

Blesma

Bulletin Members' Newsletter Spring 2019

Learn to speak
with confidence
Time to talk the talk **p04**

New rates for
the War Pension
A look at allowances **p16**



Blesma Week

It's going to be bigger and better than ever. Get ready to join in

Inside: Keep a diary; help your Limb Centre to help you



Discover how the Midlands area
is bringing Members together

Read the Spring issue of
Blesma Magazine. Out soon!

Blesma Bulletin

Spring 2019



It definitely feels like Winter as I write this introduction, but the Blesma programme is beginning to warm up so I know the Spring is close. There was additional activity across the regions leading

up to Christmas with the Outreach Officers enabling more local social events to very good reports. Another example of a regional activity was the short Speaking With Confidence course held in Plymouth; it was much appreciated and we aim to do more at the local level. You can read the article on p04.

We aim to offer new services to the membership whenever there seems to be a need and we can be of help. The demand for counselling has gone up since it was introduced in 2017 and we have recently added the opportunity for Members to be introduced to professional financial guidance. The piece on Forces MoneyPlan on p09 explains.

Introducing Support Officers into Scotland and Wales has been another successful initiative and you can see some of what Tom has been up to in Wales in his article. Tom's post, as well as that

of the Outreach Officers, is currently being paid for by the Chancellor's award of Libor bank fines and we are grateful. One other member of staff is to be introduced as we welcome Anita Pease who has joined the Fundraising Team. You can find out more about Anita on p11.

Two important pieces of news. First, the specific introduction of a universal Code of Conduct for Blesma. It applies to all within Blesma and to those who support us from without. It is nothing you would not expect, but with increasing public concern on behaviour in society, including the misuse of social media, the Trustees felt our position and expectations should be clear. The other news is that the future of the Head Office location is now clear. The matter was discussed at last year's AGM. We will move to Chelmsford later in the year, where we aim to be more efficient and to add more value to the Association's assets.

Finally, Blesma Week is in the early stages of preparation and we hope you will be able to join in. It is a great way to unite the Association during May. Please see the piece on p11.

Barry Le Gry, Chief Executive



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Increase your self-confidence in 2019



ix Blesma Members started their 2019 with a course in confident speaking.

The one-day course, with more dates planned for Spring, has been designed specifically for Blesma Members, equipping them with the awareness, skills and confidence needed to create an impact when speaking to either individuals or groups within business and for employment purposes.

The course, which has been designed and delivered by The Drive Project, explores how to speak with clarity and potency, so that the speaker's message strongly influences the audience.

Participants came to the session wanting to gain confidence when speaking in front of an audience, help with controlling nerves and an interest in understanding how to deliver and structure a talk.

The first day, which was led by public speaking trainer Jack Pinter, took place on Friday 18 January in Plymouth.

Jack led Members through sessions and practices on the following:

- Presence
- Embodying the message
- Communicating with confidence
- Physical & amp; vocal preparation
- Storytelling
- Presenting with purpose

Through various exercises, Jack encouraged the group to push themselves out of their comfort zone. The group created meaningful and insightful work, and Tuesday Critchfield from The Drive Project said that she witnessed some brilliant peer-to-peer feedback and support.

"Jack created a safe environment for the Blesma Members to fail and fail better, and learn and improve. There were some definitely personal breakthroughs!" she said.

Over lunch, Outreach Officer Rupert caught up with Members Carole, Shona, and Chris, who all said that they had thoroughly enjoyed the morning and had learned quite a bit. Carole also said that the training was beginning to give her the confidence to speak to people and build up her own self-confidence.

"I didn't know what to expect. To see other people grow within those couple of hours was just... WOW! We got a lot out of it. I loved it. I'll be able to give my next speech with more confidence."

Carole

By the end of the session, Members reported that they had lots to take away from the workshop.

"The project is brilliant, I couldn't fault it at all. It definitely lived up to my expectations. I learnt to pronounce my words better and how to structure my story line." **Vic**

"It was good for me, as I knew exactly what I wanted from it. I thought it was spot on. The things I needed to know I got out of it, such as getting the attention of the room, how to portray myself more confidently, being more proficient at public speaking.

"Having done this workshop, I now don't think I will be as nervous if asked to speak in public. I would feel a lot more confident in what I am about to do. I have been asked to give a speech in June and I am really looking forward to it. I think I will approach it the same way I did the talk on the [workshop] day and then roll it from there. I think I have got a good structure to my talk now thanks to the workshop."

Dan

"The project is brilliant, I couldn't fault it at all. It definitely lived up to my expectations. I learnt to pronounce my words better and how to structure my story"



“I feel like I’ll be able to talk to anyone now. I feel much calmer and more confident.” **Chris**

“It’s completely out of my comfort zone, but I need to be there to start to learn. I don’t want to hide behind things.” **Shona**

Jack Pinter, workshop leader, said: “I was really impressed with the way the participants threw themselves into practical exercises designed to help them find ways to share themselves and their stories with greater assurance, confidence and impact.

“They also provided each other with insightful, supportive and encouraging feedback, which is a sign of how well people can support each other in their quest to bring their experiences to life and touch the lives of all the people they can connect with.”

If you’d like to take part in a workshop there may be some availability on the below dates:

- Birmingham:** Thursday 07 March
- Leeds:** Thursday 25 April
- Edinburgh:** Thursday 09 May
- London:** Thursday 16 May

For more information, please contact the Activities Team on 020 8548 7094 or at meo@blesma.org For any questions surrounding the programme, including support with travel arrangements, please contact Tuesday Critchfield at Tuesday@thedriveproject.co.uk

Important dates for your Activities diary

Getting involved in Blesma’s activities can be hugely beneficial and they’re absolutely free! Below are just some of the activities that will be held over the coming months. If you like the sound of any, head to the Blesma website (www.blesma.org/how-we-help/

activities) where you can find more about each activity as well as any important restrictions.

For more information, or to book your place, contact the team on meo@blesma.org or call 020 8548 7094

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES			
Activity	Date	Location	Application deadline
PhotoVoice South	20-23 May	The South	15 March
Island Photography	June TBC	Shetland	15 March
NRA Adaptive Shooting	19-20 June TBC	Bisley	01 April
Intro to Cycling	22 June	York	01 April
Art and Painting Course	28 June-02 July	Winchester	01 April
Adapted Diving Florida	10-19 July TBC	Florida, USA	01 April
Adapted Fly Fishing	12-15 July	Peak District	01 April
Soldier Ride New York	15-21 July	New York, USA	01 April
Family Glamping Weekend	03-07 August	North	01 May
Couples' Weekend	09-12 August	South	01 May
Battlefield Tour	16-20 August	Belgium	01 May
Family Adventure Activities	19-23 August	Bendrigg	15 May
Dorset Fishing Competition	06-08 September	Dorset	15 June
Soldier Ride Challenge Ride	13-22 September	Germany	15 June
Greek Regatta	14-22 September	Greece	15 June
Widows' Week	30 September – 07 October	Cheshire	01 July
Ride to the Wall	04-05 October	Burton upon Trent	01 July
Seniors' Week	07-14 October	Cheshire	01 July
Bahamas Expedition	27 October – 05 November	Bahamas	15 July
Remembrance Weekend	09-10 November	London	15 July
Couples' Fitness and Lifestyle Course	22-27 November	Spain	15 June

The Blesma Universal Code of Conduct

Blesma is introducing a Code of Conduct. The Code addresses the values of Blesma and behaviours for Members, staff and supporters. The Code applies to all inside the Association and those outside who support it. The desired outcome is that everyone, inside and out, will be treated equally and with respect.

The Association has always practised such behaviour, but in this day and age we have to be able to evidence that such a policy exists. This was endorsed by the Trustees on 28 September 2018. Failure to apply the Code can result in the Trustees taking corrective action ranging from pointing out the error and the need for apology and reform, to breaking association with the offender. This is within the long-established Articles and Rules of Blesma.

The core strength of the Association is the membership of shared experience, continuing with the values of Service – selfless commitment, courage, discipline, integrity, loyalty, respect for others – both as Members and as an Association. This will be promoted by all those within and supporting the Association continuing to:

- Promote and uphold the privacy, dignity, rights, safety, health and wellbeing of fellow Blesma Members, staff and supporters at all times
- Communicate in an open, effective and respectful way whilst on Blesma business
- Acknowledge Members' rights to confidentiality with the limitation that one has a responsibility to act on any suspicion or evidence of abuse or neglect, and to pass on concerns to an appropriate position or agency
- Apply social media guidelines. Specific, named coverage of Members, staff or supporters should only be with their permission and coverage should be factual, respectful and not take opinion or make judgement on an individual
- Preserve the Association's reputation for being non-political and a promoter of diversity
- Abide by the Articles and Rules of the Association, noting the procedures for raising issues with the Trustees and the membership, and, if necessary the additional Blesma Complaints Policy

National Free Wills Network

Blesma is a member of the National Free Wills Network, so we can help you make or amend your Will for free. The National Free Wills Network enables individuals and couples who support Blesma to have their Will(s) written or amended free of charge using the services of firms of solicitors within reasonable travelling distance of their homes. This offer applies to the writing of Simple Wills (ie. Wills that do not deal with complex issues). This also includes 'Mirror Wills' for couples.

HOW IT WORKS

You can request a National Free Wills Network leaflet either via your Support Officer or by emailing legacies@blesma.org. We'll then send you the form to complete and return. Within three weeks, you will receive a letter with further details and a list of up to six solicitors in your area to choose from. You can make the appointment with the solicitor of your choice and Blesma will cover the costs of writing your Simple or Mirror Will.

For more information contact legacies@blesma.org or talk with your Blesma Support Officer

New Aviation Charter to improve travelling

A proposed new charter for airlines and airports is focused on improving conditions for disabled airline passengers.

If adopted, the charter would enforce commitments to raise wheelchair storage standards, ensure better training for airline crews and baggage handlers, and boost awareness among disabled passengers of their rights, with the aim of making air travel smoother and less frantic for disabled passengers.

The charter would also remove the £2,000 limit on pay-outs for damaged wheelchairs. The charter is part of the government's aviation strategy which will be considered in a 16-week consultation, which began in December 2018. The government says the policy will be finalised this year.

Getting your point across

Those who use a prosthetic limb will be all too aware of the time pressure their prosthetist works under. This is common across all Limb Centres where amputee patient numbers are on the increase and prosthetist numbers are declining.

There is an acknowledged issue within the world of prosthetics that more is being asked of prosthetic departments and this can make communication difficult. The time to talk through issues and problems can seem scarce. It is important therefore, to be able to get your point across effectively and succinctly, so that necessary adjustments or reworking can be done.

One way of helping with this is to maintain a daily usage diary. A simple notebook in which you can log any concerns or problems with your artificial limb as they occur can be a very useful tool. By making notes which you can then take with you to a fitting appointment, you will be in a better position to discuss what happens when you wear your prosthesis. You might wish to record relevant information from the diary onto a separate piece of paper to leave with your prosthetist; they can refer to this as required after you have left the centre.

WHAT SHOULD YOU MAKE A NOTE OF?

Here are a few suggestions of things you might want to record. The list is not exhaustive and you may have other comments you feel would be useful to make a note of. It is a personal diary and so is unique to you.

– What is the condition of your residual limb (stump) in the morning before wearing the prosthesis?

Note the size, feel and sensations, if any. Does it feel cold, hot or normal?

– Are there any 'hot spots' from the previous day?

Note the size, colour and location of any sores, blisters, redness or rashes. If possible, it could help to photograph any problem areas.

– What is the condition of the prosthesis?

Are there signs of damage or wear and tear? Include ancillaries such as foot shell, coverings and liners.



- **What does it feel like when donning the limb?**
Does it go on normally and with the normal amount of socks, or is it either loose or tight fitting? What did you do to overcome any problems?
- **How does the prosthesis feel during the day?**
Make a note of any activities that you carry out and how the limb helps or hinders you. Are you able to do more or less compared to other days? What, if anything, is different?
- **What does it feel like when you take the limb off?**
Either during the day as required or at the end of the day. As when donning the limb, when you take it off note any problem areas.
- **If you experience pain, what kind of pain is it and where does it seem to come from?**
Is it Phantom Limb Pain or pain in the stump? What were you doing when it started and what did you do to relieve the symptoms?

The tips here should help you explain to your prosthetist what is going on with your limb on a day-to-day basis in the real world.

CHANGING NHS LIMB CENTRES

Most people are content with the NHS Limb Centre they attend and, in the majority of cases, this is the Limb Centre that is either closest to them or where they were initially referred post-amputation (or when they were discharged from the Forces).

Patients living with limb loss have the right to choose where they receive their prosthetic care within the NHS Limb Service. It may be that a patient has moved home and is now geographically closer to another Limb Centre or they feel that their particular needs might be better met elsewhere. To facilitate a move, the patient's GP should make a referral to the new Limb Centre explaining the reason for the proposed change. If the limb loss is as a result of military service (attributable) and the patient is in receipt of a War Disablement Pension or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Award for the amputation, the GP should add the following to the referral letter:

As this patient is a military veteran and his/her current condition may be related to military service, this referral should be considered for priority treatment under the rules set out in the Commissioning Board mandate and Armed Forces Covenant.

It should be remembered that priority treatment is considered against the clinical needs of others. Those patients who rely on hospital transport should first ensure that their local transport provider will take them to their chosen Limb Centre as this is not guaranteed.

If you feel as though you would benefit from changing your Limb Centre and you would like to discuss this in more detail, please contact BSO Prosthetics on 020 8548 7080 or at bsoprosthetics@blesma.org

You can now put your finances in order - for free!

A free financial guidance service has been made available to Blesma Members, Widows and carers. Forces MoneyPlan offers a free, no obligation, confidential one-off meeting with a fully qualified, professional financial adviser who has agreed to give up their time to provide 'generic financial guidance' to help members of Blesma and their families identify and understand their financial position based on their specific circumstances.

It aims to help Members make better informed decisions about their financial options and to show them how best to plan their finances.

The meeting can be conducted face to face, over the telephone, or via Skype depending on your preference. Following the meeting, a personalised 'Options and Priorities' written report summarising the key points that were discussed will be issued by post or email. At this point, any decision about further contact with the financial adviser is placed firmly in the Member's hands, and they will not be contacted again by this or any other financial adviser associated with the Personal Finance Society unless they specifically request it.

For more information, get in touch with your BSO who will explain how you can take advantage of the service and what to do next. The BSOs contact details can be found on pages 18-20

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Members new to Blesma are required to pay a joining fee of £2 for life membership or £1 on joining and then £1 per annum. Payment can be made by debit card by contacting Elaine in Membership Services on **020 8548 7093**. Members who have previously paid subscriptions do not need to make any further payments.

Government-funded tech help in the West area

Blesma has teamed up with Digital Communities Wales to offer Members living in the West area a unique and insightful opportunity to learn how to use technology, get online and connect to family, friends and the wider world.

With help from Blesma volunteers who have received coaching from Digital Communities Wales, which is funded by the Welsh Government, the initiative sets out to target Members who are not digitally savvy or have never used technology before. The aim is to offer them one-to-one sessions to help and develop their skills on digital equipment such as tablets, laptops and mobile phones.

“Last year, it became apparent that a lot of Members in my area did not have access to the internet, did not have an email address, or were struggling to keep in touch with their family. Digitally, they were very excluded,” said Tom Hall, Blesma Support Officer for the West area (which includes Wales). “I had a thought that we could use our volunteers in Wales and train them up to coach those Members who needed to know how to use technology and the internet safely, and at a level to meet their individual needs.”

The initiative, which is currently running as a six-month pilot, aims to develop basic digital skills for those who need them. The sessions

can be as simple as connecting a Member’s tablet to the internet, setting up an email address and showing a Member how to use it, or teaching a Member how they can use software such as Skype to stay in touch with family members and friends. Digital volunteers, six of whom are Blesma Members, have also been coached in helping Members understand security around technology and the internet to ease any of their worries.

One-to-one sessions will be run over the phone, or can be arranged at a local meeting point, or even through a home visit. The first steps of digital engagement with Members will be to develop trust, get to know the individual’s interest and build rapport. Initial engagement often does not involve

technology. The digital volunteer will spend time listening, taking notes and building a relationship. They can then introduce a device at subsequent visits if required.

The scheme is currently only available to Members living in the West area as part of the six-month pilot. If you are a Member in the West area, and would like more information on the digital inclusion initiative, please contact your Outreach Officer, Jason Suller on 07741 744141 or your Blesma Support Officer, Tom Hall, on 020 8548 7098, who will put you in touch with a digital volunteer.

The area is still looking for digital volunteers in various locations, so please get in touch with either Tom or Jason if you are interested in helping out.



Personnel update from Chadwell Heath

ANITA PEASE

Community and Events
Fundraising Manager



Tell us a bit about your work background

I'm joining Blesma after working at St Luke's Hospice for nearly 13 years as Individual Giving/Regular Giving & Database Officer. My background at St Luke's was varied; anything from events, community, marketing, lotteries, individual giving... so I've got a wide range of skills to bring to my new role.

What attracted you to working for Blesma?

I thought it was a brilliant opportunity to work for a national charity that's got the same ethos as St Luke's Hospice – where the Members and their families are at the heart of the organisation then the community. There's a real sense of togetherness at Blesma. Everyone has their own targets, but we all work together to achieve them.

There's a new focus to your role...

The role is now more focused on encouraging more fundraisers to organise local community events or get involved with those in their area rather than targeting sign-ups for national events. I'm already hoping to bring on board a new lottery.

When should Members get in touch with you?

If Members have an idea about a community event they want to run by us, or need some advice on how to get an event off the ground, then it is a good idea to get in contact with me and we can discuss if it will work and how to make it a success. We can give them the tools and support they need to organise and run a community fundraising event themselves.

You can get in touch with Anita at Chadwell Heath by phone on 020 8548 7089 or email at communityeventsmngr@blesma.org

It's time to get Boots on for Blesma Week

Blesma's annual week of fundraising and awareness raising will take place from 20-26 May. This will be the first Blesma Week in which our Outreach Officers will join forces with our Fundraising and Communications Teams to ensure we have a presence in each of our nine areas. The Association also wants to encourage Members and volunteers to be 'out on the ground' during the week.

Blesma Outreach Officers are busy organising a range of activities, from cycle events to pub quizzes, and are currently engaging with local military units.

Meanwhile, Blesma's Fundraising Team is busy organising an exciting range of activities including two new initiatives. The Boots On For Blesma Virtual 10K will take place in May. You can run, walk, swim or cycle 10km, either in one go or throughout the month. Confirm that you have completed the distance and you'll earn a Boots On For Blesma medal.

Bite-sized fitness circuits with a limbless veteran is a new fundraising initiative that is currently being designed. Whilst it is primarily aimed at schools, it will also be rolled out to adults. Its launch will coincide with Blesma Week and will encourage people to complete a fitness circuit whilst raising money for the Association.

To get involved, visit the Blesma website nearer the time, email fundraising@blesma.org or call the team on 020 8548 7089

MEMBERS' WEEKEND RESERVE LIST

The deadline to apply for your place at this year's Members' Weekend has passed. The Weekend is more popular than ever and this year's event is now fully booked. If you are still interested in coming, you can apply for a place on the Reserve List by contacting **Sue at Chadwell Heath on 020 8548 7091 or at officeexec@blesma.org**

News from across the Branches

SUTTON, MERTON AND DISTRICT BRANCH

We would like to thank the work of our Outreach Officer, Alida, who has been able to reach out to our communities and arrange for three new Members; Peter, Ajit and Janet to join our Branch.

At our Christmas dinner in early December we had the privilege of being joined by Sam Gallop and his wife Renee. Our membership continues to grow, and we look forward to meeting and welcoming more new Members.

We have set a date of 29 May for our 70th anniversary celebrations and continue to work with our BSO Paul Findlay and Chadwell Heath on the event. To be able to celebrate appropriately, we have ensured the event is accessible for Branch Members whether new, old or future, as well as our supporters and guests.

On 10 and 11 November 2018 our Branch represented Blesma in the march through Banstead village to the memorial. We had a stand in the WWI exhibition, and helped to educate members of the public and share some of the realities of The Great War.

We would like to thank All Saints Church Banstead for sharing the Armistice service collection between Blesma, SSAFA and the RBL. We would also like to thank Waitrose Cheam for including our Branch in their green token scheme.



Our Branch has reached out to all Rotary Clubs and U3A groups in Surrey to spread the awareness and understanding of our Branch and Blesma as a charity. We have committed to taking a stall at Ashtead and Banstead Village Fairs in June and July 2019 respectively.

We would like to remind all Blesma Members that whilst our

Branch name is the Sutton, Merton and District Branch, our Branch is open to all Members. We would encourage any Member to pop along and join in with any of our meetings, which are usually held over a pie and a pint.

We feel that it is also important to reiterate the fact that we work collaboratively with our BSO Paul Findlay and Blesma Outreach Officer Alida Horne, whom we thank for their help and continued support, to ensure that Members are able to attend Branch meetings. Should accessibility or transport be a concern, please don't let this put you off.

Should you have any questions, or if you are considering popping along to one of our meetings please don't hesitate to contact



Members of the Nottingham Branch enjoy their Christmas lunch

Steve, our Branch Ambassador, on either 07917 177336 or by email at steve@geniums.co.uk so that we can answer any of your questions.

NOTTINGHAM BRANCH

The Branch held its Christmas lunch at The Belfry Hotel on 18 December. Thirty six guests attended, including Blesma Chief Executive Barry Le Gry. Although numbers were down slightly on last year, the Branch is flourishing.

We are very much hoping to have a Summer evening meal in July again this year. The date and venue will be publicised once they have been confirmed.

THE DATES OF OUR LUNCHESES/MEETINGS FOR 2019 ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Tuesday 12 March

AGM at 11.30am to be followed by lunch at 12.30pm

Tuesday 14 May

Lunch-only meeting at 12.30pm

Tuesday 09 July

Meeting at 11.30am to be followed by lunch at 12.30pm

Tuesday 10 September

Lunch-only meeting at 12.30pm

Tuesday 12 November

Meeting at 11.30am to be followed by lunch at 12.30pm

These will all be held at The Vale Hotel, Daybrook, NG5 3GG. If you would like to join us, it would be great to see new faces and you would be made very welcome.

Please get in touch by calling 0115 931 3044 or by emailing davidgledger@hotmail.com if you would like to know any more about the lunches or the Branch in general.

David Ledger, Hon. Secretary

It's time to take the HighGround

HighGround is a charity that helps service leavers, reservists and veterans find jobs in outdoor industries such as farming, conservation, forestry, and landscape design.

To help veterans explore their options, HighGround has developed Rural Weeks; five-day residential courses delivered at Bicton College in East Devon. Through classroom-based presentations and practical visits to dairy farms, smallholdings, farm shops and golf courses, college staff and outside presenters introduce attendees to their areas of expertise. They also offer advice on the careers in each sector that would be best suited to ex-military personnel, alongside the relevant training and qualifications needed.

Once the course has been completed, the charity's Careers Manager will follow up to help each individual move towards employment or self-employment,



whether this is by arranging work placements, advising on courses and how to access funding, or putting the individual in touch with a partner organisation.

If you have any questions, or need further information, please contact Anna on 07951 495272 or at anna@highground-uk.org



Members have already taken the HighGround and discovered life beyond the military

Spotlight on Benefits and Social Care

Welcome to the Bulletin's regular section on benefits and social care. 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, or if you have a query regarding social care, please contact your Blesma Support Officer. Alternatively, you can contact *Liz Watling in the Independence and Wellbeing Team by email at iwabenefits@blesma.org or on 020 8548 3516.*

BENEFIT RATES FROM APRIL 2019

For the fourth year in a row, most working-age benefits are being kept at their 2015/16 cash value. This is the final year of this freeze and these benefits should see an increase next year when the rates change.

Benefits for disabled people and their carers are not affected by the price freeze and will rise in line with Consumer Prices Index inflation, an increase of 2.4%.

The State Pension is protected by the 'triple lock'. The Government guarantees to increase the State Pension by the higher of either the equivalent to increase in wages, CPI or 2.5%. This year the increase will be 2.6%.

If you are entitled to a benefit, you will receive a letter advising you of your benefit rates some time around March from the Department for Work and Pensions or, for those living in Northern Ireland, from the Department for Communities.

STATE PENSION AGE CHANGES

The exact date that you can claim your State Pension depends on when you were born. Women's State Pension age has been increased from 60 to 65 over the last few years to bring it into line with men's State Pension Age.

Now that the ages have aligned there are further changes. The State Pension age will now increase for both men and women to 66 by October 2020. The Government is planning further increases

which will raise the State Pension age from 66 to 67 between 2026 and 2028. The State Pension age is going to be kept under review, which means that it could change again in the future, depending on different factors such as changes in life expectancy. To find out your State Pension age, contact the Pension Service on 0800 731 0175 or check the online State Pension calculator at www.gov.uk/state-pension-age

You can also request a forecast of how much State Pension you could get.

PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE PAYMENT AND ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE AGE CHANGES

The change in State Pension age also affects the Personal Independence Payment and Attendance Allowance disability benefits. If you already receive one of these benefits it does not affect you.

Personal Independence Payment is for those with daily living or mobility difficulties.

Attendance Allowance is for those with personal care difficulties.

Personal Independence Payment

You must be aged between 16 and State Pension age when you make your initial claim. If you are awarded the benefit and continue to meet the criteria, you can continue to receive it beyond State Pension age.

Attendance Allowance

You must be State Pension age or over to make a claim. You must not be receiving the Personal Independence Payment daily living component.

If you wish to find out more about benefits and what you may be entitled to, please contact your Blesma Support Officer, or Liz Watling on 020 8548 3516. Alternatively, you can visit the relevant pages on Blesma's website at www.blesma.org/understanding-benefits

BLIND PERSON'S ALLOWANCE

Most people have a tax allowance. This is the amount you can earn before you start paying income tax. The Blind Person's Allowance is an extra amount that can be added on to increase a person's tax-free allowance.

For the tax year 2019 this allowance is set at £2,450. You can transfer your Blind Person's Allowance to your spouse or civil partner if you don't pay tax or cannot use all of it.

England and Wales

You can claim Blind Person's Allowance if you are registered with your local council as being blind or severely sight impaired.

Scotland and Northern Ireland

You can claim Blind Person's Allowance if you can't carry out work for which eyesight is essential.

Contact Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to claim. Telephone: 0300 200 3301

Monday to Friday: 8am-8pm

Saturday: 8am-4pm Sunday: 9am-5pm

HOW TO ACCESS SOCIAL CARE

Social care is the term used to describe care and support provided to enable people to manage their daily living tasks. This includes supporting people with physical, mental and learning disabilities.

Care and support can be provided in a number of ways, including:

- Equipment and adaptations to your home
- Attending a day care centre
- Care at home
- Care in a residential home

How do I access social care?

Healthcare is centrally organised by the Government, whilst local authorities administer social care.

You can contact your local authority which will carry out an assessment of your needs, usually by a social worker, Occupational Therapist or other qualified professional. There is usually a means-tested charging assessment as unlike the NHS, social care is not free at the point of delivery.

The means test works out if:

- The council pays the full cost of your care
- The council pays some of the cost and you pay the rest
- You pay for all of your care

What is charged for depends on whether you live in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

If you prefer, you can contact a care agency directly that can complete an assessment of your needs. You will have to pay for the full cost of any care you have arranged privately.

In some situations, social care and support is provided by the NHS instead of your local authority. In these instances it is free. This can include:

- Short-term care after leaving hospital in order for you to prepare to manage independently at home. This is known as 'reablement'
- Care if you have a complex and serious health condition. This is known as 'continuing healthcare'

WAR PENSION DISREGARD FOR SOCIAL CARE CHARGING ASSESSMENTS

As mentioned above, when people have a local authority social care assessment they may be expected to have a financial assessment to calculate their contribution towards the care costs. Since April 2017, the Government has made changes to the way the War Pension is treated as income when calculating a person's weekly charge towards their social care package (whether residential care or home care).

For those living in England, Scotland and Wales, the War Pension is now disregarded as income when calculating a person's contribution towards their care. There is yet to be an announcement from the Northern Ireland Government.

As April is the time of year when local authorities write to people to advise them of their updated contribution towards their care, this is a timely reminder to Members to make sure that your War Pension has not been included as income within the assessment. However, please note that Constant Attendance Allowance can be treated as income.

If you do identify that War Pension is still being included within the assessment, please contact your local authority. If this is not resolved, please contact your Blesma Support Officer.

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION ADMIRAL NURSE SERVICE

The Legion works with Dementia UK to provide Admiral Nurses, a service that supports carers of The Legion beneficiaries who have dementia. The Legion beneficiary can either be the person with dementia or the carer. Currently, the service is available in Lancashire, the West Midlands, Hampshire and Somerset.

What do Admiral Nurses offer?

- The focus of the service is to maintain independence and improve the quality of life for carers and families, and to provide the practical advice they need
- Skilled assessments to determine the needs of family carers and the needs of the person with dementia
- Information and practical advice for carers and their families on supporting those with dementia
- To work with carers and families to provide emotional and psychological support throughout the caring journey
- Advice on how to care for someone with dementia and help to develop skills to encourage positive approaches to living with dementia
- To work together with other professionals and organisations to provide additional support if needed

For further queries about the service, please contact The Royal British Legion Helpline on 0808 802 8080 or visit the website www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/care/admiral-nurses/

INCREASES IN WAR PENSIONS AND ALLOWANCES - EFFECTIVE WEEK BEGINNING 06 APRIL 2019

The new rates of War Pensions and Allowances proposed from April 2019 are set out in the tables right. The annual uprating will take effect from the week beginning 08 April. Rates for 2019 are increasing by 2.4% in line with the September 2018 Consumer Prices Index.

(Weekly Rates Unless Otherwise Shown)

WAR PENSION

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
100%	£185.40	£189.80
90%	£166.86	£170.82
80%	£148.32	£151.84
70%	£129.78	£132.86
60%	£111.24	£113.88
50%	£92.70	£94.90
40%	£74.16	£75.92
30%	£55.62	£56.94
20%	£37.08	£37.96

The actual amounts paid may vary slightly from this due to the impact of the various component-level rounding rules.

AGE ALLOWANCES PAYABLE FROM AGE 65

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
40% or 50%	£12.40	£12.70
60% or 70%	£19.10	£19.55
80% or 90%	£27.15	£27.80
100%	£38.20	£39.10

CONSTANT ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
Part Day Rate	£34.95	£35.80
Full Day Rate	£69.90	£71.60
Intermediate Rate	£104.85	£107.40
Exceptional Rate	£139.80	£143.20

INVALIDITY ALLOWANCE

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
Lower Rate (Retired between 50 & 54 (women) and 50 & 59 (men) years of age inclusive)	£7.35	£7.55
Middle Rate (Retired between 40 & 49 years of age inc.)	£14.70	£15.10
Higher Rate (Retired under 40 years of age)	£22.65	£23.20

CLOTHING ALLOWANCE

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
£ per annum	£239.00	£245.00

EDUCATION ALLOWANCE

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
Maximum - £ per annum	£120.00	£120.00

MOBILITY SUPPLEMENT

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
One Rate	£ 66.75	£68.35

ALLOWANCE FOR LOWERED STANDARD OF OCCUPATION

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
Maximum	£69.92	£71.60

UNEMPLOYABILITY ALLOWANCE

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
Personal	£114.55	£117.30
Adult Dependency Increase	£63.65	£65.20
Increase for First Child	£14.80	£15.15
Increase for Subsequent Children	£17.40	£17.80

COMFORTS ALLOWANCE (PAID WITH CAA AND UNSUPP)

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
Lower Rate	£15.05	£15.40
Higher Rate	£30.10	£30.80

EXCEPTIONALLY SEVERE DISABLEMENT ALLOWANCE

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
One Rate	£69.90	£71.60

SEVERE DISABLEMENT OCCUPATIONAL ALLOWANCE

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
One Rate	£34.95	£35.80

WAR WIDOW(ER)S' PENSION

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
Widow(er) (Other Ranks)	£140.60	£143.95
Childless Widow(er) Under 40 (Other Ranks)	£33.67	£34.48
Supplementary Pension (Pre-1973 Widows)	£94.05	£96.31

WAR WIDOW(ER)S' AGE ALLOWANCE

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
Aged 65-69	£16.00	£16.40
Aged 70-79	£30.80	£31.55
Aged 80 and over	£45.70	£46.80

CHILDREN'S ALLOWANCE

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
Increase for First Child	£22.05	£22.60
Increase for Subsequent Children	£24.70	£25.30

RENT ALLOWANCE

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
Maximum	£52.95	£54.20

THERAPEUTIC EARNINGS LIMIT

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
Annual Rate	£6,526.00	£6,838.00

ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE

	CURRENT	APRIL 2019
Lower Rate	£57.30	£58.70
Higher Rate	£85.60	£87.65

Useful contact numbers across the Association

TITLE	NAME	TELEPHONE	EMAIL
BLESMA SUPPORT OFFICERS			
BSO (Prosthetics)	Brian Chenier	020 8548 7080 07796 715908	bsoprosthetics@blesma.org
BSO Eastern	Kevin Long	020 3954 3020 07825 536364	bsoeastern@blesma.org
BSO London & South East	Paul Findlay	01268 415290 07469 242277	bsolse@blesma.org
BSO Midlands	Sam Wileman	020 8548 7095 07825 536363	bsomid@blesma.org
BSO North East	Pete Shields	01469 532176 07908 667219	bsone@blesma.org
BSO North West	Mike Downes	01257 795144 07825 536362	bsonw@blesma.org
BSO Scotland, NI & ROI	Steve Burton	0131 2262910 07766 258461	bsosniroi@blesma.org
BSO South	Pat Donnachie	07741 846106	bsosouth@blesma.org
BSO South West	Steve Fraser	01278 789393 07788 312747	bsosw@blesma.org
BSO West	Tom Hall	020 8548 7098 07780 165085	bsowest@blesma.org
Members Living Overseas	Liz Watling	020 8548 3516	iwabenefits@blesma.org
BLESMA OUTREACH OFFICERS			
National Outreach Coordinator	Martin Gwillim	07741 891632	outreachcoord@blesma.org
Outreach Officer Eastern	Darren Fuller	07741 661159	outreache@blesma.org
Outreach Officer London & South East	Alida Horne	07741 845793	outreachlse@blesma.org
Outreach Officer Midlands	Vanessa Lucas	07741 845429	outreachmid@blesma.org
Outreach Officer Northern Ireland	Fiona Morrison	07741 744617	outreachni@blesma.org
Outreach Officer North East	Adele Miller	07741 847211	outreachne@blesma.org
Outreach Officer North West	Kirsten Morrissey	07741 846674	outreachnw@blesma.org

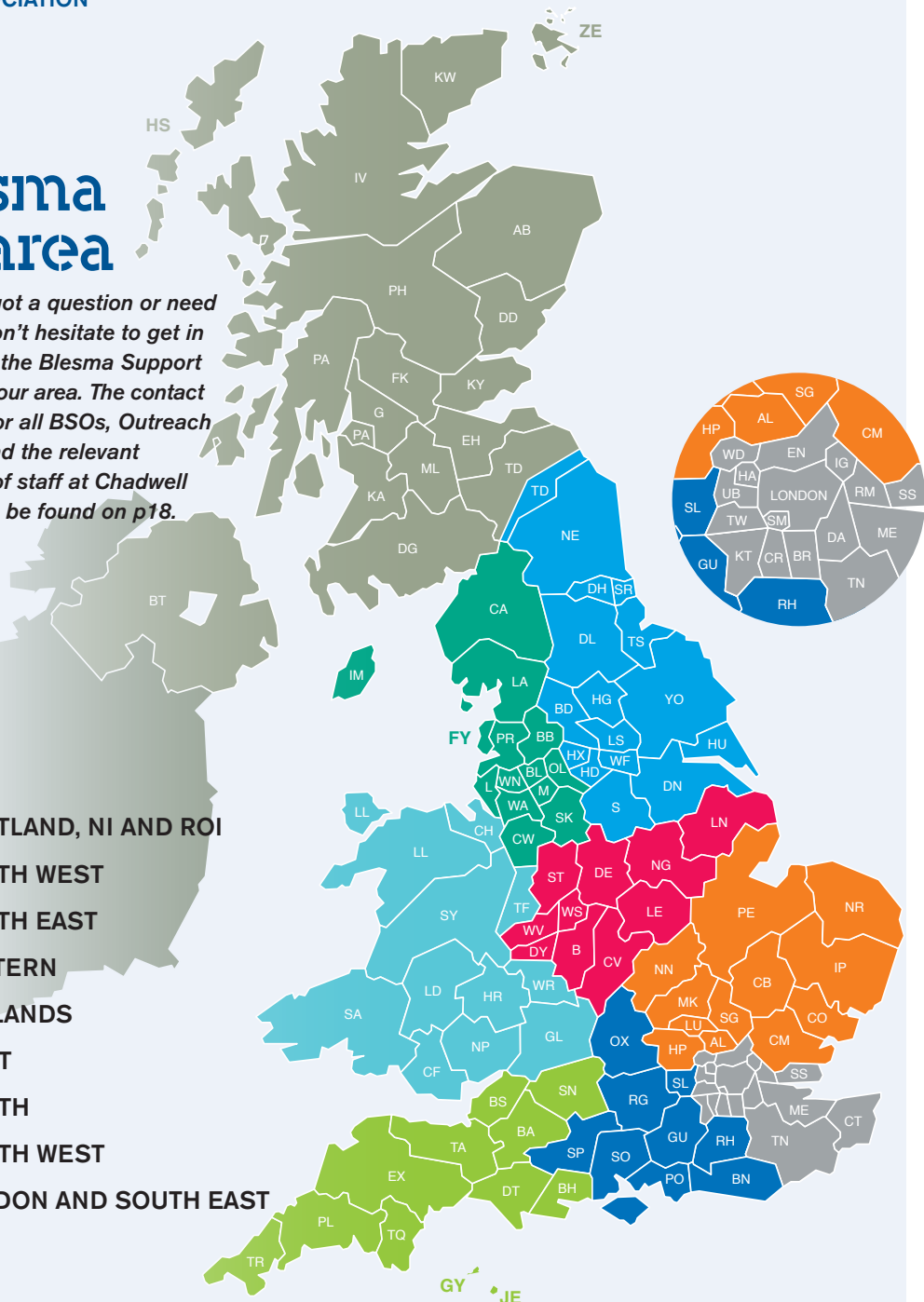
CONTACT DETAILS

TITLE	NAME	TELEPHONE	EMAIL
BLESMA OUTREACH OFFICERS Cont			
Outreach Officer South	Andy Barlow	07384 834449	outreachsouth@blesma.org
Outreach Officer South West	Rupert Lucas	07741 737563	outreachsw@blesma.org
Outreach Officer West	Jason Suller	07741 744141	outreachw@blesma.org
INDEPENDENCE AND WELLBEING			
Members Support	Liz Watling	020 8548 3516	iwabenefits@blesma.org
Members Admin	Elaine Hems	020 8548 7093	memberadmin@blesma.org
Grants Admin	Susie Grainger	020 3954 3022	grantsadmin@blesma.org
Members Support	Liz Watling	020 8548 3516	iwabenefits@blesma.org
Welfare – Direct Line		020 8598 9459	
ACTIVITIES			
Activities Manager	Jess March	020 8548 3519	activities@blesma.org
Membership Engagement Officer	Emily Mizon	020 8548 7094	meo@blesma.org
Activities Executive	Sarah Waymont	020 3954 3021	ae@blesma.org
FUNDRAISING			
Associate Director of Fundraising	Tony Bloomfield	020 8548 3517	adfundraising@blesma.org
Community & Events Manager	Anita Pease	020 8548 7089	communityeventsmngr@blesma.org
Community & Events Officer	Molly Watson	020 8548 7087	communityeventsofficer@blesma.org
Fundraising Relationship Executive	Abbi Wilkins	020 8548 7084	fundraisingrelexec@blesma.org
Corporate Partnership Manager	Mike Allen	020 3954 3029	corporate@blesma.org
COMMUNICATIONS			
Communications Manager	Lorna Dorrell	020 3954 3023	commsmgr@blesma.org
In-House Journalist	Jess Mackinnon	020 8548 3514	ihj@blesma.org
Digital Media Manager	Nick Tuck	01299 896282	digitalmedia@blesma.org
DIRECTORS			
Chief Executive	Barry Le Grys	020 8548 3512	ce@blesma.org
Operations Director	Ian Waller	020 8548 3513	od@blesma.org
Director Independence and Wellbeing	Heather Betts	020 8548 3515	diw@blesma.org
USEFUL CONTACTS			
Main Office		020 8590 1124	chadwellheath@blesma.org
Exec Team and Events Officer	Paula Ferreira	020 8548 3511	execasst@blesma.org
Admin Support	Sue Stokes	020 8548 7091	officeexec@blesma.org

Blesma by area

Have you got a question or need advice? Don't hesitate to get in touch with the Blesma Support Officer in your area. The contact numbers for all BSOs, Outreach Officers and the relevant members of staff at Chadwell Heath, can be found on p18.

- SCOTLAND, NI AND ROI
- NORTH WEST
- NORTH EAST
- EASTERN
- MIDLANDS
- WEST
- SOUTH
- SOUTH WEST
- LONDON AND SOUTH EAST



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