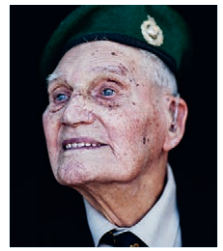


Blesma

Bulletin Members' Newsletter – Spring 2017



The latest on changes to benefits

From War Pensions to fuel payments: find out what you are entitled to **p28**



KING EDWARD VII'S
HOSPITAL

What is a Pain Management Programme?

King Edward VII's Hospital could offer you the relief you've been craving! **p24**



Get ready for the best-ever Blesma Week

Whether you want to bake, BBQ, or just bang the drum, get involved! **p12**



Help future generations

Take part in the Families Project and play your part in making history

Inside: Book your activities today. For free!

BOOK NOW!

Members' Weekend 2017

10-12 June



The Members' Weekend is back for 2017 and will be bigger and better than ever. The event will be held at the Chesford Grange Hotel in Kenilworth, Warwick. Members will be able to...

- * Share their stories
- * Debate what's important to Blesma
- * Try new activities
- * Attend the Annual General Meeting
- * Catch up with old friends and make new ones

The Weekend is free for Ordinary and Associate Members, as well as their spouses/carers, and those Honorary Members who hold Branch office.

There are limited spaces available, which will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

*Make sure you don't miss out.
Book your place now by contacting*

Sue Stokes on officeexec@blesma.org or **020 8548 7091**

Blesma Bulletin

Spring 2017



Whatever the uncertainties on the wider political stage, Blesma remains clear in its purpose; to assist the membership in their pursuit of independent and fulfilling lives. We will not be deflected

from this. The release of the Blackpool Home is underway but, most importantly, our greater emphasis on more assistance to the most infirm and those in later life in their own homes and communities is gathering momentum. The call on grants to support the membership in this direction is increasing, and we are prepared for it. The BSOs are briefed fully, so do please get in touch with them if you have a need you think Blesma might be able to help with. Remember, this includes supporting respite stays in locations closer to your home.

The Activities Team at Chadwell Heath are pushing on with the 2017 programme and there are some notable changes. The multi-discipline adaptive skiing in France is a new initiative, led by Members, and we have more for partners and families. Also led by Members is a more ambitious series for photographers. Please do express your interest early, and once expressed, please keep in touch with Emily on progress.

We are keen to hear from Members who, with support from Chadwell Heath, would like to organise events in their own region. There were a number of such events last year – fishing, photography, and lunches – all were successful, drawing in Members who may not wish to travel so far but value the social engagement. Please do read the activities stories in this issue; activities are at the core of what Blesma is about.

The Families Project that is being run in partnership with Anglia Ruskin University is underway. I would like to reinforce the request for more families to come forward. There is hardly any research archived on this topic and, whilst we know families matter, it is hard to convince policy makers and make the necessary allowances in our own plans without evidence. Membership Services are ready to hear from you if you wish to contribute; it would make a real difference on the nature of future support to you and fellow Members.

Finally, there are a number of articles in this edition that describe the networks to which Blesma has access. These networks can bring support to meet your needs and are tailored for individuals. Again, do not hesitate to get in touch if there is a 'barrier' in your life, because Blesma is likely to know someone who can get you through it or over it.

We work hard to be abreast of all the services available and putting them in touch with veterans in need is very much what Blesma is about.

Barry Le Grys, Chief Executive

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Get active and get involved

Ordinary and Associate Members, and Widows of Ordinary and Associate Members, are eligible to attend activities. Some activities are open to family members (spouse/partner and children). Honorary Members can also attend activities if they are supporting the organiser.

“All Members and Widows receive the programme and application form in the Winter edition of Blesma Magazine,” says Jess March, the Activities Manager, explaining how the application process works.

“When Members send in completed forms we compile a list of those interested in each event. We don’t just fill the spaces on a ‘first-come first-served’ basis, but we look at giving priority to those Members whose BSOs have

recommended should attend because of issues affecting health and wellbeing.

“We also look at whether Members have attended previously and at any mobility issues which might impact on their safety or ability to participate fully. We also look at the priority that the Members give to the individual activity and we don’t discriminate between Ordinary and Associate Members.

“We also always run reserve lists for each activity and so the Members who ultimately attend the event may not be those who were originally selected – people drop out and we fill the spaces with Members who were on the reserve list using the same criteria as the original lists,” says Jess. “We know things sometimes happen that can prevent Members

Activities Calendar 2017

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	APPLY BY
07-09 July	Sea Fishing Competition	Bridlington	24 March
17-26 July	Soldier Ride NYC	New York	24 March
21-28 July	Adventure Activities	Exmoor	24 March
04-07 August	Family Glamping Weekend	Gloucester	13 April
11-14 August	Couples Weekend	London	26 May
12-13 August	Tandem Parachuting	Salisbury	22 April
18-21 August	Family Glamping Weekend	Brampton	13 April
28 Aug - 01 Sept	Activities Week	Kendal	13 May
28 Aug - 01 Sept	Painting and Crafting Course	Kendal	13 May
02-10 Sept	Iceland Photography Exhibition	Iceland	13 May
04-11 Sept	CAMO Wilderness Expedition	Colorado, USA	01 May
06-13 Sept	Widows' Week	Perthshire	06 June
08-10 Sept	Dorset Fishing Competition	Dorset	13 May
13-20 Sept	Seniors' Week	Perthshire	06 June



from attending an activity that they've been selected to attend. It's really helpful if Members can let us know as soon as possible if they're not going to be able to attend so that we can give another Member the opportunity to take their place."

If you have any questions about activities, or would like to put your name forward, please contact Emily on 020 8548 7094 or email mea@blesma.org. Don't forget that you can also apply for activities online through the website www.blesma.org

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	APPLY BY
15-18 Sept	Couples Weekend	Edinburgh	26 May
17-24 Sept	Greek Regatta	Greece	26 May
24-27 Sept	Golf Tuition	Essex	26 May
30 Sept - 07 Oct	Soldier Ride UK	South England	09 June
06-07 Oct	Ride To The Wall	Burton-on-Trent	23 June
13-16 Oct	City Photography Course	York	23 June
14-23 Oct	Morocco Mountain Biking Expedition	Morocco	23 June
24 Oct - 02 Nov	South Africa Expedition	South Africa	23 June
11-12 Nov	Remembrance Weekend	London	07 August
11-19 Nov	Horseback in America	Arizona, USA	22 July
Nov (TBC)	Scuba Diving Expedition	TBC	06 June
Nov/Dec (TBC)	Colorado Ski Spectacular	Colorado, USA	20 August
Feb/March 2018 (TBC)	Winter Sports Europe	France	01 November

Organise your own activity for Members



Interested in organising an activity for Members? If you have a hobby or sporting passion that you think might appeal to other Members, then why not organise an activity? The Activities Team is here to give you as much support as you need in making it happen. If you have never organised an event before, the team can discuss the things you'll need to consider about the activity and the venue to ensure that everything runs smoothly and that Members/Widows are able to enjoy themselves in a safe environment.

For example, is the activity suitable for Members/Widows with limited mobility? Is the venue accessible (is it wheelchair friendly, is there step-free access and ramps)?

Are there accessible toilets? Blesma will pay for the cost of hiring the venue, the activity itself, refreshments and, where appropriate, accommodation. For a one-day activity, Blesma will fund tea/coffee and lunch up to £10 per person. For longer activities, Blesma will fund accommodation to the standard of a budget hotel (for example Travelodge or Premier Inn) and meals up to £20 for dinner and £10 for breakfast. Please note: Blesma will not pay for the cost of alcoholic drinks.

If you are interested in running an activity and would like to learn more about what's involved, please contact Emily at mea@blesma.org or on 020 8548 7094

Hitting the highs of Breckenridge 2016

Awounded veteran, who lost his left leg whilst serving in Afghanistan, learned to ski again thanks to a Blesma trip. Jason Hare hit the ski slopes of Breckenridge seven years ago as part of Blesma's Ski Spectacular rehabilitation activity. Taking part meant that he was able to learn to ski again and he has since enjoyed many happy family skiing trips with his two daughters; 13-year-old Cerys and six-year-old Caitlin.

"I remember it being a fantastic trip, and having skied with the military, I was curious if I'd ever be able to do it again," said Jason, who attended the trip 18 months after his injury. "I learned to ski but, more importantly, I learned to ski safely. It had a huge impact on my life as it showed me what I could do post-injury and with a prosthetic leg."

The 36 year old was given the chance to head back to the slopes of Breckenridge with 14 other Members at the end of 2016 for the most recent Ski Spectacular.

"The trip enabled me to not only increase my skiing ability but increase my confidence so that I can continue to ski with my friends and family – most importantly for me, to ski with my two daughters as they grow. I'd highly recommend the trip to any Member.



It's a special trip to be a part of – a seamless, flowing and well-organised package!"

Ski instructors worked with Jason and the other Members to improve their skiing ability safely, and taught those with no previous experience how to ski. Away from the slopes, Members also enjoyed a 'diamonds and denim'

fancy dress night – a tradition run by Blesma for many years – and a gala dinner night.

If you would like to try skiing, why not apply for this year's trip to Colorado or to Winter Sports Europe in 2018?

A brief history of prosthetics

An effective prosthesis delivers renewed functionality and is cosmetically pleasing, but it also completes the wearer's sense of wholeness. A prosthesis is as much medical device as it is an emotional comfort, and so the history of prosthetics is not only a scientific history, but the story of human beings who, whether by birth, wound, or accident, were left with something missing.

Ancient literature contains references to prosthetic limbs, but some of the earliest historical accounts of prosthetic use appear in Greek and Roman times. The historical account of Roman General Marcus Sergius tells of the loss of his right hand while battling in the second Punic War. He had a replacement hand made from iron so he could hold a shield and return to battle.

The earliest example of a prosthesis is a big toe! It belonged to a noblewoman, was found in Egypt, and dates back to 950-710 B.C. The big toe was particularly important to an Egyptian because it was necessary to wear traditional sandals. At almost 3,000 years old, this toe is a representation of the history of prosthetics being as much about function as identity. The big toe helped complete the woman, but it also completed the Egyptian.

1500s-1800s

The history of prosthetics has always been intertwined with the history of warfare and the soldiers who fought in battle. Examples from the Middle Ages show how slow the field of prosthetics advanced. Iron hands fashioned for knights were no more advanced

than the prosthetic used by Marcus Sergius more than 1500 years earlier. In the early sixteenth century, however, Doctor Ambroise Paré made significant advances in both amputation surgery and the development of prosthetic limbs. He was the first to introduce a hinged prosthetic hand and a leg with a locking knee joint. These advances, as well as his innovative techniques of attaching the limbs, are still common in prosthetics.

There followed another long period of little progress in the advancement of prosthetic limbs (up to the 1800s). Advances in amputation surgery developed in the mid-19th century, allowing doctors to shape the residual limbs in a way that made them more receptive to the attachment of a prosthesis. The prosthetics themselves weren't much better, but life was starting to become more comfortable for those wearing them.

TECHNOLOGICAL LEAPS: THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

The carnage of the American Civil War led to a dramatic increase in the number of amputees, and the field of prosthetics needed to rise to the demand.

James Hanger was a Confederate soldier and became the first amputee in the war. He went on to invent the Hanger Limb, a prosthetic leg made from barrel staves and metal, it featured hinged joints at the knee and ankle. The Hanger Limb was the most advanced limb in the history of prosthetics, and the company he founded continues to be a leader in the industry today.



In the UK, a company set up in 1890 by Chas A Blatchford, was to feature heavily in the production of artificial limbs and the development of prosthetic services. Blatchford, along with other manufactures and providers, still operate a prosthetic service in the UK, both privately and under NHS contract.

In the 1970s, the inventor Ysidro M. Martinez made a huge

20TH CENTURY

Despite the tremendous loss of life and limb in both World Wars, there wasn't a corresponding leap in prosthetic technology like the one seen in the Civil War – at least not until 1946. It was then that researchers at UC Berkeley in America developed a suction sock for lower-limb amputees. Similar attachment technology is still in use today.

impact when he developed a lower-limb prosthesis that, instead of trying to replicate the motion of a natural limb, focused on improving gait and reducing friction. By relieving pressure and making walking more comfortable, Martinez (an amputee himself) improved the lives of many future patients.

2017 AND BEYOND

Great strides are being made on the aesthetic and functional fronts, with new technologies and a never-before-seen pace of innovation. Modern materials, such as carbon fibre, are making prosthetics both lighter and stronger, while advances in 3D printing and biometrics continue to enhance the lives of amputees.

Conflict often leads to major developments in prosthetics and a wider public awareness of what can be achieved with investment. Let us hope that research and development continue at this ever-increasing pace without further conflict being the catalyst.



*If you are interested in the history of prosthetics visit **Wounded: Conflict, Casualties and Care at the Science Museum**. Details can be found at www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/wounded*

Blesma's strong links with NHS England

NHS ENGLAND CONFIRMS ITS POLICY ON MICROPROCESSOR CONTROLLED KNEES

Blesma has continued to ensure that the issue of prescribing microprocessor knees has not been allowed to slip down the agenda, despite a number of setbacks over the past couple of years.

In December 2016, NHS England announced a number of policies that it was introducing for routine commissioning; amongst which was a policy for prescribing microprocessor controlled knees. This is excellent news and any Member who feels they may benefit from such a prosthetic knee should discuss this with their Limb Centre's multi-disciplinary team. Your BSO or BSO (Prosthetics) can assist if required.

It is important to note that although the NHS may use the term 'routinely' in their policy and announcements, this relates to the fact that the policy negates the need for patients to apply for funding through other routes based on grounds of 'exceptionality'.

All potential candidates for this type of knee will have to meet strict clinical criteria. The NHS in Scotland and Northern Ireland already have policies and procedures in place in this respect. Blesma will continue to engage with Health Service officials in Wales to seek parity of provision.



NHS ENGLAND PROSTHETIC SERVICE REVIEW

NHS England has started the process for conducting a review of prosthetic services. The review itself is due to be completed by the end of the year. At the time of writing, the project team is being developed and will be looking at setting the terms of reference for the review and engaging with stakeholders as required.

Blesma is directly involved, with Brain Chenier BSO (Prosthetics) being part of the project team, thus ensuring that Blesma Members' interests are represented. More information will follow, and ways in which you can get involved or share your views will be publicised via social and printed media.

If you need advice or support in dealing with your Limb Centre, or if you have any questions, please get in touch with Brian at Chadwell Heath on 020 8548 7080 or by email at bsoprosthetics@blesma.org

Volunteering for Blesma

WELFARE REPS

One of the ways in which we can improve Blesma's connectivity is by recruiting more volunteers who visit Members: our 'Welfare Reps'. Over the years, we have been fortunate to benefit from the support of a willing band of Members and friends who work with our Blesma Support Officers, visiting Members in their homes or in hospital, having a chat over a cup of coffee and, when necessary, asking the BSO to follow up on any issues that are affecting Members' health or wellbeing.

If you are interested in volunteering to help your fellow Members and would like to learn more about the role of Welfare Rep, please contact your local BSO.

Each Welfare Rep is given a toolkit that includes the Welfare Volunteer Code of Conduct, which explains the requirements of the role. All Welfare Reps are asked to confirm that they understand the boundaries of the role and that they understand that their tasking and line of communication is through their local BSO, before they begin supporting Members. All Welfare Reps must also sign a Confidentiality Agreement.

BRANCHES

When discussing how fortunate Blesma has been to benefit from the support of willing volunteers, at the vanguard have been those who run the Branches.

Finding volunteers who are prepared to take on the commitment of being an office bearer remains the greatest challenge and, regrettably, Branches are unable to function

without the positions of Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. Chadwell Heath is here to support Branches, by distributing newsletters or other correspondence, for example, or by providing grants to enable Members to get together for social events. So, if you need any support, please contact Membership Services.

CHADWELL HEATH (HQ) BRANCH MEMBERS

Don't worry if there isn't a Branch in your area. Chadwell Heath can provide financial support to enable groups of Members to get together periodically for coffee, lunch, or even afternoon tea!

All that is needed is someone to organise the social gathering. If you would be willing to do this, please contact Frank Garside, National Volunteer Officer, by email at nvo@blesma.org or on 020 8548 3510.



Get fundraising for Blesma Week

Blesma Week

05-11 June 2017

The Association's annual week of fundraising and awareness raising activities is back!

Following on from last year's huge success, we are hoping to make Blesma Week 2017 even better! To find out how you can get involved, please contact the Fundraising Team at fundraising@blesma.org or give them a call on 020 8548 7089.



Yorkshire 3 Peaks

03-04 June

Join fellow Members to launch Blesma Week in style by trekking up the Yorkshire 3 Peaks! The fundraising target for this event is £300.

Enter our Grand Prize Draw

Tickets to be in with the chance of winning up to £1,000 cost just £1!

The Draw closes on 16 July, with the winners announced shortly after. You can buy tickets and you can even fundraise by selling tickets to your friends and family on our behalf.

Look out for the Grand Prize Draw tickets in the Spring issue of Blesma Magazine, or you can call us on 020 8548 7089 to order some.

Do your own thing

Wherever you are and whoever you're with, there are plenty of things you can do to fundraise! For inspiration, check out the website www.blesma.org or contact the Fundraising Team for a Fundraising Events Calendar at fundraising@blesma.org

Get your community involved

Can you recommend a school to get involved in Blesma Week? Could you spare a few hours or perhaps you would like to hold a collection at your local supermarket? Please drop us a line at fundraising@blesma.org or on 020 8548 7089 and let us know!

Our favourites!

Volunteer at our collections

We will be shaking our buckets again across the London Underground as well as holding a collection at the Inter-Services T20 Cricket at Lord's Cricket Ground, so if you can spare a few hours please do let the Fundraising Team know at fundraising@blesma.org





Blesma Bake

Get your Mary Berry on and sell some tasty treats this March! Sign up to bake for Blesma and receive a fundraising pack, complete with your very own *Baking for Blesma* icing duster!



Why I chose an elective amputation

For more than 16 years, Blesma Member Andy Wedge suffered from terrible pain in his right ankle which grew worse the more he tried to lead an active life. The pain was so severe that Andy required a walking stick and sometimes even a scooter to get around. In 2014, after five failed operations, Andy decided to have an elective amputation.

The pain first started as a result of a training accident in 2000 while serving in the Royal Navy. The injury, which was never x-rayed, resulted in Andy suffering heavy damage to his right ankle and, as time went on, it became worse to walk on. Eighteen months after the initial injury, Andy's ankle was finally x-rayed and it showed that he had sheared off a section of the top of his talus under the cartilage.

Over the next decade, Andy underwent five rounds of surgery to try to correct the injury to his ankle, but after the fifth operation failed, in 2012, Andy felt he came out worse off than when he went in. His doctor suggested another operation but enough was enough and Andy began to do his own research into elective amputations.

"As time went on I saw more stories about double leg amputees and how well they were getting along. I began to compare how well they were walking to how I was walking," said Andy.

By 2014, he had made up his mind to have his leg amputated. Nearly two years later, Andy had found the right surgeon to complete the operation and was given a date in October 2016 for the procedure.



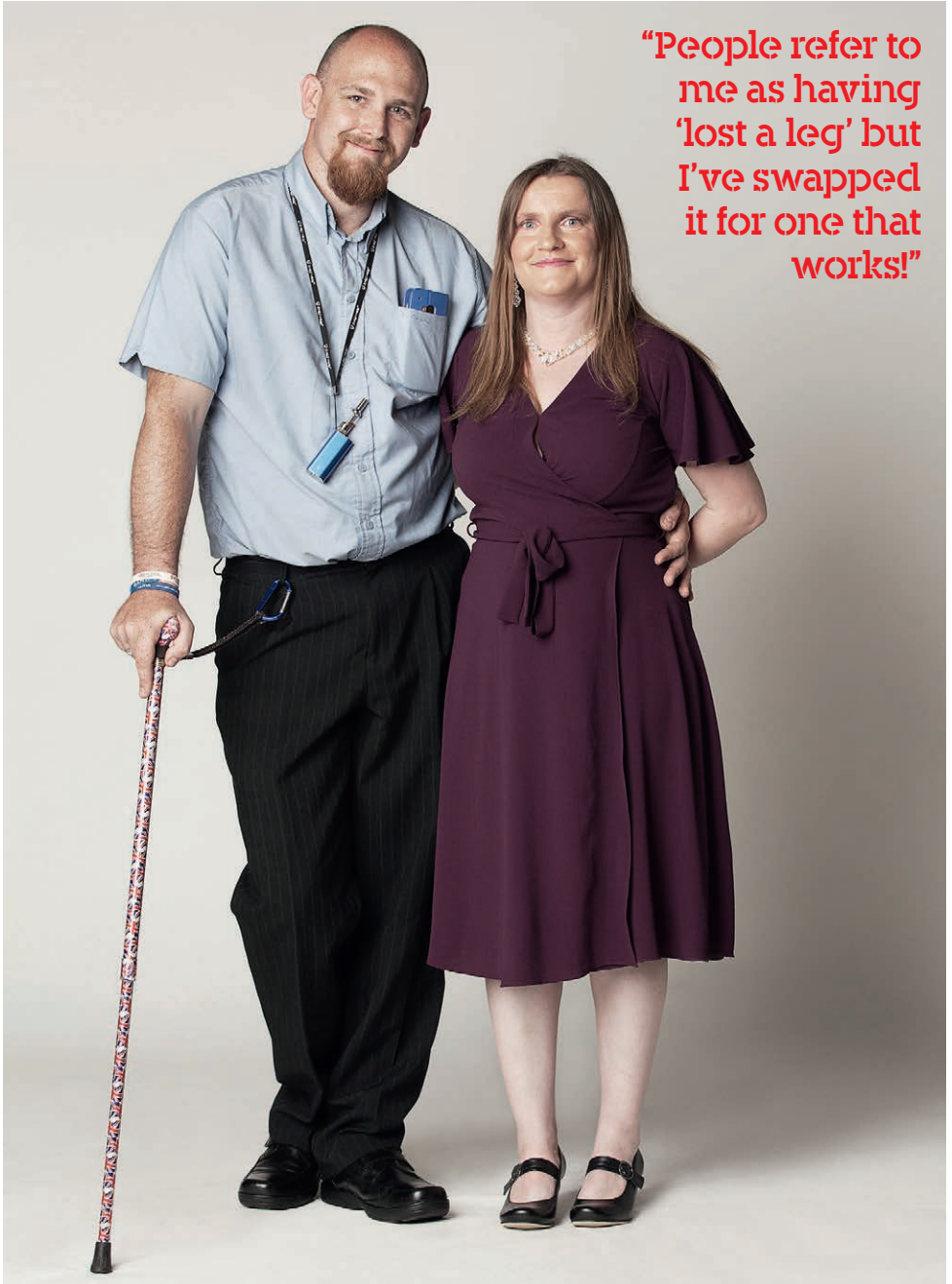
Andy, 11 weeks after his operation (left) and at last year's Member's Weekend (right)

"I have my up and down days but I'm glad I did it," said Andy. "I already walk better with a prosthetic leg than I could on my old foot. I haven't had my prosthetic leg long enough to see the full benefits yet, but for the first time since I met my wife, and in the entire eight years of our marriage, I am now able to hold her hand whilst we walk along the shore instead of using a scooter or having to hold my stick!

"It's funny, because people refer to me as having 'lost a leg' but I don't see it that way. I've swapped it for one that works!"

Within just eight weeks of his operation, Andy received his prosthetic leg and was able to take it home. He puts his fast progress down to pre-surgery preparation and his own determination to get going (with a good pinch of stubbornness), and accepting that, sometimes, you have to take time to recover in order to move on.

“People refer to me as having ‘lost a leg’ but I’ve swapped it for one that works!”



Branch News

WALSALL AND DISTRICT BRANCH

In early December we held our annual Christmas Lunch at the Shropshire Golf Centre. We were delighted to welcome DOMS Heather Nicholson, John Maughan from the Lord Leycester Hospital, Warwick, and our BSO Charley Streater as our guests.

We also welcomed a new Branch Member, Paul Meredith, together with his wife Anita. Sadly, Pat Cox from VWS Kidderminster was unable to join us due to illness. We hope she is now recovered and will be able to join us in the Summer. We took the opportunity to formally celebrate the award of the BEM to Martin Kettrick in HM The Queen's Birthday Honours List. Extremely well deserved!

In September, together with Members from other Branches in the Midlands, we enjoyed a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum. We were joined by Blesma's Chief Executive, Barry Le Gry, and the weather was very kind to us. Following a service in the chapel, we enjoyed a meal in the restaurant, and ended the day picking apples in our orchard.

Looking forward, the next event is our AGM in March. There will be a change of Secretary as Mike Gallagher is handing over to Mal James – it is, in fact, a job swap as Mike is taking over from Mal as Area Secretary in April. We are hopeful that the remainder of our committee will continue in post for a further year.

On a sadder note, we have recently lost two stalwart members – Trish Cropper passed away in August and Sam Cox in September. Trish's husband, Eric, was Branch Chairman

some years ago and they were both staunch supporters of the Branch. Sam had reached the grand age of 92 and was always pleased to welcome visitors – he followed sporting events avidly and we will all miss him.

Christmas will be a distant memory by the time you read this, so I hope you enjoyed it all. Best wishes for 2017 from all Members of the Walsall Branch.

Mike Gallagher, Secretary

PORTSMOUTH BRANCH

We were delighted to welcome the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Councillor David Fuller, and the Lady Mayoress to our Branch Christmas Lunch at the Langstone Hotel.

We were also very pleased to welcome Blesma's Chief Executive Barry Le Gry. Our guests made sure that they visited all the tables and met the large number of Members who attended the event.

We are all very grateful to Sheila Brown, who worked so hard organising the event, and to Jan Cartledge, who collected an impressive amount of prizes for the raffle. Our best wishes to Blesma for 2017.

Heather Priseman, Honorary President

SUTTON AND MERTON BRANCH

Our Branch social/lunch last year was held at The Morden Brook on 01 December. We were in the conference room which the staff had decorated beautifully. The food was a little slow arriving this year but nobody seemed to care – we just had more time to chat with old friends and new!



Members and friends of the Walsall and District Branch



Barry Le Grys and the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth



Gwen and Joan at the Sutton and Merton lunch

What a wonderful time we all had! Those attending were aged from just a couple of months to 96 years old – very typical of a Blesma gathering!

The matriarch of our Branch, Joan Smith, was with us, and we were delighted that Gwen's neighbours drove up from Eastbourne to join her at the lunch. It was lovely to see Gwen smiling after the dreadful year she's had. Joan and Gwen were seated opposite

our newest member, Gam, and they appeared to have a wonderful time. Sadly, Gam's wife Mina couldn't be with us – maybe next year?

Our day was made even more special when BSO Paul arrived with his wife, Nicole, and their little girls Isla and new-born Erin. An absolutely enchanting family! Thanks to Nicole especially for bringing them – we all know how difficult it is travelling with little ones!



WWII veteran and Branch Chairman Roy Hayward (second left) was awarded the Legion d'Honneur

ISLE OF WIGHT BRANCH

World War Two veteran and Blesma Branch Chairman Roy Hayward (below) has been awarded France's highest military honour, the Legion d'Honneur.

Roy was presented with his award by the Lord Lieutenant of the Isle of Wight, Major General Martin White CB CBE JP, at a recent Branch lunch. Roy, who is 91 years old, lost both his legs below the knee three weeks after the D-Day landings in 1944.

"It was a great honour to receive the Legion d'Honneur. It was especially nice as it was presented to me by the Lord Lieutenant of the island who is also the President of our Branch," said Roy, who joined the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry tank

regiment in May 1944. The regiment had already seen action in the Desert Campaign and Roy joined the regiment before it landed on Gold Beach on D-Day in 1944.

Roy was travelling in a tank when it was hit twice by shells, the second exploded in the

tank and set it on fire. Roy was unaware of his wounds and managed to drag himself out of the tank and drop to the ground only slightly burned. It was only then that he realised the front of his left foot was missing and his right leg was shattered below the knee.

Roy returned to work in banking before he moved to the Isle of Wight in 1973. In the same year he became the Branch Treasurer and, 28 years later, became the Chairman.





Members' Weekend 2017

10-12 June, 2017

Chesford Grange Hotel, Kenilworth

The 2017 Members' Weekend is filling up fast! If you would like to come along to meet old friends and make some new ones, to find out what Blesma Members have been up to, and to have your say on what Blesma should be doing to support its Members in the future,

please contact Sue at Chadwell Heath on 020 8548 7091 or send her an email at officeexec@blesma.org

Blesma will cover the cost of Ordinary and Associate Members as well as their partners or carers.

Please note that this year's Annual General Meeting will take place on the Sunday morning of Members' Weekend. We hope to see you there!

Take part in Blesma's Families Project

Blesma knows that living with limb loss affects the whole family, but there have been few studies into how veterans' families adjust to life after physical injury.

Because of this limited understanding of limb loss on families, Blesma is interested in exploring Members' everyday lived experiences of adjusting to living with limb loss. The Blesma Families Project, undertaken in collaboration with the Veterans and Families Institute at Anglia Ruskin University, aims to understand how veterans and their families experience and manage living with limb loss. The project has been developed because Blesma Members have expressed a need for their families to be better supported.

Existing studies focus on the physical problems associated with loss of limb and do not explore the everyday lived experiences of veterans and their families. There are a few helpful studies, however most are not based in the UK. One US study interviewed 20 veterans of the Vietnam War about their health and life experiences. The findings indicated that, 40 years after being injured, many experienced pain and mental health complications from their combat injuries, with older age problems such as arthritis, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes associated with their limb loss. The interviews also revealed how limb loss pain, depression and PTSD negatively affected their quality of life.

To understand more about what is important to your family unit, we want to hear from you and your family. This will enable Blesma to better understand your

experiences, what support is currently provided, and what you might need. Your participation will directly inform and enhance Blesma's service delivery to Members, as well as the work of other charities who support veterans and their families, and NHS Health and Social Care providers, such as the NHS Limb Service and GPs. Your participation will therefore inform the provision of support and services not only for Blesma Members, but also for the general population.

There is also some evidence that, following limb loss, women are more likely to have greater difficulty adapting emotionally. There is limited evidence suggesting that, compared to men, women with limb loss have a higher degree of body image anxiety and lower levels of prosthesis satisfaction. So we are interested in hearing from female veterans.

Little is known about the long-term adjustment of families to limb loss. It is noticeable that some areas of the military have been studied more than others. More is known about Army families than those from other services, for example. The same is true of active component families, married families and the families of male Service members. We also know more about families who seek help for specific conditions.

As such, those findings are specific to the health condition, rather than exploring the condition's effect on the everyday lives of the veterans and their families.

Because of this, we want to hear about you and your family's general everyday living experience. We appreciate that families are



diverse, and may include parents, brothers and sisters, or friends from military or civilian life. Because of this, Blesma is interested in hearing about who you consider your family to be and how they help and support your everyday living. We want to hear about your experiences, and your family's experiences, to inform how Blesma provides support to veterans and families in the future.

In particular, we would like to hear from you if your limb loss was:

- as a result of operations in either Northern Ireland, the South Atlantic Campaign, Korea, or World War II
- whilst serving, but not as a result of combat. For example, if your injury was sustained during a training exercise (including basic training), or as a result of an accident, such as a road traffic accident
- after transition out of the military, for example from vascular damage, accident, elective amputation etc

If you would like to be involved, we will ask you if you could identify up to four family members to take part. These are likely to be those you feel are closest to you and could include your spouse or partner, your parents, siblings or children. You could also include wider family members and friends who are not biologically related to you.

The only requirement is that each person is at least 18 years old, and each will need to agree to be interviewed individually for approximately 60 minutes at a convenient place of their choosing.

To find out more, please contact Doctor Hilary Engward, the project's co-lead, at hilary.engward@anglia.ac.uk or on 0845 1964106. Alternatively, you can contact Heather Nicholson, Director of Membership Services, at doms@blesma.org or on 020 8548 3515 who will be happy to discuss the project with you in detail and answer any questions you might have

Veterans' healthcare training for GPs

Blesma has been heavily involved in a collaborative project supporting Health Education England in delivering a series of half-day and full-day training sessions for GPs across England.

The project started following the work of Brigadier Robin Simpson, an Army GP who is the Defence Medical Services Dean at the Defence Medical Services College For Health Education and Training in Litchfield, and a Senior Examiner at the Royal College of General Practitioners. He persuaded the Royal College of GPs that, with nearly 2.8 million veterans in the UK (about equal to the number of diabetics in the UK) GPs should learn more about veterans' health needs and how to address them.

Working in collaboration with NHS medical educators from Health Education England, Brigadier Simpson, together with Dr Jonathan Leach and Dr Graham Wheatley, two former Army GPs now working in Worcestershire and Lincolnshire, developed an e-learning package for GPs to improve their knowledge. It is now widely available to NHS staff.

Most significantly, he also managed to get veterans' healthcare added to the curriculum for GPs in training in early 2015. Now, all GP trainees (known as GP registrars) are keen to learn about veterans' healthcare, knowing

that it will come up in their exams to gain membership to the Royal College of GPs.

Following this change to the curriculum, in early 2015 Dr Alex Bates, a civilian GP trainer and course organiser, picked up on this addition to the curriculum and completed

the e-learning module. She wondered whether more could be done to teach GP registrars about the subject. She contacted her brother Lieutenant Colonel Julian Woodhouse, a GP in the Royal Army Medical Corps, to ask if he could teach her small group of GP registrars about veterans' healthcare.

From an initial plan to run a half-day session for 30 GP registrars in Buckinghamshire things snowballed and Julian soon found himself being

asked to speak to 100 GP registrars for a day at the Kassam Stadium in Oxford. So he developed the current model of training which has already been delivered to about 1000 GP registrars and GP trainers across England.

In outline, the GP registrars are asked to complete the online e-learning module prior to the day. After a 30-minute presentation on veterans' healthcare, they are given the chance to listen to two veterans telling their stories. Then, they split into small groups and spend 15 minutes with six veterans in turn, which allows them to gain a better insight into veterans' healthcare needs.



SSAFA Norton House Selly Oak

In the afternoon session, up to six Cobseo charities tell their stories, allowing the doctors to learn about some of the support that is available. The package provides not only an excellent learning opportunity for the GPs about health needs for veterans, but it also introduces them to some of the many Service organisations that can help.

Blesma is one of a number of charities that has supported the project with speakers in the 15 sessions run across the country in the last academic year. There are a further 15 booked for the academic year 2016/2017. Brian Chenier, BSO (Prosthetics) coordinates the speakers, who so far have included Al Hodgson, Paul Findlay, BSO (London and Kent) and Charley Streather, BSO (Midlands).

Future plans include trying to add veterans' healthcare to the curriculum for The Royal College of Ophthalmology, Psychiatry and even the Royal College of Surgeons as well as getting the training delivered in London, the north east and south west of England, Scotland and Wales.

FREE MEDIA COURSE. APPLY NOW!

Applications are now being accepted for the Forces Media Academy's free media production course. All participants on the one-year course, which starts in September and runs until July 2018, will receive a bursary of £18,000. The closing date for applications is Friday 31 March. For more details, visit www.forcesacademy.com

SSAFA Norton House Selly Oak provides short-term accommodation to Service and ex-Service families visiting loved ones who receive treatment in hospital in Birmingham. The house is designed as a 'home from home' and is located in a secure and peaceful environment.

The house is available 365 days a year and is run by dedicated on-site staff who are there to offer support, comfort and advice to those who stay at this often very difficult and emotionally challenging time.

Who can stay?

Any family member who wishes to visit a loved one in hospital may stay at SSAFA Norton House. Parents, spouses, partners, brothers and sisters, grandparents and children of any age are welcome. The home has disabled access and facilities enabling patients to spend time there too if their family is visiting. The house has recently opened its doors to veterans and their families who are welcome to stay if a loved one is in hospital.

If you, or a family member, are due to receive hospital treatment in Birmingham and need accommodation please contact us to see if we can help. Any offer is subject to availability and proof of service.

To find out more about the accommodation, or to check availability, call 0121 4726310 or email norton2@ssafa.org.uk.

SSAFA Norton House can be found at 23 Selly Wick Road, Selly Park, Birmingham, B29 7JJ

King Edward VII's Hospital



Centre for Veterans' Health

PAIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME FOR VETERANS

We understand chronic pain

At King Edward VII's Hospital we understand the immense distress and suffering that persistent pain can cause; as much as being physiological, pain can also seriously affect thoughts and emotions, which in turn feeds back into the pain system. Thus, persistent pain often adversely impacts on relationships, work, hobbies, interests and other activities, as well as mood and overall wellbeing. As a consequence, those suffering from chronic pain often find themselves feeling helpless and lacking the confidence to continue with previously meaningful activities.

What is a Pain Management Programme?

Pain Management Programmes are widely recognised as the treatment of choice for individuals suffering with persistent pain. The clinical staff of the Pain Management Programme for Veterans (PMP) at King Edward VII's Hospital are leaders in the field of pain management, with years of experience of helping people with persistent pain to improve the quality of their lives.

Highlights of the PMP at King Edward VII's Hospital

Our approach is interdisciplinary (combining knowledge coming from different fields of

science) which allows us to better address the complex nature of a patient's condition and give the tools to deal more effectively with both its physical and psychological aspects.

We know that not understanding what is happening in your body can magnify the feeling of pain as well as all the negative emotions associated with it. As part of the programme we help patients develop a greater understanding of their condition. For example, we will dedicate time to explain the changes it produces in the nervous system and the differences between acute (short-lived) and chronic pain (which persists beyond the point of healing).

We know that suffering from constant pain can feel very isolating and confusing. Thus, our programme has been designed to not only offer a wide range of pain management strategies but to also provide a support group – the group setting of the course allows people to share their experiences and gain insights from the other participants in the programme who also suffer from chronic pain. We provide our programme free of charge to anyone who has served in the UK Armed Forces.

How can it help?

The main objectives of the Pain Management Programme are to help individuals improve their mood and quality of life, increase their self-management ability and involvement in meaningful activities, as well as promoting a better understanding of their condition. A reduction in the intensity of the pain over

time is not uncommon, although the primary goal of the programme is to help individuals engage in more meaningful activities and feel less controlled by their chronic pain.

Specifically, the Pain Management Programme is designed to help:

- Start, return to, or increase meaningful activities in day-to-day life and expand horizons
- Increase confidence to try new activities/hobbies, minimising the impact of pain on lifestyle
- Reduce the psychological effect of chronic pain such as distress, anger, fear or sadness
- Understand pain, its science and how to use this to manage it more successfully
- Increase awareness of physical movement, fitness and exercise
- Identify goals concerning meaningful employment where possible, using strategies gained during the programme
- A patient-tailored medication review and reduction to ensure that the medication and dose is appropriate for the patient's particular type of chronic pain.

Contents of the programme:

As explained above, the complexity of persistent pain makes interdisciplinary involvement (combining knowledge coming from different fields of science) essential as pain impacts on so many different areas of life.

OUR PAIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME FOR VETERANS ADDRESSES:

- **Information/education** – to provide individuals with information about pain (both acute and chronic), muscles, joints, the central nervous system and nerves, the brain (central sensitisation, neuro-plasticity) etc so that they develop a clear understanding of the

complicated but explainable changes which lead to the development of chronic pain

- **Goal setting** – to help individuals identify meaningful goals they would like to achieve, and understand how to approach these in a sustained manner
- **Practice of goals and activities** – to establish a pattern of regular practice and experimenting with new activities and situations while managing pain. This will allow people with pain to discuss and review how their condition feels and what actually happens
- **Desensitisation** – to teach individuals specific exercises that are aimed at helping affected areas feel less sensitive, therefore normalising changes in the brain due to persistent pain
- **Mood** – to introduce strategies based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) principles to manage negative changes in mood and distress caused by chronic pain
- **Thoughts and feelings** – to help participants understand their thoughts, beliefs and feelings in relation to pain and its impact on their lifestyle and quality of life
- **Medication reduction** – to provide individuals with information about the roles and effects of medication, how they can best be taken, and when they are most helpful. Individual advice will be given regarding medication reduction, and support will be provided for this process
- **Sleep hygiene** – to introduce strategies aimed at improving sleep patterns and assist patients in making positive changes to their existing sleep routines with the aim of improving their overall sleep experience
- **Relaxation strategies** – to introduce relaxation strategies that would be useful in the management of the pain-tension cycle
- **Return to gainful employment** – to teach individuals strategies to help them manage pain more successfully with an end goal that

SUPPORT

they can start considering their options for employment.

Specific group requirements

There are other aspects that can be discussed depending on the needs of the specific group. These can include relationships with others, intimate relationships, PTSD, and working with other clinicians.

WHAT THE PMP IS NOT

- The PMP is not an individual psychotherapy or a group therapy programme. Attendees will not be asked to share their thoughts and experiences unless they want to
- The PMP is not a PTSD group and we are very mindful not to raise any issues in relation to PTSD during the group. The focus throughout remains focused upon pain management
- The PMP does not include hands-on treatment and physiotherapy
- Those attending are not required to wear any specific clothing and the physiotherapy does not involve going to a gym

DURATION OF THE PROGRAMME

Compared to how long people have been suffering from pain and its impact on their wellbeing, the course is brief. The essence of successful pain management is active participation, as well as applying the various strategies, learned throughout the course, to everyday activities.

The PMP involves several components:

- A five-day residential course
- Five additional follow-up days during the year

We believe that the involvement of an individual's support network is vital for the success of any therapy. Therefore, family and friends are invited to attend one of the days scheduled halfway through the

programme, which will give attendees extra confidence and help them gain the most from the course.

Who is suitable for the programme?

Those who fulfil the following:

- Those who suffer from persistent pain
- Those who are motivated to actively engage in a group-based Pain Management Programme
- Those who are able to travel to London (all expenses will be covered)
- If suffering from PTSD, the condition is mild to moderate

Who is this programme not suitable for?

The programme is not suitable for those who:

- Are incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability
- Are actively suicidal
- Have violent/aggressive behaviour
- Find group environments challenging
- Are awaiting or planning surgery in the near future
- Are currently enrolled in another pain treatment programme elsewhere (e.g. physiotherapy, nerve blocks etc)

How to take part

Those wanting to take part will need to:

- Contact the coordinator of the Centre for Veterans' Health at King Edward VII's Hospital. This can be done by emailing janetaylor@kingedwardvii.co.uk or calling 020 7467 4348 to express an interest in taking part
- Attend an initial assessment appointment (approximately two-to-three hours) to determine suitability for the programme
- Successful applicants will be invited to take part in a five-day residential programme in London

King Edward VII's Hospital Grants

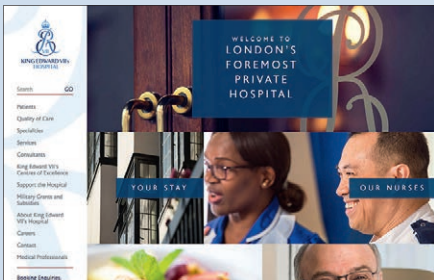
Sister Agnes Benevolent Fund

This is available to all military personnel as well as veterans, their spouses and widows. This is a means-tested grant that can offer up to 100% discount on all hospital fees for things such as consultations, operations, surgery, imaging, physiotherapy and hydrotherapy. Some consultants also reduce their fees, but not all are able to.

The 20% Military Discount

This is an automatic discount given to all military personnel, veterans, their spouses and widows for surgery or treatment at the hospital. It is not means tested. For further information, please contact Jane Taylor at janetaylor@kingedwardvii.co.uk or on 020 7467 4348.

If you are considering contacting King Edward VII's Hospital about their support to veterans, you may also wish to speak to your Blesma Support Officer about what Blesma may be able to do to help. For example, you may be entitled to a grant towards the cost of your travel to and from the hospital.



Your BSO is first point of contact

CONTACT YOUR BSO

Your Blesma Support Officer is standing by to assist you. If you would like some support or advice, please get in touch... don't wait for him to contact you!

BSO (North) STEVE BURTON

Tel: 0131 226 2910 Mob: 07766 258461
Email: bsonorth@blesma.org

BSO (North West) MIKE DOWNES

Tel: 01257 795144 Mob: 07825 536362
Email: bsonw@blesma.org

BSO (North East) PETER SHIELDS MBE QGM

Tel: 01469 532176 Mob: 07908 667219
Email: bsone@blesma.org

BSO (Eastern) TOM ORMISTON

Tel: 01480 469216 Mob: 07825 536364
Email: bsoeastern@blesma.org

BSO (Midlands) CHARLEY STREATHER

Tel: 0116 241 5489 Mob: 07825 536363
Email: bsomid@blesma.org

BSO (South East) BILL GILLET

Tel: 01980 629337 Mob: 07920 092329
Email: bsose@blesma.org

BSO (South West) STEVE FRASER MBE

Tel: 01278 789393 Mob: 07788 312747
Email: bsosw@blesma.org

BSO (London and Kent) PAUL FINDLAY

Tel: 01268 415290 Mob: 07469 242277
Email: bsolk@blesma.org

Spotlight on Benefits

Welcome to the Bulletin's regular section on the benefits system. As well as highlighting some useful information regarding benefits, we will also be raising awareness of some health and social care matters. If you would like to discuss your benefit entitlement, please contact your Blesma Support Officer (details on page 27). Alternatively, you can contact Liz Watling in the Membership Services Team on 020 8548 3516 or by email at membersupport@blesma.org.

WINTER FUEL PAYMENT

For those born on or before 05 May 1953 the Winter Fuel Payment is a tax-free lump sum payment of between £100 and £300 to help with the costs of your Winter heating bills.

You should automatically receive a payment without making a claim if you meet the criteria, if you received a payment last year and your circumstances have not changed, or if you are getting a State Pension or other social security benefit (excluding Child Benefit or Housing Benefit) in the qualifying week.

You should have received your payment by 24 December 2016. **If you meet the criteria but have not received a payment, you must make a claim on 0345 915 1515. You may be sent a claim form which will need to be received by the Winter Fuel Payment Centre by 31 March 2017.**

Some people are not entitled to a payment if, in the qualifying week beginning 19 September 2016, they are in hospital and have been for the previous 52 weeks, are in

custody, or are in a care home and receiving Pension Credit (other exclusions can apply).

If you are entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment and your only government paid income is from a War Pension or War Widows Pension, your Winter Fuel Payment will be processed by Veterans UK. For any questions, please contact 0800 169 2277.

PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE AND MOTABILITY

Those who receive the enhanced mobility component of Personal Independence Payment can choose to use their benefit to pay for a lease vehicle through the Motability charity. If your benefit is turned down at reassessment the car has to be returned.

In early December, the government announced it is considering plans to allow Personal Independence Payment claimants to keep their Motability vehicle until they know the outcome of their appeals. The government also announced it was exploring options to allow those who are not in receipt of the enhanced mobility component to have access to the Motability scheme. We will update Members as soon as there are further developments.

ESA – A REMINDER

The Summer 2016 Bulletin included a future change to Employment and Support Allowance. This benefit is for those who have limited capability for work due to ill health or disability, and who meet further criteria. Ongoing eligibility for the benefit is tested

under a Work Capability Assessment. Currently, if the assessment is satisfied, a higher payment is received, either as a Work Related Activity Component or Support Component.

From April, the extra payment for those in the Work Related Activity Group will no longer be awarded. This will affect new claimants only. Current claimants are unaffected by the change. It is therefore important that, if you are not receiving Employment and Support Allowance and think you may be entitled to, you should discuss it with your BSO before the change comes into effect.

PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENT AND DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE FOR THOSE LIVING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Personal Independence Payment is for those aged 16 to 64 who have difficulty with daily living and/or mobility. It was introduced in England, Scotland and Wales in 2013. Northern Ireland only introduced the benefit in June 2016.

Previously, Disability Living Allowance was the benefit for those with personal care and/or mobility difficulties. This benefit is being phased out and current claimants will be invited to claim Personal Independence Payment. If you are an existing Disability Living Allowance claimant aged 16 to 64 and your benefit is due to come to an end, or if you report a change in your care or mobility needs, you will be invited to claim Personal Independence Payment.

If you are aged 16 to 64 and have an indefinite or lifetime award for DLA, you will be randomly selected for assessment and invited to claim PIP. This will happen over a number of years between 12 December 2016 and December 2018. It is important to remember that whilst the two benefits have

similarities, there are many differences and you should not assume that just because you have been receiving Disability Living Allowance you will automatically qualify for Personal Independence Payment.

If you are not entitled to Personal Independence Payment, or receive less than you did on Disability Living Allowance, you may be entitled to a supplementary payment for a year up until March 2020.

BENEFIT RATES FROM APRIL 2017

Disability benefits are usually increased in line with the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). In September 2016, when the rates were set for the following year, the CPI was 1% which will mean an equivalent increase in disability benefits, such as Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance.

Other benefits for working age people, such as Income Support and Jobseekers Allowance were frozen in cash terms from April 2016 for four years. State Pension is unaffected by this as it is protected by the 'triple lock' – the measure used for uprating State Pension each year. The government has guaranteed to increase State Pension equivalent to increases in wages, prices, or 2.5% – whichever is higher.

INCREASES IN WAR PENSIONS AND ALLOWANCES (EFFECTIVE WEEK BEGINNING 10 APRIL 2017)

The new rates of War Pensions and Allowances proposed from April 2017 are set out in the tables on the following page. The annual uprating will take effect from the week beginning 10 April. Rates for 2017 are increasing by 1% in line with the September 2016 Consumer Prices Index.

The weekly rates are shown in the following tables unless otherwise shown or stated...

BENEFITS

WAR PENSION	CURRENT	APRIL 2017
100%	£178.20	£180.00
90%	£160.38	£162.00
80%	£142.56	£144.00
70%	£124.74	£126.00
60%	£106.92	£108.00
50%	£89.10	£90.00
40%	£71.28	£72.00
30%	£53.46	£54.00
20%	£35.64	£36.00

The 100% War Pension is as quoted by the MOD. The others (90% - 20%) are calculated by DOMS and there could be 'pennies' either way.

AGE ALLOWANCES PAYABLE FROM AGE 65		
40% or 50%	£11.95	£12.05
60% or 70%	£18.35	£18.55
80% or 90%	£26.10	£26.35
100%	£36.70	£37.10

CONSTANT ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE

Part-Day Rate	£33.60	£33.95
Full-Day Rate	£67.20	£67.90
Intermediate Rate	£100.80	£101.85
Exceptional Rate	£134.40	£135.80

INVALIDITY ALLOWANCE

Lower Rate (Retired between 50 & 54 (women) and 50 & 59 (men) years of age inclusive)	£7.10	£7.15
Middle Rate (Retired between 40 & 49 years of age inclusive)	£14.20	£14.30
Higher Rate (Retired under 40 years of age)	£21.80	£22.00

CLOTHING ALLOWANCE

£ per annum	£230.00	£232.00
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EDUCATION ALLOWANCE

Maximum (£ per annum)	£120.00	£120.00
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MOBILITY SUPPLEMENT

One Rate	£ 64.15	£64.80
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ALLOWANCE FOR LOWERED STANDARD OF OCCUPATION

Maximum	£67.20	£67.88
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UNEMPLOYABILITY ALLOWANCE

Personal	£110.10	£111.20
Adult Dependency Increase	£61.20	£61.80
Increase for First Child	£14.20	£14.35
Increase for Subsequent Children	£16.75	£16.90

COMFORTS ALLOWANCE

(PAID WITH CAA AND UNSUPP)

Lower Rate	£14.45	£14.60
Higher Rate	£28.90	£29.20

EXCEPTIONALLY SEVERE

DISABLEMENT ALLOWANCE

One Rate	£67.20	£67.90
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SEVERE DISABLEMENT

OCCUPATIONAL ALLOWANCE

One Rate	£33.60	£ 33.95
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WAR WIDOW(ER)'S PENSION

Widow(er) (Other Ranks)	£135.15	£136.50
Childless Widow(er) Under 40 (Other Ranks)	£32.37	£32.69
Supplementary Pension (Pre-1973 Widows)	£90.41	£91.31

WAR WIDOW(ER)'S AGE ALLOWANCE

Age 65-69	£15.40	£15.55
Aged 70-79	£29.60	£29.90
Aged 80 and over	£43.90	£44.35

CHILDREN'S ALLOWANCE

Increase for First Child	£21.20	£21.40
Increase for Subsequent Children	£23.75	£24.00

RENT ALLOWANCE

Maximum	£50.90	£51.40
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THERAPEUTIC EARNINGS LIMIT

Annual Rate	£5,590	£6,240
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ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE

Lower Rate	£55.10	£55.65
Higher Rate	£82.30	£83.10

THERAPEUTIC EARNINGS

A War Pensioner (WP) in receipt of UNSUPP is permitted to do some work without his/her allowance being affected. The arrangement continues to be known as 'Therapeutic Earnings', now somewhat of a misnomer.

In order for any work to be accepted by Veterans UK as 'therapeutic', it must be for no more than 16 hours per week, and should not produce earnings that exceed £6,240 per year from 10 April. Additionally, the work proposed must not be considered detrimental to the claimant's health. To avoid any misunderstanding, prior approval should be sought from Veterans UK if the WP is in receipt of UNSUPP and wishes to start any work that he/she would like to be considered under the 'therapeutic earnings' rules.

If the job finishes, the WP must seek further approval before starting another job, and any increase in hours or earnings must be reported. If you have any questions, please contact your local Blesma Support Officer (details on page 27).

Take a look at the Benefits Information section on the website (www.blesma.org). If you have any questions, contact your BSO or Liz in the Membership Services

team on membersupport@blesma.org or by calling 020 8548 3516.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

From time to time the government will review certain benefits to ensure they are delivering the required policy intent or when they wish to make certain changes to the Benefits legislation.

ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE CONSULTATION UPDATE

We are pleased to announce that the government has made the decision to drop its plan for the localisation of Attendance Allowance and the benefit will remain the responsibility of the government.

We first reported on the government's plan to consult on the future of Attendance Allowance in England and Wales in the Spring 2016 Bulletin. Attendance Allowance is a benefit for those whose disability or ill health started after they turned 65. The benefit is a payment to recognise the increased costs that a person can incur due to their difficulties. Claiming Attendance Allowance can also help with qualification for other benefits, for example, a carer may be able to claim Carer's Allowance.

The proposal for Attendance Allowance within the consultation would mean transferring the budget for Attendance Allowance to local authorities, giving them more responsibility to support people with care needs. There was no recommendation as to how the local authorities could use this money and it could have resulted in the money getting swallowed up in the social care shortfall many are experiencing.

To support Blesma's response to the consultation we sent a short survey to our Members who are already receiving Attendance Allowance to find out what difference the benefit makes to them.

The responses made it clear how valued the benefit is. People use it to pay for wellbeing issues such as private or informal carers, disability aids, heating and cleaners. The majority of those who responded to the survey have an informal carer (eg. a family member) and cited the difficulties they have had in approaching their local authority for assistance with care. Attendance Allowance allows Members to manage their lives as they choose and prevents them from requiring local authority support with care.

In our formal response to the consultation we reported the results of our survey and strongly recommended that Attendance Allowance remains within the benefits system and the responsibility of the government. We made this recommendation because the evidence shows that managing the benefit in this way gives freedom of choice and allows Members to have control over maintaining their independence for as long as possible.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the survey; your responses secured the best outcome for those in receipt of the Allowance.

MEMBER'S TOP TIP

Are you a leg amputee who enjoys gardening? If so, you may be interested in this top tip from Blesma Member Chris Jones:

“It can be a real struggle to don a pair of wellies as the prosthetic foot remains at 90° to the shin. You can only get the boot on after a lot of effort, and getting it off is nigh-on impossible without pulling the leg off! My solution? Wrap the foot in a carrier bag and the welly slides on and off easily.”

And finally...



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

As you are aware, our Articles of Association require an Annual General Meeting and this year we will hold it during the Members' Weekend in Kenilworth. We will keep formalities to a minimum! Look out for the Calling Notice included in this Bulletin. We hope to see you there!

LEAP INTO THE UNKNOWN...

Fancy learning to skydive? Try wind tunnel training under first class instruction and increase your chances of being selected for the planned Trans4mers California Expedition in 2018. Contact Emily on 020 8548 7094 or email mea@blesma.org



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