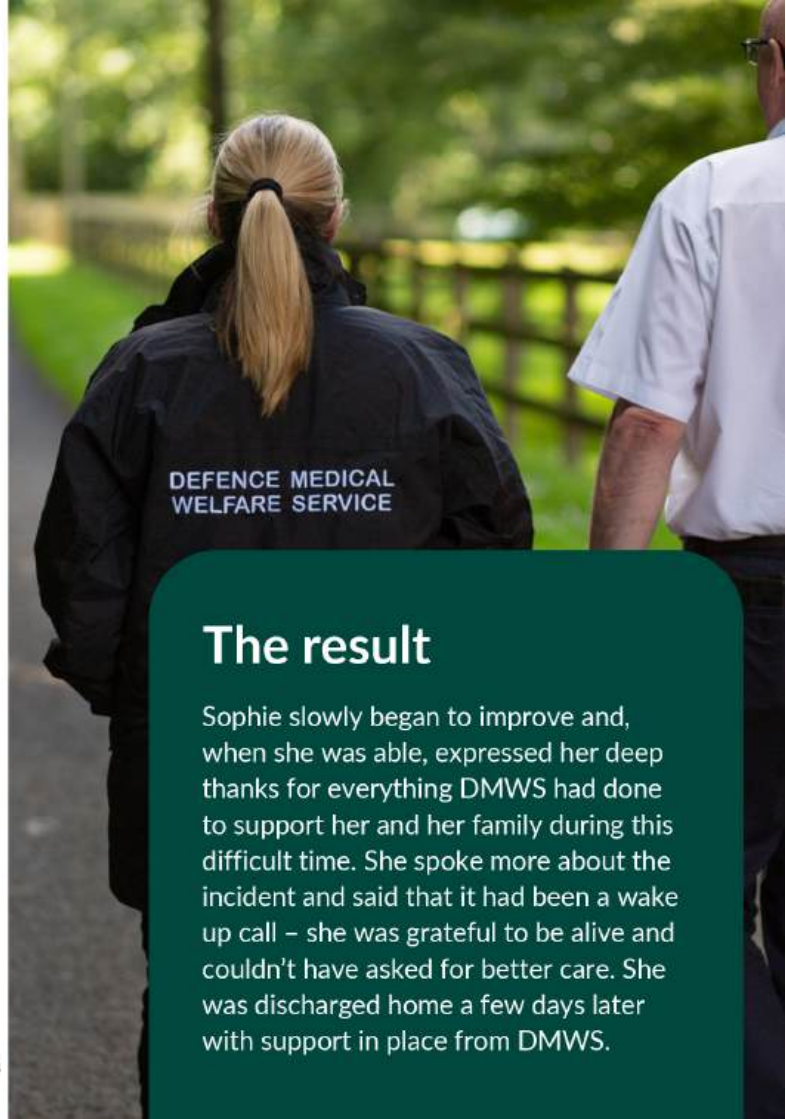
OpRESTORE

**NHS**  
The Veterans Physical Health  
and Wellbeing Service

## Sophie's story

Sophie is a 46-year-old female veteran who was admitted to a specialist hospital following an overdose. She had acute kidney failure and liver damage which would mean a long stay. Sophie's husband (also a veteran) and adult daughter, who has learning difficulties, wanted to stay with her so our Welfare Officer organised accommodation and helped the family settle in. They told us that Sophie had been struggling with poor mental health for a while but they hadn't realised the full extent.

The family were understandably worried so our Welfare Officer provided crucial support during this uncertain time. This included accompanying Sophie's husband and daughter to visit her in Critical Care and meeting with them daily to provide updates. Sophie's daughter was particularly upset and overwhelmed so our Welfare Officer supported her to take regular breaks and spent time with her to build rapport. Sophie's daughter later said that she felt she now had someone to talk to.



### The result

Sophie slowly began to improve and, when she was able, expressed her deep thanks for everything DMWS had done to support her and her family during this difficult time. She spoke more about the incident and said that it had been a wake up call – she was grateful to be alive and couldn't have asked for better care. She was discharged home a few days later with support in place from DMWS.

# Op COMMUNITY: Armed Forces Community Support

DMWS are the Single Point of Contact for Op COMMUNITY, a collaborative of providers who support the Armed Forces Community/family members and carers of those who are serving or have served. This is led by Op COURAGE London and includes The Ripple Pond. We aim to provide advice and support under the Armed Forces Covenant and the Armed Forces Act 2021, understanding military life and culture and the challenges families experience.

“The support was excellent and we are truly grateful for the progress that was made and the positive outcome. It’s so reassuring that this service is here to support us.”

Op Community Beneficiary

## How do we help?

- Work and liaise with other organisations facilitating safe and expedient transfers and continuity of care.
- Continuation of treatment including maintaining places on NHS waiting lists.
- Advice, guidance and support on how to use the NHS and navigate systems.
- Advise on Veteran Friendly GP Practices within the local area.
- Coordinated support through Social Prescribing.
- Information and advice on other NHS Armed Forces services e.g. Op RESTORE, Op COURAGE and the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service.
- Working alongside the wider armed forces network to find solutions; this may include supported referrals to specialist charities and organisations, for example support with debt, housing, employment, and benefits.

OpCOMMUNITY

**NHS**  
Armed Forces  
Community Support

## John and Lucy's Story

DMWS received a referral from Emergency Occupational Therapy to support John, a 67-year-old Navy veteran, and his daughter Lucy who is his main carer.

Our Welfare Officer visited the veteran at his bedside while he was in hospital, talking about his service history and his current wellbeing. We also talked with Lucy and identified ways to help her care for her father; this included accessing benefits and identifying needs at home to prepare him for a successful discharge such as installing a ramp at his door and a medication safe. Our Welfare Officer also connected John and Lucy to local groups so they could feel included in the community and get support from others like them.

One week later, Lucy called DMWS in a panic about her father's leg which was swollen. She felt like no-one was listening and was about to call 999.

## The result

Our Welfare Officer listened to her concerns and escalated them to a GP who assessed John the same day and prescribed medication to help. This prevented a call to emergency services and alleviated stress for John and Lucy.

We also supported John to complete his applications for a Blue Badge and bus pass which were approved, allowing him to maintain some independence and get out and about. We arranged a community Occupational Therapy home visit with the Housing Officer to discuss the best ramp for John and sourced funding for this through a veteran's charity.

After all the support DMWS provided, John is now able to remain at home with confidence and independence. He attends a weekly coffee morning to meet others and Lucy has joined a carer's group, receiving support and training so she can continue to look after her father.



# MOD



Ministry  
of Defence

The nature of military activity and the ways of service life set Armed Forces communities apart from many areas of civilian society. As such, there is a requirement to provide welfare support to 'secure and improve the wellbeing of serving personnel and the Service community.

DMWS deliver a Hospital Welfare Service in three operational military theatres, each with a prevalence of distinct and particular issues.

These locations are:

- Royal Centre for Defence Medicine, Birmingham
- Northern Ireland co-located with 38 Irish Brigade
- British Forces Cyprus



*DMWS Cyprus Team.*

“DMWS was invaluable during a really difficult and uncertain time for me and my family. I don't think I am able to put into words quite how much I appreciate and needed the support. Without DMWS I would not have been able to navigate language barriers by myself or understand the care my new-born son was receiving and the testing he would need to have. The Welfare Officer listened to all my worries and concerns, offered advice and solutions, liaised and got answers and I am extremely grateful that she was here for me. Thank you for your services.” - **DMWS Beneficiary**

# RBL Battle Back Centre

## *Andy's story*



**DMWS are proud to offer professional welfare support on Royal British Legion's Battle Back courses.**

Andy is an Army veteran and proud of his service in the Corps of Royal Engineers. However, several bereavements, PTSD and a difficult relationship with alcohol contributed to the breakdown of his personal relationship. He lost everything and became homeless. The Royal British Legion helped him secure housing where he came across an advert for a course at Battle Back. During the course he engaged in some excellent activities and met one of the DMWS Welfare Officers who is embedded there to provide support.

Andy gained a great deal from the course and has gone from strength to strength. He now volunteers at an open water swimming club and works part time on a local farm that offers Mental Health First Aid and Wellbeing Courses. Andy made a great impression there and he was offered part-time work on the farm, looking after the farm machinery and many animals.

Andy has recently attended Battle Back for a second time and continues to create a happier and healthier life for himself.



*Andy and Geoff Ingram,  
DMWS Welfare Officer.*

# Northern Ireland

## Support for Veterans

With our considerable background in supporting the Armed Forces Community in Northern Ireland and our understanding of the sensitivities and the medical environments, DMWS are well placed to deliver an innovation project in Northern Ireland. This is an 18-month project supported by the Office for Veterans' Affairs to better understand the healthcare needs of the veteran community.

DMWS deliver clinical and non-clinical expertise to support physical and mental health issues as well as the wider determinants of health which can cause or exacerbate poor physical and mental health. Our clinicians provide nursing assessments, sit in on consultations, and advocate at a clinical level. Our team is embedded in the local community and are developing pathways into the healthcare system that will impact on delivery to the veteran community.

### Our service:

- Provides a point of contact for future referrals.
- Offers a specialist clinical support service to veterans seeking advice and guidance with ongoing treatment and lifestyle improvements.
- Advocates and supports people to navigate clinical pathways which form part of the project.
- Understands the needs and barriers experienced by veterans in Northern Ireland.
- Seeks to improve pathways and understanding of support requirements.
- Delivers enhanced and flexible support which is integrated but independent.
- Aims to create a service that supports the principle of 'waiting well' in a complex delivery environment.
- Delivers a sense of active commitment and support to the veterans' healthcare journey even while waiting.



Office for  
Veterans' Affairs




## Joyce and Bill's story

Joyce was a 52-year-old RAF veteran who was awaiting a cancer diagnosis. DMWS received a call from Joyce who felt her husband, Bill, would benefit from having someone to talk to due to the upcoming diagnosis and uncertainty about the future.

Bill then reached out to DMWS himself, saying he agreed he could benefit from support, having previously struggled with depression, thoughts of taking his own life, and alcohol misuse. He didn't want to risk falling back into this way of life if he were to lose Joyce, and as a Mental Health First Aider he understood the importance of receiving support.

Our Welfare Officer built trust with the couple and provided emotional support, particularly during the shock of Joyce receiving a terminal diagnosis. Bill was able to open up to our Welfare Officer, expressing how he felt with honesty, in a way which he felt he couldn't do with his family or friends at this difficult time.



Sadly, Joyce passed away much sooner than expected. Bill was supported in navigating his bereavement. At his pace, we guided him through potential community groups and activities that he could take part in when he felt the time was right. He was also directed to wider cancer and bereavement support groups that could provide further support for his situation.

We continue to support Bill as he adjusts to life on his own. We will be there for Bill as long as he needs.

# Collaborations: Veterans Housing Scotland

DMWS are proud to be working with Veterans Housing Scotland (VHS), an Edinburgh-based charity, who provide affordable rented homes and wraparound support for disabled veterans. This partnership is funded by The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust under the Reducing Veteran Homelessness programme.

This fantastic collaboration is working to support veterans facing homelessness. Together, dedicated VHS Visiting Officers and DMWS Welfare Officers identify and support veterans who are on challenging housing journeys and need a combination of stable housing and welfare support to help them live well.



From left to right - Veterans Minister, Graeme Dey, MSP; Siobonne Brewster, Director of Development, Defence Medical Welfare Service; Bob Kemp, Chairman, Veterans Housing Scotland; Stephen Elliot, Deputy Chief Executive, Veterans Housing Scotland; Yvonne Pugh; Craig Pugh, VHS Tenant; and front Ryan MacDonald, Operations Manager, SSAFA/Glasgow's Helping Heroes.

## Collaborations: *Alabaré*

DMWS work collaboratively with Alabaré, a charity supporting vulnerable, homeless and marginalised people, to support veterans struggling with homelessness in Wales. The pathway to ending homelessness is not just about accommodation; for many of those we have worked with, the first step is believing they are worthy of comfortable housing in safe communities.

This collaboration is a two-way process; Alabaré refer veterans to DMWS for support with ongoing/complex healthcare needs. In turn, DMWS identify veterans who may not otherwise access Alabaré's support, using our significant networks and expertise to engage veterans with relevant services. This combined support has allowed veterans to move through the housing journey sustainably, reducing likelihood of further crisis.

By addressing barriers to wellbeing, such as poor self-worth, mental health difficulties, and alcohol and substance misuse, this partnership reduces the probability of veterans staying in cycles of homelessness.



We are now fully operationally in all locations within Wales as well as being embedded in the local NHS Health Boards so that beneficiaries have a seamless route for referrals into Alabaré.

"We absolutely see the need for this individualised service. We can spend dedicated time with each person to ensure they achieve their aspirations. Although we are just one quarter into the delivery of the programme, we can already see the impact and outcomes of our work."

**Head of Service, DMWS**

"We very much value this service and partnership!"

**Simon Frith, Wellbeing Enterprise Manager,  
Alabaré**

# Collaborations: *Veterans' Places, Pathways and People (VPPP)*

As a military welfare charity, DMWS understands that veterans can face challenges navigating mental health. The Veterans' Places, Pathways and People (VPPP) programme, funded by The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT), aims to create better, more sustainable support for veterans in their local communities.

This initiative has led to widely recognised positive outcomes. By creating safe spaces to learn together, the portfolio has worked together to develop three principles underpinning improved mental health support for vulnerable veterans:

1. **No wrong door**
2. **Warm handovers**
3. **Person centred support through multiagency working**

This fresh approach has achieved fantastic and life-changing outcomes for veterans present and future. With significant improvements in access to mental health services, particularly for at-risk veterans, including those in the LGBT+ community, while also reducing loneliness.



To date, the portfolio has:

- Supported 3067 beneficiaries.
- Created 5+ new safe places.
- Attended 500+ multi-agency meetings to advocate for veterans' needs.
- Trained 6 new support workers.
- Made 300+ cross-partner referrals.
- Engaged with 185 non-funded partners.

“The ability to build a network has helped in managing individuals who may have previously tried and failed or simply didn't know where to start. It has also enhanced our ability to make more meaningful and purposeful referrals across the charity's landscape, not just in the Midlands.”

**VPPP Midlands Partner**

# Veterans' Places, Pathways and People (VPPP)

DMWS were proud to host the Midlands Armed Forces Health Symposium, 'Meeting the Armed Forces Covenant Duty – Veterans' Mental Health' in Birmingham on 7th November 2023. The event saw a range of regional and national delegates come together to share lessons and insights on supporting veteran mental health in the Midlands region. This included combined expertise from The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, NHSE (Armed Forces Commissioners), Op COURAGE, the MOD and the military third sector.

Michelle Woolman-Lane, DMWS Veteran Network Programme Lead, says, 'Empathy is at the core of the VPPP programme. Building honest relationships with organisations where they feel safe and supported to grow has been incredible. By nurturing our military partners, we have seen individuals and organisations grow in their confidence to support the Armed Forces Community. This collaborative approach has not only led to meaningful outcomes for our most vulnerable veterans but also fosters a sustainable shift toward continued partnership and integrated support that will benefit them long into the future.'

We are proud to be continuing as VPPP Midlands Portfolio Lead as well as taking on this role in the Northeast and Yorkshire. We also continue to participate in other portfolios across the regions.



Midlands Armed Forces Health Symposium, 'Meeting the Armed Forces Covenant Duty – Veterans' Mental Health' held in Birmingham on 7th November 2023.

A person with long, wavy brown hair is seen from the back, looking out over a landscape. The person is wearing a dark, textured sweater. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with a blue sky and some greenery. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

## Paul's story

Paul is a 30-year-old male who is serving in the British Army. He was referred to DMWS because he was struggling with hearing loss and anxiety. The news about his hearing had been a shock and had immediately impacted Paul's career plans. He was overwhelmed and having regular panic attacks.

During this stressful time, two of Paul's children were on the pathway for Autism/ADHD. This was an additional worry for Paul as he could not physically be with his family when they needed him. Paul was finding it difficult to communicate his worries and feelings as he had never needed help before. He was also struggling being away from his loved ones and their much-needed support. He felt like he had lost control over his life.

## The result

DMWS provided emotional and practical support to Paul, having regular calls to build trust and giving him an outlet to share his feelings. We provided guidance to help Paul manage his panic attacks and anxiety, helping him to understand his triggers and introducing breathing and relaxation techniques to manage his racing thoughts. We also connected Paul to Hearing Loss services to help him learn about his condition and ways to manage symptoms.

To support him and his family through the Autism/ADHD assessments, we helped Paul and his partner access neurodiversity-focused parent support groups within their local area, plus an advocacy service to help them navigate the education system.

Paul has made fantastic progress. We are proud to continue to support him and his family as he plans for his future, helping him focus on his skills and goals.



“DMWS has been the only consistent support for me in all areas, from emotional support on my low days to informational support to help me progress my children’s Autism screening assessments and educational needs.”

“Your support has enabled me to push through those low days and see more clearly, slow down and understand my worries. You have helped me reflect on what is important and what I need to do, not only for myself but for my family.”

“I’ve now got support as I move forward and into the civilian world. Thank you!”

**Paul, DMWS Beneficiary**

# Supporting NHS staff

## *Leeds Health and Care Academy*



Working with Leeds Health and Care Academy, DMWS provide holistic welfare support to all health and care employees in Leeds, including social care and voluntary sectors. As an independent body, we can establish a relationship rooted in trust between the Welfare Officer and the beneficiary, giving them the outlet they need to share their difficulties and concerns, whether in the workplace or at home, to find solutions. We receive referrals from a range of sources including Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Primary Care and third sector organisations as well as self-referrals and those through senior colleagues.

Our service is delivered face-to-face and virtually to meet individual preferences. The staff supported so far have experienced a range of issues including bereavement, workplace discord and concerns, mental health issues, family difficulties and commitments, financial worries, housing concerns, and more.

"I want to thank you for making this service available to NHS staff; it has been an absolute life saver. My Welfare Officer listened without judgement, gave advice when needed and is compassionate. She's a great asset and gave me the confidence I needed to fight for my rights in the workplace. I'm more than happy to spread the word about your service."

"I had been struggling with anxiety at work but with DMWS's help I have gone three months without sickness."



## Jake's story

DMWS received a referral from a hospital's HR department to support Jake, a nurse who had previously served in the Army. Jake was off sick from work due to poor mental health following an investigation. Our Welfare Officer reached out to Jake to see how we could help. After talking with Jake and building trust, we referred him to Op COURAGE, the specialist NHS veteran mental health service, as well as his local Veterans' Hub for some social activities. We determined that Jake preferred to be contacted by email as it felt less daunting.

Two weeks later, Jake expressed worries about returning to work after being away for three months. We suggested meeting Jake at the hospital for a coffee to help remove the fear around being back in the hospital setting. During the meeting, Jake revealed he had been struggling with PTSD for many years, but he had thought it was depression from work. He had been engaging well with the support from Op COURAGE and was receiving the appropriate therapy to help him.

## The result

Our Welfare Officer met weekly with Jake at the hospital, encouraging him to visit different areas of the site. One month after the referral, Jake planned to return to work as he now felt able to. We agreed to meet him for lunch on his first day back and continued this throughout the week. Jake returned to full-time work on his original duties, contacting our Welfare Officer as and when he needed support; he also began attending a weekly social group.

Jake now feels confident to self-manage his PTSD and move forward. He is optimistic about the future and continuing his nursing career.

# Police Support

DMWS deliver a range of clinical and non-clinical interventions tailored to the needs and specifications of police environments. We offer support to Police Officers and Police Staff with any problems they are encountering professionally or in their personal life. The service is designed to work independently of, but aligned to, the objectives of the Police Forces, delivered by a team of staff with significant operational experience.

Our services are bespoke and tailored to meet the needs of the specific Police Force. Our extensive work in this area over the last three years has led us to identify the main issues that Police Officers and Police Staff typically face which are:

- Traumatic events
- Investigation
- Deterioration in mental health
- Demanding work environments and maintaining work-life balance

"I really appreciated the expediency that the service offered, the regularity, and the duration of each session. Claire was a great companion for each meeting and I really appreciated her approach and skills. She was the right person at the right time for me."

"I can't say enough about Ben, I felt supported and understood; he had a great understanding of what I was going through. His support was invaluable. I honestly don't know what I would of done without this service. Thank you!"

"Fantastic support and encouragement at a time of immense stress and pressure."

# Scottish Police Authority

DMWS provide quarterly psychological supervision for 98 Forensic Scene Examiners. We assess current mental wellbeing and provide appropriate support for a national service of staff who are exposed to traumatic scenes on a daily basis as a function of their roles.

This is a pilot programme to test the efficacy of proactive engagement with an independent counsellor as part of professional practice. We use appropriate measures to identify changes in the population's self-reported wellbeing using CORE-OM.

DMWS have supported the delivery of three sets of supervision with quarterly sessions on an ongoing basis. Through confidential and supportive sessions, we review issues including wellbeing, the job role, safety, and boundaries. The Scottish Police Authority reported being pleased with DMWS's ability to accommodate some significant logistical challenges due to geography and availability. Regular status meetings have been held with regular communication about the pilot and the participants. Both organisations are pleased that an improvement in wellbeing is being seen and look forward to ongoing progress and reviews.



SCOTTISH POLICE  
AUTHORITY  
ÙGH DARRAS POILIS NA H-ALBA

# Working for DMWS

"I have now been working for DMWS for just over three years since leaving the Army after a 35-year career. One of my main concerns was finding an organisation to work for who would provide me with job satisfaction and the camaraderie I enjoyed in the Army. I can safely say that I have found the golden nugget and look forward with anticipation to the next three years, to see what the future holds for DMWS as it continues to grow and support those who we serve."

**Andie Cole, Complex Case Manager**

"I'm so proud to work for DMWS, being able to support University Hospitals of Northamptonshire in raising awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and the vital network of support available to the Armed Forces Community through our work."

**Anna Ferreira-Gomes, Welfare Officer**

"Being a part of the Armed Forces Community myself and having worked with military personnel and their families in Germany, I initially felt that this would be a natural job transition for me. I then read more about DMWS and felt that the company's values and culture align with my own and therefore I applied for the role. I like the work environment and enjoy working with the team at HQ. I feel proud knowing that in some way the HQ team is supporting our welfare staff in doing what they do to support our service users."

**Naaz Giri, Business Manager and Company Secretary**

*Right. From top down. Colin Blackwood and Kirsty Smart, DMWS Scotland Team; Michelle Reynolds, Welfare Officer; Gemma Derbyshire, Welfare Officer; Matt Evans, Welfare Officer.*



# Celebrating 80 years

In September 2023, DMWS celebrated 80 years of supporting the frontline. Staff and supporters across the UK and Cyprus marked the occasion with events and challenges, participating in Ultra Marathons and activities across locations. This included Devon University Royal Naval Unit (URNUD)'s hike of the South West Coast Path from Land's End to Plymouth, covering an impressive 167 miles over 10 days. Other brilliant events included the 24 Commandos 80km Cycle and Row and a Run4Life charity event in Brunei! DMWS also hosted an Charity Ball in Plymouth.

DMWS are so thankful for everyone who took part and raised crucial funds to directly support those on the frontline.



*Above.* From left to right, Arthur Evans, Welfare Officer; Geoff Ingram, Welfare Officer; Collette Beeson, Operations Manager; Paul Weaver, Director of Infrastructure, and Siobonne Brewster, Director of Development; Staff Sergeant H. Dewa. *Right.* Jess Liston, Director of England and Wales; Jacqui Blackwood.

# Commitment to quality

DMWS continue to invest in a comprehensive training system, excellent business infrastructure, governance, information security and safeguarding, managed through our dedicated Project Office. We have tailored training and development packages for role-specific professional and personal development, with robust policies, procedures, and dynamic management.

We are proud to hold ISO9001, ISO27001, and Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation, ensuring security and quality standards.

Our Welfare Officers complete DMWS's Foundation For Welfare Professionals Course, developed to ensure the professionalism of welfare is standardised. We are proud to have been awarded 'Course of the Year' 2023 by Advantage for this qualification. Other qualified staff are supported to maintain their professional accreditations with appropriate Continued Professional Development.

## Memberships and Awards

- Defence Employer Recognition Scheme – Gold
- Veterans Mental Health Awareness Standard
- Fighting with Pride – Pride in Veterans Standards
- Course of the Year Award – Advantage 2023
- Finalist for Nottingham ICS Health and Care Awards 2023
- Finalist of Celebrating Forces Families Awards 2023
- Nominated for MIDAS Award – Northampton General Hospital



Left to right. DMWS Team Members at a training day at HQ; Matt Jackson, Welfare Officer, and Rachel Hembury, Complex Case Manager at the Plymouth Ball; DMWS Scotland Team Members.

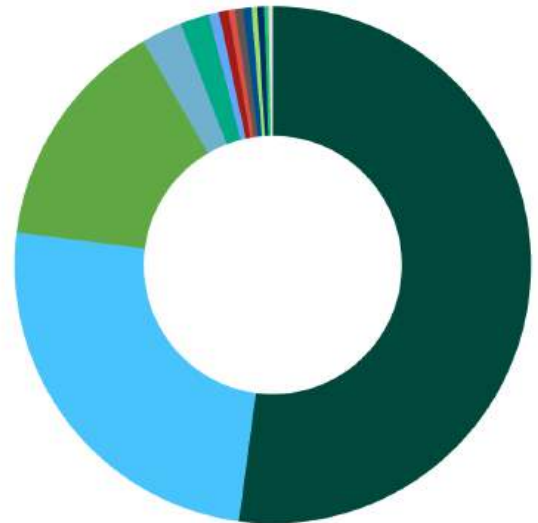


# Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

DMWS are extremely excited to have been awarded a significant grant by The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust through the Transformational Grants programme.

This three-year funding will support DMWS to deliver a programme engaging with underrepresented Armed Forces Communities in a healthcare context across the UK. We will consolidate and increase our understanding of issues, barriers and preferences, to create safe spaces, identify barriers to support and work across military, third sector and statutory health organisations to develop best practices. This will contribute to real systemic change for Armed Forces groups who may be struggling to access health and wellbeing support for a range of reasons.

**Abby Dryden, DMWS Chief Executive**, says "This substantial grant from AFCFT will help us make a real impact for underrepresented Armed Forces Communities across the four nations. Through this project, we will work together across sectors to learn, inform and co-produce welfare services which are accessible and inclusive for all members of the Armed Forces Community."



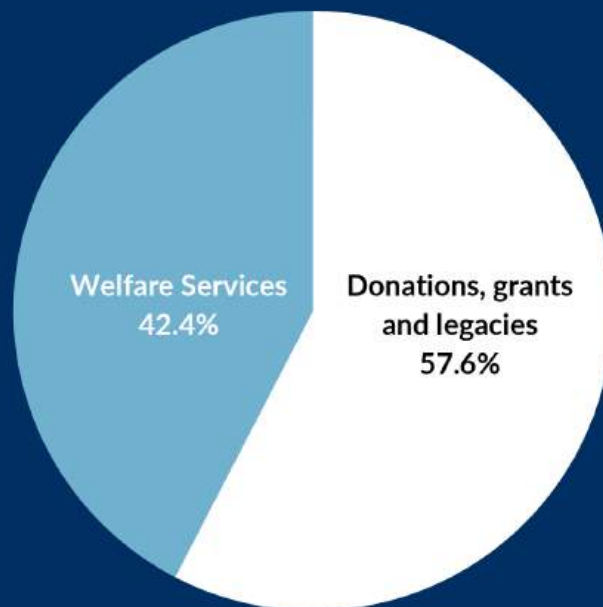
**Ethnicity of DMWS Beneficiaries**  
**(April 2023 - March 2024)**

# Financial Overview

Income and Expenditure



Income Breakdown





# Our Supporters

We are grateful to all of our funders and partners who make our support possible.

## Funders

Adferiad  
Alabaré  
Army Benevolent Fund  
Army Central Fund  
Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust  
Blesma, The Limbless Veterans Charity  
BNA Charitable Incorporated Organisation  
Company X Consulting Ltd  
EF Bulmer Trust  
Greater Glasgow and Clyde Healthcare Charity  
Milton Keynes Community Foundation  
Queen Mary's Roehampton Trust  
Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund  
The Bridge For Heroes  
The Eveson Trust  
The Hodge Foundation  
The Nancie Massey Charitable Trust  
The National Lottery Community Fund  
The Orders of St. John Care Trust  
The Poppy Factory  
The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity

The Scottish Veterans Wellbeing Alliance  
The Valentine Charitable Trust  
Unforgotten Forces  
Veterans Housing Scotland  
Veterans' Foundation

## Partners

Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust  
Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust - Op COMMUNITY  
Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust - Op RESTORE  
Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust  
Ministry of Defence  
NHS Devon ICB  
NHS England  
NHS Fife Health & Social Care Partnership  
NHS Norfolk and Waveney ICB  
NHS Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent ICB  
Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust  
Northamptonshire Police

Office for Veterans' Affairs  
Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust  
Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust  
Scottish Government  
Scottish Police Authority  
Somerset NHS Foundation Trust  
The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust  
Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust  
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

**Thank you!**

# Support us

Any support you can give is gratefully received.

Our preferred method is an **online donation**. You can donate online at: <https://dmws.org.uk/donate/>

**Alternatively, you can donate by cheque/post.**

Please make your cheque payable to St John & Red Cross Defence Medical Welfare Service.

**Send your cheque to:**

DMWS, The Old Stables, Redenham Park, Andover,  
Hampshire, SP11 9AQ

Please include your details if you can as we would like to say thank you and let you know we have received your generous donation.

**Gift Aid:** If you are a UK taxpayer, you can increase your donation by 25% at no cost. If donating by cheque, please include a Gift Aid form which can be printed from our website: <https://dmws.org.uk/donate/>

## How does my donation help?

**£5** could pay for a Welfare Officer's hospital parking charge, meaning they are able to conduct more face-to-face support.

**£10** could pay for a series of phone calls by a DMWS Welfare Officer to a person isolated and in need of support.

**£25** could pay for a DMWS Welfare Officer to provide emergency support and source items to families whose loved ones are in hospital.

**£50** could pay for a DMWS Welfare Officer for half a day, enabling them to support several cases.

"The great thing about working for DMWS is that I get to say to people **'I'll be with you the whole way through this'**. Seeing the look of relief on people's faces when you tell them **'I've got time for you'** is amazing. I tell them not to worry and that they can phone me anytime. It makes such a difference when they know they have someone there who understands them."

**Stephen Baird**  
**Welfare Officer**

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#supportingthefrontline

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