

Shout!

Official magazine of The Fire Fighters Charity

www.firefighterscharity.org.uk

Celebrating 80 Years

Marking eight decades of help, support and care for our fire family

Climbing Together

133 women tackle Mount Snowdon

Families first

How we can support your loved ones



The
Fire Fighters
Charity

Summer holidays with a difference

With summer holidays fast approaching, we're offering you the chance to book a getaway with us at our centres in Cumbria, West Sussex and Devon. But this is a holiday with a difference...

Each time you book, you'll be supporting the UK's fire services community, as every pound will help ensure we can continue offering our vital support to thousands of beneficiaries every year.

For our latest availability, scan here or visit
www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/holiday-rentals



Editorial



Welcome to *Shout!* Magazine and, at long last, to summer.

In this issue, I am delighted that we can all come together to celebrate our 80th anniversary. There is so much we can be proud of when we reflect on the last eight decades. The Charity has evolved hugely over that time - from a fund that supported bereaved families of firefighters killed during WWII, to one that over the last year has made a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of over 10,000 members of the UK's fire family.

However, none of that would have been possible without the generosity of generations of supporters. By standing

with us and raising the funds we need, you are the people who have made it possible for us to help a huge number of beneficiaries over the last 80 years. So, on behalf of everyone who has been supported by the Charity since 1943, thank you all.

Of course, the past 80 years has also seen the Charity navigating through stormy times and this last winter has been particularly stormy for us. While we have supported record numbers of people, we have also faced continued challenges in regard to our fundraising. Your continued support with helping us to raise the £12m we need this year is therefore hugely appreciated, as ever.

I hope many of you will be inspired by the fundraising ideas on page 12. It would be such a fitting tribute to all those who have come before us, if we can come together to raise a record amount to support our fire family in the Charity's 80th anniversary year.

Elsewhere in the magazine this month, I'm sure you will find our health and wellbeing pages interesting, as we cover topics such as the extraordinary mental health benefits of creativity. I was also inspired to read about and follow the incredible fundraising efforts of the 133 women from 28 fire and rescue services who climbed Snowdon for us in April – you can read about their remarkable day on page 24.

As ever, there is lots to read to keep you up to date on the services that are available to you or, if you're not an eligible beneficiary, to hopefully remind you of the need to support our incredible fire family to ensure they can live and work healthily and happily.

Wishing you an enjoyable summer.

Dr Jill Tolfrey
Chief Executive

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Registered Office: The Fire Fighters Charity, Level 6, Belvedere, Basing View, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 4HG. Charity registered in England & Wales (1093387) and Scotland (SC040096)

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Shout! about it

Here's where you'll find out what we and our supporters have been working on over recent months. We're always on the look out for interesting stories and if you've got something newsworthy that you'd like to *Shout!* about, let us know: shout@firefighterscharity.org.uk

New research into fire sector health and wellbeing

Partnering with Nottingham Trent University, we recently launched a body of research - commissioned jointly with the National Fire Chiefs Council - into the health and wellbeing of the UK fire and rescue sector.

The research, which surveyed more than 3,000 UK fire and rescue service personnel, found that mental wellbeing across the service is being impacted by issues such as sleep disruption, occupational stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression.

However, wellbeing was found to be improved by work engagement, social support, resilient coping, and by both job and life satisfaction. Exercise is also positively associated with work engagement, job satisfaction, perceived social support,

life satisfaction, and resilience. It is also linked to lower levels of burnout, anxiety, stress, and depression.

You can read more about it, and see the key priorities and recommendations identified by the research team, at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/ntu-research.



Firefighters recognised in Queen's final bravery awards

A Watch Manager and a former on-call firefighter were recognised for their bravery in the final Civilian Gallantry Awards to be approved by our former Patron, the late Queen, before her death last September.

Ed Durante and Craig Jones helped rescue a group of people from a car which had crashed and caught fire on the A38 on 21 June, 2021. They were both off duty at the time.

They were among 15 people named in The Civilian Gallantry List, which recognises the bravery of people who've put themselves in danger to save, or attempt to save, someone's life.

Read more at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/2023-gallantry-awards.



Join one of our My Fire Fighters Charity Groups

We have reviewed our Groups in My Fire Fighters Charity to ensure there's one for everyone in our fire services community. Have you joined any yet?

From our All Things Fundraising Group, where you can share ideas, photos, videos and more, to a Nutrition, Recipes, Food and Drink Group, we've covered all bases to ensure you can find a topic of interest. Head to www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/myfirefighterscharity to register, if you haven't already, and then click on the 'Groups' tab to join one or more



Fire Angels' Antarctic challenge

A team of four female firefighters will ski 1,130km from the coast of Antarctica to the South Pole in November, to raise funds for us and inspire women and girls to achieve their ambitions.

The Antarctic Fire Angels is made up of Georgina Gilbert, Rebecca Openshaw-Rowe, Nikki Upton and Becky Hinchley – who work across South Wales, Derbyshire and London Fire Brigade.

They're planning to ski the route unassisted, pulling 85+kg pulks (supply sleds) in temperatures as low as -50c with possible wind speeds of over 60mph. They hope to complete it in around 45 days – that's approximately 25km every day.

"Historically women and girls have been stereotyped into certain roles and therefore unaware of their own capabilities outside of these boundaries," Becky Hinchley says.

"We intend on challenging that concept and showing what women are capable of... we intend on being visible role models to women and girls, as you can't be what you can't see!"

You can read about their challenge and donate to the team at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/antarctic-fire-angels.



Take a break and change a life

All year round, we're pleased to offer members of the fire services community and the public the chance to book a holiday with us at one of our picturesque centres across the UK. If you do, we guarantee that yours will be a holiday with a difference.

Richard Jenkins, our Head of Estates and Facilities explains; "How often can you say that your holiday changed someone's life for the better? Every time someone books a break with The Fire Fighters Charity, that's what they're doing – they're helping to fund life-changing services for members of the UK's fire services community.

"So we're delighted to offer the fire community and members of the public the chance to holiday with us, utilising our accommodation when it's not being used by our beneficiaries."

Find out more and book your next rental break with us now at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/holiday-rentals.



Bag It and Bank It reaches record-breaking success

We achieved record-breaking success once again this January with our annual recycling championship, Bag It and Bank It – all thanks to you.

Our supporters dropped 405 tonnes of unwanted clothing at our clothing banks outside 966 fire stations, raising a record-breaking £89,162 from fire stations alone. Meanwhile, when looking at all UK recycling points including other community sites, the final amount stood at 457 tonnes overall – bringing in a grand total of £96,394.

Chatteris Fire Station in Cambridgeshire took first place for the second year in a row – both in England and UK-wide. Meanwhile, Cwmbran Fire Station took the top spot for Wales and Kilsyth Fire Station is now Scottish champion for the first time.

Thank you to all those who supported the campaign once again – every piece of clothing you drop off makes such a huge difference. Read more at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/bibi2023.



Join our summer of fundraising

We'd love to see as many of you as possible get involved in unique and fun fundraising challenges and events this summer, to help us mark our 80th anniversary. And many of you are already underway with your own plans:

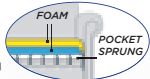
- Fire Cadets are joining forces for their annual 999 challenge, which will see them take on creative challenges linked to the numbers 9-9-9 or 8-0.
- Meanwhile, control rooms right across the country have hosted dress-down days in aid of us, with more planned later this year.
- And hovercraft service, Hover Travel, put the kettle on this International Firefighters Day to host a Brew With A Crew celebration event in aid of our 80th anniversary year.

You can find more ideas on pages 12-13. If you're one of our beneficiaries, make sure you share what you get up to in our All Things Fundraising group in My Fire Fighters Charity by visiting www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/myfirefighterscharity to register and then heading to the 'Groups' tab.



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1943-2023: Everyday health and happiness

We're celebrating our 80th anniversary this year – that's eight decades through which we've stood side-by-side with the UK's fire services community, helping them to live healthier and happier. And it's fair to say we've come a long way over that time...

Having been born out of the devastation of the Blitz in World War II, we have worked for decades to support the health, wellbeing and happiness of the UK's dedicated fire services community. And in August this year, we'll be celebrating our 80th anniversary.

Today, we've been able to develop our services hugely to meet the ever-changing needs of fire service personnel and their families.

However, every person we have supported over the past 80 years has only been helped because someone, somewhere, became a regular donor, climbed a mountain, ran a marathon, held a bake sale, organised a car wash or donated their pocket money.

So, celebrate with us this year and pat yourself on the back. We couldn't do what we do without you.

Here we look at just how far we've come, and where we are today...

Our history

1943: The London Fire Service Benevolent Fund, which was set up in 1940 from an initial donation of £24, nationalises to become the Fire Service National Benevolent Fund (FSNBF).

1945: We care for almost 1,400 fire service orphans, supported by grants and allowances.

1953: HM Queen Elizabeth II becomes our Royal Patron.

1965: Marine Court, our centre in Littlehampton, West Sussex, opens as a recuperation centre.

1980: Our annual fundraising income tops £1million for the first time.

1981: Harcombe House, our centre in Devon, opens for recuperation.

1993: The Queen attends our Golden Jubilee reception at London's Guildhall.

1995: Jubilee House, our centre in Cumbria, opens and offers rehabilitation and nursing services.

2002: Our Lottery launches. It's still going strong today.

2006: Following lengthy refurbishments, Harcombe House starts offering rehabilitation.

2008: We change our name to The Fire Fighters Charity.

2013: Marine Court launches rehabilitation facilities and psychological support services roll out across all three centres.

2019: The Prince of Wales – then the Duke of Cambridge - visits Harcombe House.

2020-present: During lockdown we introduced a series of digital support pathways, which we are continuing to develop and evolve. Read more about where we are now, 80 years on, on the following two pages...



CELEBRATING 80 YEARS

The next era of our Charity

Having seen the transformative steps we've taken over the last 80 years, imagine what we can do together in the next 80?

Since developing our digital support offering, we've reached more people in remote areas of the UK, helped thousands of people who may not be able to access a centre with online consultations, and offered more options for fire service personnel to fit online programmes around their busy schedules.

Listening to the needs of our community, we have shifted away from being solely responsive - there to provide support during times of need - towards being a proactive and preventative organisation, equipping our beneficiaries with the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to maintain and improve their overall wellbeing.

Sharon Bailey, our Director of Beneficiary Services, says: "In the last three years alone, we've developed and adapted our services more than ever before to meet the changing needs of our fire services community - and that's something we're incredibly proud of.

"We've broken down barriers which previously prevented many of our beneficiaries from easily accessing our support and we're now focusing on spreading a proactive health and wellbeing message: you don't have to be injured or ill to reach out to us.

"No problem is too small, we're here to listen and help you to move forward positively with your life, whether that's through our online health and wellbeing resources and programmes, or via a face-to-face support pathway."

Here's a closer look at the last three years...

2020/21:

With the UK thrown into lockdown, we adapted and developed our services quickly to ensure all of our beneficiaries could continue to access our help when our in-person services had to temporarily cease.

Having primarily offered our support face-to-face for years, we began offering digital consultations with our physiotherapists, exercise therapists and psychological therapists, as well as telephone and online calls with our welfare caseworkers.

We also started offering tailor-made workout routines via our clinically-approved app, Salaso, so beneficiaries could support their recovery at home with constant guidance. Furthermore, we developed an extensive library of online resources on our website including advice articles, videos, podcasts and webinars.





Around this time we also recognised the urgency of establishing social connections for our retired community, so we started offering online Living Well Group calls each week, so people from across the UK could come together and chat. You can read more about these on page 28.

2021/22:

We continued our digital growth with the introduction of *My Fire Fighters Charity*, which included a full library of health and wellbeing content, a series of chat groups for people to join and the ability to access support faster than ever.

Meanwhile, with a growing number of our beneficiaries reporting that they were experiencing long-term symptoms of Covid-19, and once our centres re-opened, we developed a Covid Recovery Programme aimed at supporting them with their recovery.

We also introduced an Outpatients Service for people living close to Marine Court or Harcombe House to receive support over a few hours on scheduled days. Meanwhile, a residential Reset Programme at Harcombe House was launched, aiming to improve people's resilience and mental fitness.

Alongside our Reset Programme, we also began working with social enterprise *Hope for the Community* to roll out a series of Hope Programmes, which are online mental health and wellbeing programmes that participants can take part in from home, completely at their own pace.



Both our Reset Programme and Hope Programmes are well suited to those living with stress and anxiety and aim to support beneficiaries as early as possible in a proactive way, to equip them with the tools they need to face any challenges in their personal and professional lives, and help them before they reach a point of crisis.

2022/23:

While we've continued each of these programmes over the last year, we also marked a huge milestone in autumn 2022 as we delivered our 10,000th digital consultation – a number that continues to rise significantly today.

We've focused on developing our proactive support services even more over the last year and now have a Wellbeing Hub on My Fire Fighters Charity with a number of online courses and workshops available for beneficiaries to take part in. These range from shorter, bitesize programmes to longer six-week courses on a range of health and wellbeing topics.

Elsewhere, we've developed our Wellness Coaching – offering individual fire and rescue services workshops on a range of health and wellbeing topics, to suit the needs of their employees. And we invited beneficiaries to join a number of online webinars earlier this year covering everything from developing resilience to understanding menopause.

Elsewhere, we introduced a telephone befriending service, offering members of our retired community a regular telephone call to offer social support and connection.

And our family services have continued to grow in popularity. You can read more about these on pages 18-19.

Now as we look ahead to the coming years, we'll continue to develop both our digital and face-to-face services and proactive health and wellbeing programmes, with the aim of reaching more of our beneficiaries across the UK – so no-one ever has to feel alone.

Facts and stats from the past 80 years

1940: From its inaugural meeting in October 1940, up to the end of that year, the London Fire Service Benevolent Fund (which would later become our national Charity) provided direct and rapid assistance to 298 people, with grants totalling £977.80.

1951: We had 1,400 on our 'orphans list' and we introduced free summer holidays for them. We paid all travel expenses and gave each child 10 Shillings pocket money. In the summer of 1951 alone, we ran 450 holiday schemes.

1943: With the start of the Fire Service National Benevolent Fund, we provide a range of 'death grants and allowances' for our beneficiaries, including:

- A standard death benefit of £15
- A payment of £4 in respect of each dependant orphan, together with an orphan's weekly allowance of 20p where the father's death was the result of a wartime action
- Injury or sickness benefits, set at £2 per week for a maximum period of 75 weeks
- One-off hardship grants of £10

1961: We introduced a regular grant for widows of 10 Shillings a week. We also rolled out our first education grants to orphaned children.

1980: Our fundraising income topped £1m for the first time.

2001: 80 people took part in the FSNBF international trek to China and the Great Wall, raising £104,000

1944-45: Five motorised wheelchairs were presented to injured firefighters.

2005: We started to work with the Children's Burns Trust, offering support to burn survivors.

1945: With 1,364 orphans on our register, we announced an increase of 10p to each child's allowance, bringing it to 30p a week.

2008: We launched our Beneficiary Support Service, a nationwide initiative to help people away from our three centres. Now known as our Welfare service, we have helped thousands of people in their homes and communities in the years since.

1950: We introduced a pilot scheme offering a TB cure at a sanatorium in Switzerland for beneficiaries. Over two years, 20 people were helped there – all funded by us.

2022/23: Over 10,000 beneficiaries supported overall



The power of Hope

Northern Ireland firefighter Keith Shields participated in our online Hope Programme after a period of ill health took a toll on his mental wellbeing. Here he shares how it helped him, and it's all thanks to your donations...

Keith Shields always dreamt of being a firefighter, so when a spate of ill health threatened to end his career, he says the toll it had on his mental wellbeing was huge.

However, he joined one of our online Hope Programmes, focused on improving the mental wellbeing of fire service personnel and their families, and says it was the boost he needed to look ahead and move past the challenges he'd been facing.

"I got Covid in August 2021," says Keith, 49, a wholetime firefighter with Northern Ireland FRS. "I essentially lost a week of my life, I was bedbound and I can't remember any of it – I was like a zombie."

Keith says his symptoms continued for a long time afterwards, and he was eventually told it had developed into 'Long Covid,' which lasted for several months.

He began to feel better around December that year and was looking to start training again. However, he started noticing an unusual heaviness in his chest.

"In January of 2022 they told me I had unstable angina," says Keith. "It hit me like a tonne of bricks and last year was just awful from there really."

Keith was rushed to hospital twice around that time and he's since been told he had three blocked arteries, for which he's had two stents fitted.

"I was breaking down in tears thinking, 'my career is gone'," he says. "Coupling that with all the health checks, and then the diagnosis which left me terrified from the moment I woke up to the moment I went to bed that I'd have a heart attack, it was a really difficult time."

Keith had followed us for years throughout his career, and ended up spotting one of our Facebook posts about our Hope Programme last year.

The online programme, which is ideally suited to those living with stress and anxiety, can be taken at participants' own pace and is supported throughout by trained facilitators.

"The support was fantastic and you really do time it to fit you," says Keith. "I did it completely at my own pace and there was no pressure. It removed all the anxiety, which is exactly what you need when you're feeling stressed and anxious already."

Keith's now working towards getting back on the run and has returned to work, on modified duties, in the meantime.

"Everybody is going through their own small personal hells, and a lot of people bottle them up and don't ask for support – myself included," says Keith. "But it's there, it's there through the Charity. I donate every month and in return, I know that help is there for me whenever I need it. That's so valuable."

Book a Hope place today

We have a number of dates available to join our Hope Programme this year, with start dates of:

- 6 July
- 7 September
- 19 October

To find out more and sign up, scan here or visit www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/hope.



Thank You

None of the support we offer people like Keith would be possible without generous donations from our supporters – both public and within the fire service. By donating now, you'll be ensuring we can continue offering programmes like this to more of our fire services community. Scan here or visit www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/donate to give what you can, now.





Join our 80th birthday party

This year marks our 80th anniversary and we'd love all of our supporters – whether working in the fire service or not - to plan something special at any point throughout the year to mark the occasion and raise funds, helping us to support the fire services community for the next 80 years.

Throughout the last 80 years, our amazing supporters have gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure we raise the funds we need to support as many people as we can.

You've regularly donated, run, walked, cycled, climbed, jumped, swum, baked, shaved, washed, painted, sung, danced... and in the process, you've changed the lives of generations of fire service personnel across the UK.

This year, as we battle against the fundraising fallout from the pandemic and the cost of living situation, we need to raise £12m to support the growing number of people turning to us for support. Today, we help over 10,000 beneficiaries a year, compared to 4,000 before the pandemic, so raising the funds we need is vital to ensure we can meet the needs of this increasing number of people.

In our 80th anniversary year, however, we have every confidence that our incredible supporters will once again do us proud.

We're inviting you to explore the many ways you could host events or take part in activities for us throughout the year. By doing so, you'll help us to shine a light on the incredible work of the fire services community and raise the vital funds we need today.

To get you started, we've gathered a few tips and ideas for things you could plan over the course of the year. And to find out more about how you could help us mark 80 years, scan the QR code below or visit www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/80.



Throw a birthday party

If you needed an excuse to get a cake out, we've got you covered. We'd love to see you host a birthday celebration this year, whether it's your own birthday, ours (which falls on August 17) or your organisation's. By asking all those attending to donate what they can, you'll be directly supporting fire service personnel across the UK. One way to get started would be to set up the fundraiser on Facebook, making collecting donations and spreading the word as simple as possible.

80 for 80

Could you complete an activity over 80 days? You could choose 80 of one single activity or combine a few for a varied workout. How about keeping a video or photo diary of your progress and sharing it on social media too? Here are a few ideas to start you off:

- 80 squats
- 80 push ups

- 80 star jumps
- 80 step ups
- 80 days of dancing
- 80 lengths of the swimming pool

Special 80th Open Day

We love seeing fire stations pull out all the stops on their Open Days – so why not raise the bar even higher this year and give it an 80th spin? You could even host a raffle or bake sale at the same time.



A milestone Car Wash

Get your colleagues together, plus any volunteers from your community, and put a new spin on our traditional Car Washes – whether you dress up, lay on some entertainment or plan something else to attract more members of your community in.

Host your own Great British Bake Off

It's the most popular baking show in the UK, so why not plan your own Great British Bake Off? Gather colleagues, friends and family together, whether together at work or remotely from home, and see who can cook up the best sweet treat. You could then hold a bake sale or a Brew With A Crew event with the finished results, with donation opportunities throughout. Find out more by scanning or visiting www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/brew.



Organise a dress-down day

We've seen some fantastic dress-down days in aid of our charity from Control Rooms across the UK this last year – could you plan one too? You don't need to be working for the fire service, we'd love to see wider businesses get involved too – inviting employees to come into work out of uniform in return for a donation.

Get carving

This Halloween we'd love to see drill towers up and down the UK glowing with pumpkins. Invite your community to bring their pumpkins to the station to be displayed on the drill tower for a small donation and offer prizes for the scariest carvings.

Create your personal goals

Set yourself or your children a goal and complete each one for 80 days. Here's some ideas to get you started:

- Make your bed
- Read a chapter of a book
- Do a good deed every day for a week
- Follow a healthy eating plan



Get mindful

It's never a bad time to practice more self-care – and the summer months can make it particularly enjoyable with opportunities to spend time outdoors. Here's some ideas for you to try over 80 days:

- 80 minutes of Yoga or Pilates
- Share 80 memories on social media
- 80 good deeds

You can find some of our guided mindfulness exercises by scanning here or visiting www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/relax.



An individual physical challenge

Perhaps there's a walk you've always wanted to do? Or a mountain you've dreamed of climbing? Whatever it might be, summer is the perfect time to get out and about and tick off those dream challenges in aid of us.

Crafting challenge

Crafting is great fun, and can be a good way to relax and refocus the mind (you can read more about that on page 21). How about learning a new craft over 80 days, and setting yourself regular goals? You could learn to sew, paint, draw, knit, or try pottery or jewellery-making...the choices are endless!

Silly putty, for example, was discovered 80 years ago, so how about getting the kids involved to see how many activities they can do? They could make snakes, confetti, use it for stamping or make a picture by imprinting beads and paper.



Share what you get up to, including all your photos and videos, on social media (tagging us into your posts. You can also join our All Things Fundraising Group in My Fire Fighters Charity, if you're on of our beneficiaries, by scanning here or visiting www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/myfirefighterscharity to register and then heading to the 'Groups' tab.



“It is great to know that you can go into schools and make a real difference. The teachers and admin staff have been very welcoming, supportive, and appreciative of the efforts that I have made.”

Have you got the DIY skills to help local schools as a caretaker?



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HELP US HELP MORE THIS YEAR

While our Fire Family Fundraisers will be looking for innovative ways to raise funds this year to mark our 80th anniversary, we also need the continued support of our regular donors to help us raise the £12m we need each year.



We rely almost entirely on the generosity of you, our supporters and donors, to raise the funds we need each year to ensure we are here for every member of our fire services community.

Since 2019, the number of people we've helped has more than doubled, from around 4,000 people a year, to 10,000. However, in order to help this increasing number of people turning to us, we need to raise more income.

That's why we're asking for your help this summer.

Perhaps you already donate to us every month? Or maybe you play our Lottery? If so, thank you so much for your continued support. Unfortunately the number of people regularly donating to us has fallen over recent years, so we're now asking if you can support us further by increasing your regular donation, starting one if you haven't already,

or increasing your monthly Lottery plays so we can raise the £12million we need this year to fund our services.

This regular income allows us to plan ahead and continue to support more people like Vicky – whose story you can read on the right - safe in the knowledge that we will be able to fund our services and activities tomorrow and into the future.

To donate now, scan here or visit www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/shout-donate.



Vicky's story

Reaching out to us for support was a big deal for Vicky Shakesby, Group Manager at Humberside Fire and Rescue Service.

Facing challenges to her mental health for a number of years, Vicky eventually took the decision to ask for help and, she says, it was the best thing she could have done.

"When you're living with mental health issues, you're not in the best frame of mind to be going anywhere, but actually going away from home, leaving some of the issues at home, and going to the Charity was the best decision I ever made."

Vicky attended a residential stay at one of our centres which exceeded her expectations and helped her to open up and clear her mind. Now, she is an ambassador for positive mental health across Humberside Fire and Rescue Service.

"We're really supportive as a fire family, but sometimes you just need that extra help from wherever you can get it, and The Fire Fighters Charity is absolutely the place to go for it."



How your donations could make a difference

£3

a month

Could help to fund a firefighter to attend an online programme to help build resilience

£5

a month

Could help to fund a one-to-one digital session with one of our psychological therapists

£10

a month

Could help to fund a specialist session for a firefighter experiencing trauma

Support available to you

We're with our fire family for life as your constant health and wellbeing partner. Here are just some of the ways we can support you, all thanks to donations from people like you...



Covid Recovery Programme

Our Covid Recovery Programme is designed to help those living with ongoing and long-term Covid-19 symptoms, 12 weeks or more after an initial infection. Available at all three of our centres as well as digitally, the programme includes a range of educational and activity-based sessions.

Find out more: www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/covid-support



Digital counselling and Hope Programme

Our psychological therapists provide short-term 1:1 counselling support via telephone and video to help with a wide range of issues, including stress, anxiety, depression and stabilisation of trauma symptoms.

Find out more at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/how-we-can-help/mental-health



We also offer regular Hope Programmes, which are six-week online self-management courses run in partnership with *Hope for the Community*, covering topics like managing stress and improving sleep.

Find out more at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/hope



Residential Reset Programme

Our residential Reset Programme is designed to improve your overall health, wellbeing and resilience. The programme, which is group-based, is ideally suited to those starting to struggle with their mental health and those living with a long-term physical health condition which is impacting on their wellbeing.

Find out more at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/reset



Living Well Groups and Befriending

Our volunteer-led Living Well Groups offer our retired community the opportunity to meet with like-minded others, either virtually or face-to-face, to socialise and share common interests.

Find your nearest group at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/lwvg



We also offer a telephone befriending service which provides social support and connection for our retired beneficiaries through a regular telephone call from a friendly volunteer.

Find out more at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/befriender



Welfare and financial support

From helping during times of financial hardship, to support with aids and adaptations to help you to live independently in your own home, our Welfare Services team is here to support you during difficult times.

Find out more at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/social-wellbeing

Wellness Coaching

We offer a range of health and wellness workshops which are delivered directly to you through your Fire and Rescue Service, either virtually or face-to-face at the workplace. Our team of Wellness and Behaviour Coaches work directly with your

My Fire Fighters Charity and our Wellbeing Hub

We have a huge library of health and wellbeing resources available on our website and through our app, My Fire Fighters Charity. The app also has a fantastic library of interactive health and wellbeing courses, resources and tools in a dedicated Wellbeing Hub.

Register now at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/myfirefighterscharity. You can access the Wellbeing Hub by clicking on the Courses tab.



Residential rehabilitation and nursing support

Our residential physical rehabilitation programmes are designed to meet the needs of those with a range of injuries or illnesses, both short and long-term, with support from our team of physiotherapists, exercise therapists and psychological therapists.

We also have a team of registered nurses who can provide 24-hour support at Jubilee House for those who may have a long-term or degenerative condition, or who may have suffered a traumatic injury or stroke. Carers can also attend.

Find out more at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/physical-health



wellbeing team to understand your needs so we can develop a programme of support for you and your colleagues.

Find out more: www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/wellness-coaching



Family support

We offer a number of support pathways for the whole family, including our Child and Family Weeks at Harcombe House, support for 16-17 year olds and a specialist children's book for fire families, *The Wolf Was Not Sleeping*.

Find out more at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/family-hub



Outpatients service

For those who live close to Marine Court and Harcombe House, we offer a physiotherapy and exercise therapy outpatient service. This is aimed at those who may need support following injury or illness and usually runs across four sessions.

Find out more: www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/outpatients



Digital physiotherapy

Our physiotherapists and exercise therapists provide 1:1 digital support for individuals who may need support following an injury or illness, via our video consultation platform.

Find out more at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/digital-physio



Rest and recharge

We offer residential stays at all three of our centres for individuals, families, and couples who need time away to rest and recharge following a difficult or challenging time. There is no structured programme but there is access to the gym and pool at set times, and our recreational facilities.

Find out more at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/rest



HERE FOR YOUR FAMILY

Did you know that, if you're an eligible beneficiary, we're also here for your family? As well as all our normal services, we have dedicated resources, programmes and support pathways available for eligible family members of the UK's fire services community. Here we explore a few of them...



In response to this increase in demand, we're now offering more dates – including some specialised weeks for single parent families and carers of adult children with additional needs.

You can find out more, including available dates, on our Family Hub.

TIME OUT TO REST AND RECHARGE

Sometimes you just need some time out – and that's exactly what our Rest and Recharge stays are designed for.

We offer members of our fire services community the opportunity to visit one of our centres when they've been through a difficult time, to enjoy some space to relax. Our tranquil and peaceful surroundings provide the perfect setting for recovery and building resilience.

There is no structured programme for these breaks, but we provide access to our gym and pool at set times, as well as our recreational facilities.

At Harcombe House there is also the opportunity to enjoy low level activities such as Tai Chi, gentle walks or social activities, allowing you the opportunity to meet up with others visiting us. These activities are optional as we recognise that for some, a period of complete rest is what's needed.

Scan to find out more or visit www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/recup.



We've been proud to support families of fire service personnel from the moment we formed in 1943 – a time when many of our beneficiaries were young orphans of firefighters who'd tragically lost their lives in World War II.

And that family legacy has continued – and only strengthened – in the 80 years since.

Now we have a broad range of support options available to spouses, partners and dependants, from dedicated weeks at our centres to opportunities to enjoy time away together for some rest and recharge, as well as a host of online wellbeing guides, videos and activity ideas.

You can find all of this and more in our Family Hub by scanning the QR code in

the box on the page opposite or by visiting www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/family-hub.

Here's a snippet of some of the ways we're here for fire service families – and how your donations can help them when they need an escape from challenging times:

DEDICATED WEEKS AT OUR CENTRES

Our Child and Family Weeks have grown in popularity over recent years, allowing us to support more families in a range of different ways.

These weeks cater for families of children with additional needs, young carers, children or parents living with difficult health conditions. They allow families to come together for a much-needed break and a fun week packed full of activities at Harcombe House, our centre in Devon.

SUPPORT FOR 16-17 YEAR OLDS

With increasing numbers of young people facing challenges with their mental health, there's a growing need for dedicated support for them – and their families.

We have listened to these concerns and, based on the feedback provided by our beneficiaries, we have partnered with an organisation called *Livelif*e to offer online therapy sessions to support 16-17 year-olds.

We've also shared a wellbeing guide for young people online, as part of this support offering. You can find out more via our Family Hub

DEDICATED YOUNG PERSONS' SPACE

We have a family space at Harcombe House – Furze Cottage - which offers all those on Rest and Recharge stays a number of activities and games for all ages, from young children to teenagers, as well as space for adults to connect with each other.

While one room is fully equipped with everything from an Xbox to a TV and music streaming system for teenagers, the main room has a reading corner with books, games and puzzles, a table and chairs for children to draw or build Lego and various toys for different age groups.

Adults, meanwhile, can sit and enjoy a hot drink together and chat to others who are visiting.

You can see inside Furze Cottage and watch a video of its opening day by scanning here or visiting www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/furze-cottage.



WELFARE SUPPORT

Our Welfare caseworkers know that life can often be unpredictable, with many a curveball thrown in from time to time. They are there to support all beneficiaries during difficult times.

Our Welfare team has worked with families from across the fire services community for years, in a variety of ways. Here are some examples of the ways they have helped others:

- Providing financial support with travel and accommodation costs for parents whose child required extensive medical treatment in a specialist hospital outside of their locality. Helping with these costs allowed them to be with their child at a time when he needed their support most.
- Providing supermarket vouchers to a family to help with buying food and essential household items, while they were waiting for welfare benefit support.
- Providing temporary housing support to a family whose house had been flooded, while helping to purchase basic clothing and other essential items.
- Purchase of disability related equipment – including a specialist trike, wheelchair, or mobility scooter.
- Bereavement support – including immediate hardship support, help with claiming welfare benefits, telephone support, referral to local bereavement support and recuperation at one of our centres to give some much-needed time away.

If you feel you would benefit from some support from our Welfare team, call our Support Line on **0800 389 8820** and a member of our assessment practitioner team will put you in touch.

CHILDREN'S BOOK

We are offering a specially commissioned children's book to help fire and rescue service families to chat through any fears or anxieties that their children may have about the work of firefighting relatives.

The book, written and illustrated by author Avril McDonald, features the story of a wolf cub who finds it hard to sleep because his dad is a firefighter. The book comes with a reference sheet and link to a dedicated website page with advice and question prompts for parents to use as they read the story with their children.

The Wolf Was Not Sleeping – available in English and Welsh – can be ordered by all members of the fire services community for a voluntary donation. For further details and to order a copy, scan here or visit www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/wolf.



FAMILY HUB

Visit our Family Hub now to find out more and to see exactly how your donations are helping families in the UK's fire services community at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/family-hub.



WHAT NEXT?

Our Wellness and Behaviour Change Coach, Mike Lennon, discusses the importance of preparing for retirement – and ways of maintaining social connections.



John Lennon once sang: “Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans.” And so it can seem...we spend our lives dashing from one thing to the next, barely taking time to smell the roses.

For many, the prospect of retirement represents an opportunity to enjoy more time appreciating life. However, it’s not without its anxieties.

Most of us will worry about getting older, managing our finances, filling the void left by no longer working in a profession, the loss of connection that being part of a fire and rescue service family afforded us and not getting under the feet of our loved ones too much.

However, of these worries, it is most often social wellbeing that’s given less priority, despite being essential to our overall wellbeing.

Research into understanding the transition of firefighters into retirement, which was funded by the Charity and led by McNamara et al (2021), reported that; “retirement represented a period of considerable identity change for firefighters.” It also emphasised the need to proactively plan for social connections and sense of purpose outside of the fire service, to support identity continuity and mental wellbeing.

In particular the study highlighted that;

- Retired firefighters feel less socially connected than the general workforce, which may be explained by a



tendency to restrict social connections to career and family.

- Firefighters approaching retirement and those already retired felt their planning was insufficient: while their fears tended to focus on social relationships, their efforts were focused on financial planning. This meant they were less resilient to negative wellbeing consequences of the retirement transition.
- However, retired firefighters who were part of more social groups were more resilient to negative wellbeing consequences and better able to develop meaningful

relationships with others.

Now, I know what John Lennon said about life and plans, but when it comes to retirement we must ensure we plan to flourish, otherwise what’s the point? And, like we might encourage a garden to be resilient and thrive by simultaneously nurturing the existing flora whilst also sowing seeds, planning for social retirement requires the dual approach of maintenance and growth when it comes to social memberships. For example;

- Maintaining valuable existing social groups supports identity continuity into retirement and allows important access to sources of psychological support.

- New groups provide more opportunities for valued social connection, meaningful relationships and a sense of purpose.

So, whilst it is essential you get your finances in order, to flourish into retirement you need to care for existing relationships while also encouraging and nurturing new ones. To get you started, answer the following questions to identify where you could maintain and grow your social network:

1. Which valued relationships that I already have do I want to invest more time in?
2. What current activities would I like to spend more time doing?
3. What passionate interests that I used to have would I love to reignite?
4. How could I redeploy my expertise and strengths in new and interesting ways?

Good luck – and remember, we’re with you every step of the way.

We have a dedicated wellness workshop series available to all fire and rescue services which focuses on wellbeing into retirement.

Scan to find out more or visit www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/wellness-coaching.



TIME TO GET CREATIVE

Psychological Therapist, Sophia Carmen, shares some of the ways expressing creativity can boost mental wellbeing.



Creativity is often dismissed as an indulgence, as if it's an unimportant activity we might treat ourselves to on occasion. Yet try to imagine a world without creativity? There would be no music, no films, no novels, no poetry and no artwork on the walls.

Like the arts, our emotions are often relegated to the sidelines, as if they're a hindrance to the real business of life - yet they drive the majority of our decisions. Art and emotions are so strongly linked, yet we are often unaware of how much power they have for deepening self-awareness and improving mental wellbeing.

The simple acts of writing, crafting or baking, for example, can help us relax and focus on creating something unique which in turn, can aid us in expressing our emotions.

Creativity really has no rules, and there are so many forms it can take. Here are just a few of them...

DRAWING AND WRITING

We might use what we have at our disposal, for example, a biro and a scrap of paper, and we might begin doodling. Or we might put pen to paper and allow our words to flow.

One person who has done just that is firefighter Leigh Hosy-Pickett. Leigh has been in the fire service for 25 years and, as a way of processing the mental health challenges he's faced in that time, he wrote a book – *Up In Smoke* – detailing his career, from the humorous to the challenging times.



"The writing became quite dynamic, from it originally being a funny book through to me sharing some of my own mental health experiences," says Leigh.

"Given my own mental health journey, it was certainly very therapeutic to write it all down. Sharing it all, and having no shame in doing so, shows strength. By admitting you have a weakness, there's real strength in that."

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

If you prefer more structure alongside community support, you might choose to explore the creative opportunities in your local area. Whether that's through volunteering, baking and holding a bake sale or even looking into communal art and crafts opportunities, there are so many ways you could get involved – and interact with others around you at the same time.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

In recognition of how creativity can boost mental health, we recently appointed an Activities Coordinator at Harcombe House, Sharon Cook, to encourage and support anyone on a Rest and Recharge stay who wants to try an activity.

"From making clay leaves and Christmas wreathes to wet felting



and fat balls for the birds, we are trying all sorts," says Sharon. "You can see people relax, the time flies and people chat away."

Mask-making is another option for supporting mental health. By creating visual representations of ourselves via masks, we can express ourselves. A mask with a zip or lock over the mouth, for example, might express difficulty in talking about emotions. Mask-making to facilitate recovery from trauma is increasingly being employed as an effective therapy.

DANCE AND MUSIC

Alternatively, our canvas might be floor space and our mask-making might be the pattern of our body as we dance. Or maybe we're watching the dance and notice that our own emotions are stirred?

Similarly, picking up an instrument, singing or even



listening to music can help us express our emotions. Perhaps you used to play, but haven't for years? Or you'd like to try something new?

Join a creative group

If you've been inspired, jump on to My Fire Fighters Charity and join the Hobbies and Interests Group to chat to others about how they embrace their creative side.



The gifts that give back

Surprise someone special with a unique gift from our online shop. Not only will you make them smile, but every purchase helps us to support our fire family across the UK.

Commemorative Collection

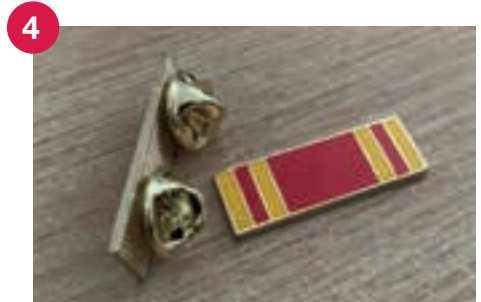
- 1. Mounted Presentation Axe on Board **£155.00**
- 2. Mounting Board **£30.00**
- 3. Presentation Axe **£90.00**



- 7. The Fire Fighters Charity Cufflinks **£10**
- 8. Statuettes from **£72.00**



- 9. Crystalware from **£28.80**



- 4. Long Service Enamel Medal Ribbon - **£4.00**
Self-adhesive and pin badges options also available
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9

Prices correct at time of printing.

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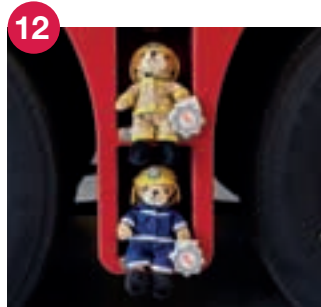
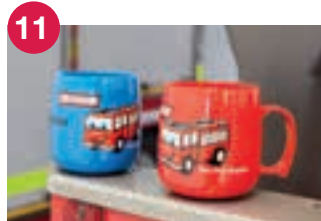
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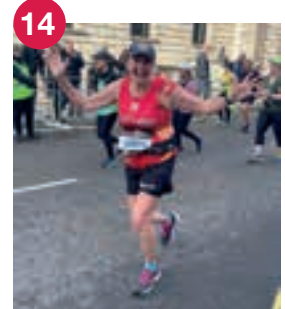
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- 13. Men's running vest £14.99
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- 15. Cycling top £39.99



Visit our online shop to purchase all these products, and much more! www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/shop

Follow us on the 'Merchandise Offers & Updates' group on our My Fire Fighters Charity App for the latest news and product releases.

100% of profits from our shop goes to your Charity, helping to fund vital health and wellbeing services for the fire services community across the UK.



Power in numbers

This April, 133 women from 28 fire and rescue services across the UK came together to take on an epic fundraising challenge in aid of us.

Our fire and rescue services across the UK truly are part of one big team – a family. They feel strongly bonded to each other, no matter how many miles there are between them.

And this April, 133 women demonstrated that powerful bond by joining together from more than 20 different services to take on an amazing fundraising challenge for us by climbing Mount Snowdon, en masse.

Pulled together by Women In The Fire Service (WFS), this huge group was comprised of representatives from fire and rescue services the length and breadth of the UK, from Scotland to the Isle of Wight. Many of those walking had received our support themselves, while others knew of colleagues, friends and family who had done so in the past.

Collectively raising awareness of the incredible work women do in our fire services community every day, one of those leading the challenge was Daisy

Byron, who received our support in 2015. While attending Marine Court, our centre in Littlehampton, we were able to help her in her recovery after complications that arose following the birth of her two daughters.

She received both physical and mental health support at the time and previously told us: “You go there thinking the world is against you, then you get there and meet other people all with their own issues and they make you think differently. The whole experience just helped me so much.”

We spoke to Daisy after she completed the Snowdon challenge and she told us: “The day was absolutely amazing, every single person got up to the top and it went so smoothly.

“It was honestly epic to have women from right across the UK – people who wouldn’t normally meet – all come together. The friendships and connections that have come out of this are going to be life-long.

“We’ve obviously all got something in common, but it wasn’t just about women in

the fire service, it was about the strength we’ve got between us on a whole in everyday life.”

Joining her was Diane Johnson, from Warwickshire FRS’ Control team, who took part in memory of their former Chief Fire Officer Kieran Amos – and as a thank you for the mental wellbeing support she’s received from us.

She said: “Most people will know me from Fire Control. I worked for West Sussex Fire and Rescue before transferring to Warwickshire, and I had the pleasure of working alongside Kieran Amos for many years. His tragic passing two years ago gave me a sudden realisation that I needed to do more things with my life: at 50, I needed to push myself more, and get out of my comfort zone.

“I climbed Snowdon in memory of Kieran, and in aid of The Fire Fighters Charity, who have helped me twice over the last few years, most recently to support my mental health and wellbeing. It’s not only frontline firefighters that can be affected in the

“It was great to see green book, grey book, control staff, people from across the British Isles come together.”

profession we are in. Control Room teams play a vital role dealing with traumatic and distressing situations on a daily basis.”

Catherine Paddon, Community Fire Engagement Officer with Suffolk FRS, joined the climb too and told us afterwards: “I don’t use the word inspiring very often, but it was exactly that.

“For me, it was great to see green book, grey book, control staff, people from across the British Isles and different walks of life within the fire service come together and achieve one goal. I loved it.

“I’ve been involved with fundraising for the Charity previously, as part of our women’s network. I’ve seen the impact of the Charity on people I work with within the service too, who have either picked up an injury or required support outside of that and have stayed at a centre. Being able to see the tangible effects of fundraising like this has been a massive motivator.”

Representing our Charity on the day, and climbing alongside the group, was our

individual ensured that everyone in their group was able to complete the climb, whatever their physical ability - whilst also having great fun.

“It was clearly very well planned and organised by Daisy and her colleagues and the enthusiastic welcome we received on our completion at the bottom was hugely appreciated. Everyone involved should feel incredibly proud of their achievement and involvement in this brilliant day.”



Charlotte Smith, Community Fundraiser at The Fire Fighters Chariry, added: “This was an incredible example of fire and rescue service representatives from right across the UK coming together for a common cause, and we’re so grateful to all the women who took part in this climb for choosing us to support.

“Funds raised from events like this go such a long way in helping us continue to support thousands of fire service personnel and their families every year with their physical and mental wellbeing. On behalf of everyone at The Fire Fighters Charity, a huge thank you to everyone involved.”

Representatives came from areas including Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Cleveland, Derbyshire, Devon & Somerset, Dorset & Wiltshire, East Sussex, Essex, Hampshire & Isle of Wight, Hereford & Worcester, Hertfordshire, Humberside, Lancashire, London, Lincolnshire, North Wales, Oxfordshire, Scotland, Staffordshire, Suffolk, Tyne & Wear, Warwickshire, Beds Police and NFCC, as well as Women in the Fire Service.



Wellness and Behaviour Change Coach, Roger Saxby. He recalls of his experience: “I felt very fortunate to be asked to attend this fantastic event on behalf of the Charity and witness so many inspiring women from across the UK’s fire and rescue service undertake such a huge challenge.

“Whilst I was made to feel very welcome, there was a real sense of collective spirit within the group that was demonstrated through kindness and support. Each

Fundraise for us this summer

We’d love you to plan an event or challenge in aid of us this summer too. And you don’t need to be in the fire service to make a difference, everyone can get involved and directly support the lifesavers working tirelessly in their communities every day. Scan here or find out more at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/get-involved.



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A Stiltz Homelift will help you continue living in the home you love.

Stairlift? No Thanks

A Stiltz Homelift is an ideal and affordable alternative to a stairlift. You can now safely travel between the floors in your home while keeping your stairs the way they have always been.

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expense and emotional upheaval of moving house or the disruption of adapting your home for downstairs living. Save money instead; live comfortably and independently in the home you love for as long as you want, with a Stiltz Homelift.

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Mr. Eames

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"Excellent product installed by polite and very competent tradesmen. Fits perfectly into my home. Made a huge difference to my ability to live independently".

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Mrs. K, April 2023

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A little goes a long way

We're reaching out to organisations and businesses across the UK, asking them to support our delivery of vital mental health services to the fire services community by partnering with us. Do you know one that could help us?

Today, we're helping more than twice as many people as we were in 2019. However, as thousands more benefit from our new accessible services, we need to find new and innovative ways to raise the funds to pay for them – which is why we want to work with more inspirational businesses and organisations across the UK. And we need your help to reach them.

Whether you're a beneficiary or a member of the public, the chances are you have links to organisations and businesses in your local community, or through your friends, family or colleagues.

Each of these businesses may have a vested interest in ensuring the safety of their workforce and of the communities they work within, so supporting their local fire services, by fundraising for or donating towards The Fire Fighters Charity, could be the perfect fit for them.

Whether it's becoming an organisation's Charity of The Year, partnering with them for a one-off fundraiser, or having conversations about how else we could work together, we need your help to make contact with the right people.

Debbie Rushbrooke, our Corporate Partnerships and Philanthropy Manager, said of the importance of working with corporate partners; "It not only helps us to raise vital funds, but also raises awareness of who we are, what we do and why it's so important to keep our fire and rescue service personnel happy and healthy.

"Every business in this country, and the people in their community, rely on the fire and rescue services to keep them safe. By partnering with us, businesses can therefore reinforce their own commitments to the safety and wellbeing of their workforces. And I can promise we would make it a fun and informative partnership for all involved.

"So, if you know someone in a business that might be interested in partnering with us, please do let me know. I'd love to work with you, and them, to open a conversation and see where we can get to."

If this has got you thinking, you can reach Debbie for a further conversation and to find out more by emailing her at drushbrooke@firefighterscharity.org.uk.



Small businesses making a big impact

No matter the size of the business, it could make a lasting difference to so many lives...

- A local confectionery company, which has links to the fire service through one of its employees who is an on-call firefighter, fundraised throughout 2022 in support of us (image above). The company, Kinnerton in Fakenham, Norfolk, encouraged employees to organise raffles, bake sales and more to raise funds and later presented a cheque for £1,537.51.
- A local Worcestershire business donated an incredible £10,000 to us in 2022, as a thank you to the firefighters whose heroic efforts saved its premises from a huge blaze in a neighbouring property. John Tainton, a steel stockholder in Kidderminster, wanted to give something back after a crew from Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service attended a massive fire at another company next door.
- Spalding-based business Bakkavor also generously donated £10,000 to us this year (image bottom left), as a thank you to local Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service crews who helped them during flash flooding in the area last year. The food manufacturing firm also delivered cream cakes to local fire stations as a direct thank you for their support.



To find out more about becoming one of our corporate partners, and helping to fund our vital mental health services, visit www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/corporateappeal.





Rest, recharge and reunite

Our online Living Well Group began during lockdown in 2020 and has run regular sessions ever since. To celebrate long-standing friendships between our attendees from across the UK, we invited the group to Harcombe House to meet face-to-face for the first time.

The first national lockdown in 2020 saw most of us cut off from friends and family, with little to no social interaction. Finding a virtual means to create connections between our beneficiaries was therefore vital, to maintain their wellbeing and to ensure that they could continue to benefit from being part of a community, even when confined to their homes.

That's why we started our online Living Well Group.

Since then, the group – which invites former and retired members of our fire services community to join a regular video call, no matter where they're based, to enjoy a chat and share experiences – has grown in popularity and become a regular fixture in people's calendars.

It's been so successful in fact that while our face-to-face groups have started up again since restrictions eased, we've

continued the online group so that those unable to access a face-to-face meeting can continue to interact.

And after almost three years, in which time our group members have made strong friendships online, we invited them to come together in March to meet face-to-face for the first time at Harcombe House.

"We developed a programme for them with everything from a talk on self-care and identifying stress, to a Tai Chi taster session and some baking," says Clare Hannaford, our Communities Development Lead.

"We had people from Manchester and Nottinghamshire to Somerset, Essex and Gloucester. A couple of our regular group members weren't able to come unfortunately, due to caring responsibilities and mobility, but that's exactly why meeting online is so important – as people can join from wherever and whenever, no matter their circumstances.

"It really was one of my highlights of 2023, seeing them all together."

Here's what some of the attendees had to say:



Ian Aldridge

Ian, a retired firefighter from Bucks FRS, said: "The meet-up at Harcombe was absolutely excellent, it just surpassed everything that I'd ever dreamed of.

"I was quite amazed by the facilities available to use at

Harcombe House and I've since come back myself and am even more amazed at the courses that the Charity offers."

Pete and Jean Blackwell

Pete is a retired firefighter from London Fire Brigade and attended the week with his wife Jean. They've both received our physiotherapy support at Marine Court, but this was their first time to Harcombe House.

They said: "We've found the online group really good, particularly through lockdown. Obviously not being able to see family, it was nice to talk to other people and break the week up. To then meet them after this long at Harcombe was really enjoyable."

To find out more about our Living Well Groups – both face-to-face and online – and how to join, scan here or visit www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/living-well-groups or email Clare on CHannaford@firefighterscharity.org.uk.



Volunteering: a work of heart

Volunteering is an enjoyable way of making a vital contribution to the work we do with our fire services community. Join us today and make a life-changing difference to someone's life.

Our volunteers are an integral part of our Charity and help to ensure we can continue offering our support to thousands of people in our fire service family every year.

From those offering their time to call a member of our retired community, right through to those meeting our beneficiaries at our centres to ensure they get the best out of their time with us, we couldn't continue to do what we do without them.

We're now hoping to recruit even more of these dedicated volunteers to join us. Could you offer a few hours a week and make a difference to the lives of our beneficiaries?

There are so many ways you could volunteer, both face-to-face and online and in our community as well as on station. Below are a few of the many opportunities we're looking to recruit:

Centre volunteers

We offer support to thousands of people every year at our three centres across the UK – Harcombe House in Devon, Marine

Court in Littlehampton and Jubilee House in Penrith.

And we have a number of volunteers who offer a few hours a week to help out, from greeting beneficiaries when they arrive and making them feel welcome with a short briefing session, to others volunteering in our café at Harcombe House.

Living Well Group Co-ordinators

Our Living Well Groups offer our retired community somewhere to socialise and reminisce with fellow members of our fire family – both face-to-face and online.

And central to their success are the volunteers who help organise and run them.

Both the face-to-face and online groups are supported by two volunteer Living Well Coordinators who host the sessions – monthly in communities and regularly online. They organise for speakers and help to run the groups, ensuring everyone feels comfortable and relaxed.

We also have opportunities for Digital Age Champions. Working in pairs, you will run live digital sessions over Zoom for our

retired beneficiaries, demonstrating how to get the most from their smartphone, tablet, or PC and to keep safe online.

And to support both our face-to-face and digital Living Well Groups, we are also looking for a small team of volunteer activity organisers to source and book speakers from local or national organisations.

Befrienders

We're looking for dedicated, friendly volunteers to call members of our retired community as 'befrienders', as part of our Fire Friends befriending service.

This role may include:

- Sharing stories and life experiences
- Asking questions to get a conversation started
- Talking about hobbies and interests
- Listening to what is said and allowing space and time for answers

Hope Programme volunteers

Our Hope Programme volunteers facilitate and support our beneficiaries taking part in the six-week online mental wellbeing programme, and are asked to commit a minimum of two programmes annually.

We'd ask volunteers to commit to an hour each day (Monday to Friday) during the six-week programme, once they're up and running. You can read more about how the programme helped one beneficiary on page 10.



If you are interested in any of our volunteer roles, please email us at volunteers@firefighterscharity.org.uk or call us on 01256 366580. You can also find out more by scanning the QR code or visiting www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/volunteer. Once you've become one of our volunteers, you can join our Volunteers Hub group in My Fire Fighters Charity to meet others and share ideas.





Win £150 in Amazon vouchers thanks to Terberg DTS UK Ltd.

Terberg DTS UK Ltd. are the exclusive UK distributors for a range of products serving the fire and rescue service market. They include: Holmatro Rescue Equipment, Flir Thermal Imaging Cameras, TFT Branches and Portable Ground Monitors, Supervac PPV Fans, Vallfirest Wildfire Equipment and also 3F Firefighting Foam.

And, to help us celebrate our 80th anniversary, they've generously donated £150 worth of Amazon vouchers exclusively for *Shout!* readers.

To win this fantastic prize, simply scan here or fill in our online entry form at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/shout-2023-comp.



Question: What is the official date of our 80th anniversary this year?

- A) September 19
- B) August 17
- C) August 26

The winner will be picked at random from all correct entries received on or before 30 September 2023, and will be notified via email or telephone.

Your information: The information you provide will be used by the Charity to fulfil your request. Your details may be used to keep you informed about the Charity – please call 01256 366 566 if you do not wish us to contact you. You can view our privacy policy at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/privacy. Competition is not open to Charity employees.

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