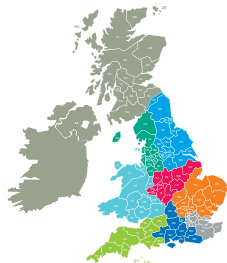


Blesma

Bulletin Members' Newsletter Winter 2017



More BSOs means more time for you

It's never been easier to get in touch with your Support Officer **p24**



Sign up for a weekend to remember

Don't miss out – book your place for Members' Weekend 2018 now! **p11**



KING EDWARD VII'S HOSPITAL

The hospital with a focus on the military

Discover how you could benefit from the Centre for Veterans' Health **p13**

We'll help you get the right help

From Winter Fuel Payments to understanding Universal Credit, we're here for your benefit **p18**

Inside: Get up, get out and get active in 2018



**One Member's family talks
about limb loss in the Winter
issue of Blesma Magazine**

Available in December

Blesma Bulletin

Winter 2017



Autumn is upon us now and we are quite advanced in our plans for next year. It will be 100 years since the end of World War One, its terrible toll and the birth of Blesma. The Trustees have been keen to mark this and in a way most appropriate for Blesma; we will shortly announce particular and unique events for Blesma Members to take the lead on. I hope this intrigues you!

We have experienced increasing demands upon Membership Services. The State and statutory services are under increasing pressure, and there is an expectation that the charity sector will fill emerging gaps. Cases are complex and regulation is increasing. Blesma has invested in this realm considerably over recent years. The number of Support Officers has increased from six to 10, for example.

At their September meeting, the Trustees decided that a realignment of responsibilities at Director level was necessary when all these factors were taken into account. They wish Heather Nicholson to concentrate on the security of Members and for Ian Waller to assume responsibility for the Activities Programme. Support Officers will continue to advise, support and follow up on the Activities Programme, no change there, the linkage will remain strong. So, Heather will become Director Independence and Wellbeing shortly, focused even more strongly on welfare support.

As you may be aware, Tom Ormiston BSO (Eastern) retires at the end of the year. We're pleased to announce that we have recruited his relief, and Kevin Long will be joining us at the

beginning of December. Kevin currently works at the PRC in Colchester and is already known to some of you. I know that you'll wish to join me in thanking Tom for all his hard work over his 10 years with Blesma, and to welcome Kevin.

There is important content in this Bulletin for Overseas Members. With Heather's adjusted role, she and her team will be able to keep closer touch with Overseas Members. This was raised at the Members' Weekend and we will now be acting on this. We are most grateful to Ian Lloyd for taking the lead on the Blesma painting week and for providing regular lessons locally. We are keen to support local initiatives, so please keep ideas flowing. We are also thankful to Andy Derry and Mick Foulds for their great initiatives and support. None of these things happen without a good deal of effort, and it is much appreciated.

Finally, plans are pushing forward for Members' Weekend next year. The details are inside. Please note the AGM will be included again and we are looking to inject some more fun activities too. I hope you will put the date in your diaries now.

Barry Le Grys, Chief Executive

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Get involved with Blesma activities

PAINTING AND CRAFTING

Members had the chance to try arts and crafts this summer when Blesma Member Ian Lloyd led a Painting and Crafting course in Kendal.

Over the five-day course, Ian taught Members how to create watercolours and each day they produced a 'masterpiece' to take home. Even those with the most basic of skills could participate as Ian broke down each part of the painting into the background, the objects within the painting and how to create depth using colour.

Ian's love of art began during his time with the Royal Marines when he served as an illustrator. After Service, Ian volunteered for art-related jobs and has qualifications in a range of art courses from drawing to painting

in oils, and has now been teaching art courses for 10 years in Wellington, Somerset.

"Ian was one of the first Members to start his own local activity for Members and has been running a monthly watercolour class for some time," said Emily Mizon, Membership Engagement Assistant, who supported Ian in running this first five-day course. "It was great to see the class after hearing so much about it. The great thing is that it is for any ability – Ian's teaching allows for anyone to have a go, and he makes it really engaging."

Ian will be running a course for Blesma Members every month in Somerset. For more information, contact him on 01823 672877 or at ianflloyd@gmail.com





GLAMPING

Blesma families got to enjoy the wilderness in style this August, when BSO (South West) Steve Fraser and BSO (Prosthetics) Brian Chenier hosted two Family Glamping Weekends. Steve entertained four families in Gloucester, whilst Brian took the event and two families up north to Brampton for what was a Blesma first.

Member Louis Farrell attended the Gloucester trip with his wife, Rachel, and five-year-old daughter, Lillian. The activity was not only Rachel's and Lillian's first Blesma trip, but it was a first for Louis, too.

"The trip came at a great time for my family as we were looking for something we could all do together," said Louis. "The whole weekend was amazing and so well organised."

The safety of the enclosed complex meant that Lillian and the other children were able

to explore the campsite without their parents having to keep a close eye on them or worry what they were up to. During previous Blesma Glamping Weekends, the wives and partners of Blesma Members have also found the activity beneficial for their wellbeing.

"Sometimes I think my injury is hardest on Rachel," said Louis. "For the first time, she had the chance to be around the wives of injured veterans and found out the way she was feeling and what she was experiencing was shared. The best thing about the trip was that we could all be together and it put a smile on all our faces! It was beneficial for us all and for us as a family."

Family Glamping activities will be returning to the Activities Programme next year, so make sure you take a look at the 2018's Activities calendar of events in the Winter edition of *Blesma Magazine*.

Couples enjoy a welcome break



A new activity was added to this year's programme which saw Blesma Members share a weekend away with their other half, and the couples immediately saw the benefits of the trip.

'Couples Weekends' took place in London in August and Edinburgh in September (above). The London weekend was led by BSO (London and Kent) Paul Findlay and his wife Nicole, and the Edinburgh event by BSO (North) Steve Burton and his wife Diane.

Member Andrew Haugen joined Blesma earlier this year and was persuaded to attend his first event when he realised his wife, Marie, could go too. The couple rarely attend social events due to wheelchair accessibility, while Marie's arthritis can make lifting difficult.

"It was a fantastic trip and Edinburgh is somewhere we'd never thought about visiting. Steve [Burton] insisted on helping with Andrew's wheelchair so it was lovely to get a rest as a carer," said Marie.

As well as getting a break, the trips allowed Members to get to know each other and gave partners and spouses the chance to form friendships with others in similar situations.

"I've never seen Andrew laugh and smile like he did on the trip," said Marie. "It has done him the world of good and we've both come home refreshed. Our son can't believe how happy we are!"

Andrew and Marie would like to reassure couples that the Blesma staff worked hard to ensure everyone had a stress-free time!

Veterans Mobility Fund: a reminder

The Veterans Mobility Fund (VMF), which is administered by The Royal British Legion, will support those veterans who have Service-related serious physical injuries and who require provision for clinically appropriate mobility aids that are beyond the routine NHS provision or whose warranty has expired. Funding for this scheme is from LIBOR fines.

To be eligible for VMF support, an individual will normally be in receipt of a War Pension or have received an award under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

There are two stages to the application process. The first stage assesses eligibility, which will require you to submit evidence of your War Pension or award under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. This is done by completing the application form on the Legion's website (britishlegion.org.uk).

You can request that a form is sent to you by post by emailing medicalfunds@britishlegion.org.uk or by calling the British Legion's Contact Centre on 0808 802 8080.

Please ensure that the call handler knows that you are seeking help

with an application for the Veterans Mobility Fund, not general support from the Legion.

The second stage of the application must be completed and submitted by relevant clinical experts such as an Orthotist or an Occupational Therapist.

Although the VMF is primarily aimed at supporting wheelchair and orthotic provision, other mobility aids may be considered for funding on a case by case basis. In the first instance, you should contact you Blesma Support Officer for advice and, if necessary, Blesma will liaise with the VMF on your behalf.



Prosthetics Update

A MECHANICAL SOLUTION TO A BIOLOGICAL PROBLEM

'PROSTHESIS'

In medicine, a prosthesis (plural: prostheses; from Ancient Greek *prósthesis*, meaning 'addition, application, attachment') is an artificial device that replaces a missing body part, which may be lost through trauma, disease, or congenital conditions.

There is evidence that human beings have had the ingenuity and imagination to fashion additions, applications and attachments to the human body ever since early civilisation.

Technology has moved at an astonishing pace over the last century, however, and it cannot be denied that life-changing prosthetic innovation is now available. From relatively simple adaptations to the design of prosthetic feet using materials such as carbon fibre, to electronically controlled joints, human beings have produced some wonderful mechanical solutions for those living with limb loss.

Nature, however, has had much longer to perfect the human body from a biomechanical perspective. But as nature has gifted us with a marvel of biological engineering, she also limits our abilities through a natural ageing process and other frailties. As our bodies age, we tend to find aches and pains creeping in. Joints become worn and energy levels drop. Unfortunately, we may also suffer from other ailments and illnesses which conspire to slow us down or change the way we live.

While innovation in prosthetics can address many of the mobility and functional needs

of amputees, it cannot reverse the natural process of ageing and slowing down. A person's ability to safely use a prosthesis can be compromised by many things. General poor health or specific conditions can have a significantly detrimental effect. As everyone is unique, it follows logically that the problems associated with prosthetic use over the years will be different from person to person.

Safety is at the forefront of a clinician's mind when considering a person's ability to use a prosthesis, and this can sometimes lead to the difficult but necessary decision to cease prosthetic provision. If this is something that concerns you or a family member, please discuss this with your Blesma Support Officer or BSO (Prosthetics). Although the BSOs are not qualified to offer medical advice, they can support you with your dealings with the limb service. Alternatives to prosthetic use may be possible and additional support might be available. Blesma can assist in many ways.

Ageing and slowing down are normal, and it is important to have the long term in mind when using artificial limbs. General health and fitness are important, and knowing how your particular circumstances may influence your future could help you to develop early strategies to mitigate problems in later life; and perhaps prolong safe prosthetic use.

For more on any prosthetics issues, contact Brian at Chadwell Heath on 020 8548 7080 or at bsoprosthetics@blesma.org, or visit the Blesma website at www.blesma.org



Free counselling for Members

FREE COUNSELLING SERVICES FOR BLESMA MEMBERS, WIDOWS AND CARERS OF BLESMA MEMBERS

What is counselling?

Whatever our circumstances, background or role in life, we all face problems from time to time – whether personal, familial, emotional or practical. Talking about what is worrying us, and sharing our troubles with a sympathetic person, can help us feel better.

You can, of course, talk to your Blesma Support Officer but there may be an occasion when you'll feel you need to talk to a trained counsellor. If that's the case, then you may be interested in this service.

How does it help?

LONELINESS

Many of us feel lonely from time to time. Our family may live a long way away, and friends may have passed away. Talking about our sense of loss can help us feel better.

DEPRESSION

Depression can affect anyone at any time. Churchill famously suffered from what he called his 'Black Dog'. Counselling can help us overcome depression and can give us strategies to cope when we feel down.

BEREAVEMENT

Coping with the loss of loved ones and close friends is never easy. Counselling can help us move beyond a sense of emptiness.

ANXIETY

Feeling scared, unsure and nervous are all common problems. Counselling can help

regain self-confidence, and equip us to face our anxieties.

RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships need to be maintained and nurtured. Counselling can help to improve relationships with a partner as well as with colleagues, family and friends.

How does it work?

After the Counselling Service receives an application someone will contact you to make arrangements for your counselling.

If you find it hard to travel, the counsellor can visit your home. Alternatively, you can see a counsellor near to where you live.

After you have seen the counsellor for the first time, they will normally offer five additional sessions, usually at regular times each week to suit you.

Who can use this service?

Any Blesma Member, Widow of a Blesma Member or Carer of a Blesma Member.

How do I apply?

Contact your local Blesma Support Officer and ask him or her to apply on your behalf.

OR

Call 0300 0120 369 and your application can be taken over the phone. If you prefer, an Application Form can be posted to you.

If you would like more information, please speak to your local BSO (their contact details can be found on p24) or to Liz in Membership Services on 020 8548 3516



Members' Weekend 2018

09-11 June, 2018
Chesford Grange Hotel, Kenilworth

The 2018 Members' Weekend will again take place at the Chesford Grange Hotel, Kenilworth. If you would like to come along to meet old friends and make some new ones, find out what Blesma Members are up to, and to have your say on what Blesma should be focusing on to support

Members, please put the date in your diary now and complete the application form inserted into this Bulletin. Blesma covers the cost of Ordinary and Associate Members and their partners or carers.

The 2018 Annual General Meeting will take place during the Weekend, but the formalities will be kept to a minimum as always. We very much hope to see you there!



The Ripple Pond

A peer-led, self-support network is offering its services to adult family members of physically or emotionally injured Service personnel and veterans.

The Ripple Pond provides group meetings nationwide, as well as a 'buddy' system and an online forum. The main focus of these avenues of support is to set up spaces where people feel able to express their feelings in a non-judgemental environment.

"In March 2009, one of my sons left for a tour of duty to Afghanistan," said Julia Molony, founder and patron of The Ripple Pond (pictured below). "On 21 May 2009, I got the dreaded phone call to say that he had been seriously injured and would be flown back to Birmingham. The doctors tried to save his leg, but with the infection travelling ever further up, in March 2010 he made the decision for his left leg to be amputated.



"This was a very low point for me. While my son had the support of his welfare officers and Blesma, being out of the welfare circle meant that there was nothing for me. I felt incredibly isolated and emotionally stuck with feelings of loss, anger and fear. So, in 2012, I set up a national network to support the adult family members of those personnel who had been injured, either physically or emotionally, as a result of their time serving in the Armed Forces.

"The Ripple Pond provided me with a space to be seen and heard, to share what had helped me and to hear what had helped others. This mutual support network and the ready understanding of others has been a lifeline."

For more information about the help and support that The Ripple Pond can offer, please visit www.theripplepond.org

New Centre for King Edward VII's Hospital

KING EDWARD VII'S HOSPITAL OPENS CENTRE FOR VETERANS' HEALTH

King Edward VII's Hospital was established in 1899 to care for soldiers returning from the Second Boer War. Whilst it is now open to everyone and aims to provide the best possible care and treatment for all its patients, the centre has not forgotten its military heritage. To celebrate this heritage, the Centre for Veterans' Health has been created as a continuation of the hospital's significant commitment to the military and to recognising the great sacrifices made by members of the Armed Forces.

What does the hospital do?

It offers an extensive range of surgeries, procedures and investigations with leading consultants. It is the only hospital in the country to invite consultants to become part of the staff and maintains the highest possible standards of medicine. Its nursing care is also known to be outstanding. Please note that the facility does not treat advanced oncology patients, nor does it carry out cardiac or neuro surgery.

How is this possible?

- **Military Grants Fund**

A means-tested grant offering up to 100 per cent of the cost of procedures carried out at King Edward VII's Hospital

- **20 per cent military discount**

All military personnel, veterans, spouses and widows are given an automatic (not means tested) discount for any procedures, imaging

or surgery carried out at the hospital. Please note that grants are not offered for cosmetic or bariatric surgery.

THE CENTRE FOR VETERANS' HEALTH PAIN MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

This was launched in February 2016 in partnership with Supporting Wounded Veterans. The first cohort is complete, with two further cohorts on-going. This consists of a residential programme, with further follow-up days over a six-month period.

At least six Pain Management Programmes will be run each year.

VETERANS PAIN CLINIC

Veterans will be able to see a specialist pain consultant on a normal 'book and see' basis. A GP referral will be required.

RESEARCH

A lead researcher and two research assistants have been engaged to write and publish papers on veterans' health issues. For more, visit www.hvrt-mac-veteranshealth.org

How do I apply?

For a grant application form please contact the hospital on 020 7467 4348 or veteranshealth@kingedwardvii.co.uk

If you would like help completing the application form, please contact your local BSO – his or her contact details can be found on p24

Having fun and making money



GREAT DUCK RACE REACHES NUMBER 15 FOR ANDY!

Blesma Member Andy Derry held his annual charity duck race in August with record crowds turning out to support the event in aid of Blesma and local charities in Amesbury.

Every August Bank Holiday for the past 15 years, 1,000 yellow plastic ducks have been released onto the River Avon where they race to the finish line. This year, the event had added colour as Andy had replaced the old yellow ducks with colourful new ones.

“The day went brilliantly. We had a lovely, sunny day for the race and the event was well attended by the locals,” said Andy. “Using colourful ducks this year made the spectacle look even more fantastic. It was a great day all round!”

Andy raised an incredible £1,650 for the Association and a further £1,000 which will go to local charities.



MICK THROWS ‘LEGLESS’ PARTY IN SUPPORT OF BLESMA

In August, Blesma Member Mick Foulds (pictured above) celebrated a decade of living without legs by throwing a ‘legless’ party. The double amputee welcomed more than 150

people to his home in Suffolk and raised £1,800 for the Association through the sales on a Blesma-themed stall.

“The party went really well,” said Mick. “I was pleased with just how many people turned up, including a few Blesma Members and staff; Tom Ormiston, Bob Monkhouse and many more.

“Blesma has been a great

help since I’ve been injured, giving me the opportunity to take part in skiing trips and to meet and spend time with lots of like-minded people,” said Mick.

Former Royal Engineer Mick lost both his legs in a train accident in 2007. Here’s to the next 10 years Mick!



Jacqui receives Birthday Honour

The former manager of the Blesma Blackpool Home has been awarded the British Empire Medal. Jacqui Longden was recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in June for her hands-on service that has made a 'significant difference' to the veteran community.

Jacqui, who joined Blesma in 2000, initially thought the letter was summoning her to jury service. "It came as a complete surprise. My daughter saw the letter and rang me straight away. I told her to open it so that

I could arrange the time off work, but then she told me I was being awarded the British Empire Medal. It was a lovely surprise and I was very emotional," said Jacqui, who now manages Preston Glades Care Home in the north west.

Jacqui (pictured) was given her medal by Lord Shuttleworth at a private presentation at Lancaster Castle in September, in front of friends, family and many familiar faces who had attended events at the Blackpool Home.

"The event was absolutely fabulous. It was so personal as everyone there had shared the experience of the Home and the work we did there. There was not a single day in all the 17 years that I spent at the Home that felt like work. It was a very special place to be."



Help us to keep you connected

If you are moving home, or have changed your telephone number or email address, please let us know. This will help us to keep our records as up to date as possible, ensuring your Blesma Support Officer can contact you, and that you receive not only the magazine and Members' Bulletin, but also any email updates about forthcoming activities and events.

To update your details, please call Elaine in Membership Services on 020 8548 7093 or email her at memberadmin@blesma.org

Why not nominate an email buddy?

We are conscious that in this world of emails, the internet and social media, there are still many Members who are unable to access emails easily or who do not wish to use these methods of communicating.

Please be assured that we will always provide hard copies of our publications to Members who rely on receiving information through their letterboxes. However, for those of you who have members of your family or friends who could receive emails on your behalf, please let us know by emailing **the Membership Services Team** at memberadmin@blesma.org so that we can update our records and add your details to our electronic mailing lists.

What's going on at a Branch near you?

MIDLANDS AREA

On 02 August a group of Members from the Midlands Area enjoyed a visit to Grimsthorpe Castle, the home of Lady Jane, Baroness Willoughby de Eresby, the Association's Vice Patron. Lady Jane gave the Members a very warm welcome on arrival, and joined them on a tour of the castle before hosting a very enjoyable lunch which included salads from her garden.

After lunch, the Members were free to explore the extensive gardens, and partake of a delightful afternoon tea before departure home. The weather was kind, with only one shower in mid-afternoon. The castle and gardens are open to the public and you are guaranteed a warm welcome should you wish to visit. Everyone at the Branch would like to thank Lady Jane for a wonderful, memorable day.

PORTSMOUTH BRANCH

I am writing to introduce myself as I have taken over as Branch Secretary from Don Cartledge. My name is Sheila Brown and I can be contacted on 023 9246 9116 or 07733 102364. The Branch also has a new Treasurer as Cath Nash has stepped down and has been replaced by Sheila Oakes. Sheila can be contacted on 023 9224 1091. The Chairman is still Ron Rose, who is doing a fantastic job, and Heather Priseman is still our President.

We meet at the Buckland Community Centre on the first Tuesday of every month, except in January and August. We are holding our Christmas Lunch on 08 December at the

Brookfield Hotel in Emsworth. The tickets cost £5 for Blesma Members, their partners and carers. Guests will have to pay £20 per head and there is a maximum of four guests per Member.

We have also introduced an annual subscription of £5 per head for ALL Members who wish to remain within our Branch. If you attend meetings there will be £1 charge to offset the cost of the tea, coffee and lunch. We also have a raffle at every meeting.

Over the last 18 months we have enjoyed a number of visits, including to the Poppy Factory and visits to Birdworld and Wisley Garden Centre.

Branch Secretary, Sheila Brown

WALSALL AND DISTRICT BRANCH

In June we held our Summer Lunch, and were delighted to welcome Colonel Richard Maybery QGM CEng MSc BSc (late RLC) Deputy Commander, 11th Signal and West Midlands Brigade, and Pat Cox, formerly West Midlands Area Welfare Officer at Veterans UK as our guests. The lunch was well attended and a good time was had by all.

At the end of June, the Branch Committee joined Chadwell Heath staff, Trustees, BSOs and the Coventry Branch Committee for a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum. All enjoyed a service and welcome in the Chapel, a tour of the Visitors' Centre, a talk by Martin Kettrick, followed by lunch in the Founders Room, ending with the dedication of new plinths in our Garden, which were donated by Walsall & District and Coventry Branches.



Members from the Midlands Area during their visit to Grimsthorpe Castle in August



Doug McGill celebrates his 80th birthday

Doug McGill celebrated his 80th birthday with friends and family at the Bridgnorth Rugby Club on Sunday 09 July. It was a lovely warm and sunny day, ideal for the adults to relax and the children – many of whom were Doug's great grandchildren – to play.

Doug has had a long association with the rugby club. For several years he was the club vice chairman and is now their national ticket secretary. They did him proud on the day and

excellent entertainment was provided by the Bridgnorth Ukulele Band. Jim Keating represented Blesma and the Walsall Branch at the party, and enjoyed meeting so many of Doug's friends and family.

In August, the Branch Members joined together with Members from the Midlands Area, and by kind invitation of Baroness Willoughby de Eresby DL (Lady Jane), visited Grimsthorpe Castle in Lincolnshire. Our group was given a tour of the castle, which is wonderful, and then had lunch with Lady Jane before ending the day with tea and cakes. What a fabulous day out, and many thanks to Mike Gallagher for organising it.

The Branch is delighted to announce that Mike Gallagher has accepted our invitation to become Vice President.

On a final note, we were all very sad to learn of the retirement of our BSO Charley Streather, and we all wish him good health and a happy retirement.

Spotlight on Benefits

The winter weather will soon be with us, so in this edition of the Bulletin we would like to tell you about some of the ways the government can help with fuel costs.

WINTER FUEL PAYMENT

This is an annual payment to help pensioners with heating costs. If you were born between 25 September 1937 and 05 August 1953, you could receive either £100 or £200 to help pay for your heating bills this winter. This is known as a 'Winter Fuel Payment' and the amount you receive will depend on your circumstances in the qualifying week (18-24 September 2017).

If you were born on or before 24 September 1937 and you are entitled to receive a Winter Fuel Payment, this year you will receive £150, £200 or £300 depending on your circumstances in the qualifying week.

Some people are not entitled to a payment if, in the qualifying week, they are in hospital and have been for the previous 52 weeks, are in custody, or are in a care home and receive Pension Credit (other exclusions can apply).

You do not pay tax on Winter Fuel Payments, and if you have previously received a payment and your circumstances have not changed you should receive an automatic payment between early November and Christmas 2017.

If you have not received your automatic payment by the beginning of January 2018 you should call the Winter Fuel Payment Centre on 0345 915 1515 (0345 606 0285

for textphone users). Lines are open between 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday.

If you have previously received a Winter Fuel Payment but your circumstances have changed, you will need to contact the office that usually makes your payments – the contact details will be on your paperwork. If you cannot find the contact details then you should contact the Payment Centre number above.

If you have not previously received the Winter Fuel Payment you will need to make a claim for a payment for winter 2017/18. You must return your claim form on or before 31 March 2018.

If you are entitled to a Winter Fuel Payment and your only government paid income is from a War Pension or War Widows Pension, your Winter Fuel Payment will be processed by Veterans UK. For queries, please contact 0808 191 4218.

WARM HOME DISCOUNT SCHEME

This is a £140 credit to your electricity bill. You qualify for the discount if, on 09 July 2017, all of the following applied:

- Your electricity supplier was part of the scheme
- Your name (or your partner's) was on the bill
- You were getting the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit

You can also qualify if you use a pre-pay or pay-as-you-go electricity meter. You may be able to apply directly to your electricity

supplier for help if you don't qualify because you don't get the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit but:

- You are on a low income
- You get certain means-tested benefits

Check with your supplier to see if you're eligible and how to apply. The following suppliers are part of the scheme:

Atlantic	M&S Energy
Bristol Energy	Npower
British Gas	Our Power
Cooperative Energy	OVO
Economy Energy	Sainsbury's Energy
EDF Energy	Scottish Gas
E.ON	Scottish Hydro
Extra Energy	Scottish Power
First Utility	Southern Electric
Fischer Energy	SSE
Flow Energy	SWALEC
GB Energy	Utilita
Manweb	Utility Warehouse

COLD WEATHER PAYMENT

This is an automatic payment of £25 for each qualifying week if:

- The average temperature recorded or forecast over seven consecutive days at the designated weather station for your area is 0°C or below **and**
- You have been awarded a qualifying benefit:
 - Pension Credit, or
 - Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance and you are responsible for a child under five, or you are getting Child Tax Credit that includes the disabled child element, or
 - IS, income-based JSA or income-related ESA that includes one of the disability or pensioner premiums (for ESA this also

includes the support component or work related activity component).

- Universal Credit which includes an increase for a disabled child, or you have been assessed as having limited capability for work or work-related activity and you are not in employment or self employed
- You must not be living in a care home

You do not need to make a claim for a Cold Weather Payment. The Department for Work and Pensions should automatically pay you if you qualify.

THE WELFARE REFORM ACT 2012

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 legislated for a number of changes to the Benefits System. The most substantial of these has been the introduction of a new benefit, Universal Credit. Due to this being a significant change, which has also required a new computer system to manage and calculate claims, the Government has opted to introduce the benefit across the country in a phased manner.

Most Members will have been unaffected by this as claimants who have a disability have been able to claim benefits under the previous system. However, the introduction of Universal Credit is gathering speed, so here is an overview of the benefit, to give you an idea of when you will be affected by the changes.

What is Universal Credit?

Universal Credit is a single, integrated means-tested benefit payable to people of working age who are on a low income.

There are conditions attached to a claim, such as your and your partner's work status, income and capital. It is to support those who are either:

- In work and on a low income
- Out of work but able to work (although some people can be exempt from this)

BENEFITS

- Out of work due to illness or disability
- Responsible for a child
- Responsible for rent or housing costs

Universal Credit is replacing most of the current means-tested Benefits System for those of working age. The benefits it is replacing are:

- Income-based Job Seeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit

These are referred to as legacy benefits. Under the legacy benefits system you claim each of the benefits relevant to you. Under the Universal Credit system you claim the one benefit. Other benefits, such as Attendance Allowance and Personal Independence Payment remain as they are.

What is the phased introduction?

Universal Credit is being introduced in stages. Whether you can claim will depend on where you live and your personal circumstances. Areas are split into either 'live service' or 'full service'.

- **Live service** For single claimants and some couples who are not in work and do not have an illness or disability
- **Full Service** For all new claimants including those with an illness or disability

The introduction of the full service is being phased in across postcode areas at 50 Job Centres per month. It is expected that Universal Credit full service will be available across the country by September 2018. Once an area is a full service, claimants under the

live service will have to transfer to become a full service claimant.

What does this mean for legacy benefit claimants?

The legacy benefits are being phased out. At some stage all legacy benefit claimants will have to make a claim for Universal Credit. If you are on a legacy benefit you will remain under this system until:

- You have a change of circumstances and are in a live service area
- You are contacted by the Department for Work and Pensions (The Department for Communities in Northern Ireland). This is expected to start sometime after all areas become a full service in September 2018

Universal Credit marks a radical change to the Benefits System and will affect around seven million people. As a result, the change is complex for claimants. We will be providing regular updates through this section of the Bulletin. *However, if you have any queries please contact your Blesma Support Officer or Liz Watling in Chadwell Heath on membersupport@blesma.org or by calling her on 020 8548 3516.*

LOOK ONLINE FOR HELP!

We have created a Benefits Information section on the website which focuses on disability, carers and out of work benefits. We will be adding to the list of benefits that are featured over the coming weeks but in the meantime, if you would like more information, have any questions about your benefit entitlement, or would like hints and tips on how to fill in claim forms, *please contact your Blesma Support Officer or Liz in the Membership Services team by phone on 020 8548 3516 or by emailing her at membersupport@blesma.org*

Support for our Overseas Members

There are some 60 Blesma Members living overseas, and providing them with the same level of assistance as those who live in the UK can be challenging. One of the main difficulties is medical support, including prosthetic provision.

Few countries operate a health system like our NHS. Most medical support is provided under private health insurance. For those with amputation or injury/illness caused by their military service, Veterans UK may support medical costs. This can be a complicated and time-consuming process, and often leads to frustration and delays in getting treatment. Blesma continues to monitor the impact on our Overseas Members, but it is important that we get to hear about individual cases so that we can help to get a resolution. We cannot promise to solve every issue or reach a resolution quickly, but we will do our best.

Another issue is isolation from other Members and the Association itself. We do not have BSOs outside the UK but we are looking at how we can connect Members more easily to each other, and to Chadwell Heath, so that we can provide better support. Over the next few months, we'll get in touch with Members either by phone or email.

Overseas Members should contact Liz Watling at Chadwell Heath on +44 20 8548 3516 or membersupport@blesma.org, or Brian Chenier BSO (Prosthetics) on +44 20 8548 7080 or bsoprosthetics@blesma.org if they need specific help, advice or support

Gardening Grants: How to make a claim

We understand that it may be difficult for Members to maintain their gardens, whether it's mowing the lawn or weeding the flowerbeds. We award an annual grant of up to £200 which can be applied for on the proforma that has been inserted into this Bulletin. The application must be accompanied by receipts or a signed statement from the gardener. However, we are unable to award grants where Members have paid a relation to maintain their garden as this is not within the spirit of benevolent support.

If you've mislaid the Gardening Grant Form, or there wasn't one inserted into your copy of this Bulletin, please contact Liz at Blesma Chadwell Heath on 020 8548 3516 or at membersupport@blesma.org

Calling all Members!

Please remember that this is YOUR Bulletin and we'd very much like to know what you think about it. We'd also like to print more of your articles, letters, comments and suggestions. Please get in touch with Jess Mackinnon by emailing her at ihj@blesma.org or by calling her on 020 8548 3514 to tell us your opinion or if you would like to know how to contribute something to the next issue, no matter how small. We look forward to hearing from you!

Get up, get out, and get active in 2018

The Activities Calendar in 2018 is looking exciting! We'll be sending everyone a brochure in the Winter issue of *Blesma Magazine*, which will contain all the information you'll need to help you choose the activities that are right for you.

Whether you've participated in activities before or are keen to get involved for the first time, we're sure that there'll be plenty that will appeal to you. As well as including the perennial favourites such as winter sports in Colorado, scuba diving, golf, fishing, photography, cycling and multi-activity weeks, we've also included some events which have proved popular this year – the winter sports event in France, family activity weekends and couples' city breaks.

Remember that the costs of all activities in the calendar are met by the Association, so why not try something new and meet other Blesma Members in 2018?

MEMBER ACTIVITIES IN EARLY 2018

For all those Members who want to get their adventure fix in early, we'd like to remind everyone of the activities taking place in early 2018. The deadlines for applications for the following activities have been extended, so get your bids in now!

WINTER SPORTS

Where Europe

When 21-28 January 2018

Application deadline The deadline has passed, however applications for the Reserve List must be received by 15 November

We've changed our ski-biking event and made it more accessible. So if you would like to spend a week in the French Alps learning how to slide down the slopes, no matter what your level of mobility or expertise on skis or ski bike, then get in touch with Emily.

TRANS4MERS SKYDIVING TRAINING

When February 2018 (TBC)

Application deadline 15 December

Ever fancied skydiving? Would you like to gain your A licence in sunny California? The Accelerated Free Fall (AFF) course is the best way for those with disabilities to learn to skydive and attain their licence as a qualified parachutist.

It doesn't matter if you've never jumped before, we will give you all the training you'll need. Our instructors are world champions, dedicated to passing on their expertise, and have trained beginners to compete at national level against able-bodied teams! We're hosting a training weekend in February 2018 with the expedition set to take place in April or May.

You will need to be robust, weigh no more than 14 stone (89kg) and preferably be younger than 45. Training will involve ground school, a tandem jump, perfecting techniques in the wind tunnel (pictured opposite) and jumping solo from 13,500ft.

INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

When 09-13 March 2018

Application deadline 07 December 2017
Photography has become so popular with

For more information
 email mea@blesma.org
 or call 020 8548 7094



Members that the photography group has now become something of a community in its own right. If you want to try taking photographs but don't really know where to start, then this is definitely the activity for you – and it's suitable for any Member, regardless of injury or age.

Based at the Calvert Trust in the Lake District, the course will introduce you to the basics of composition using light and photo-editing software.

For more on these activities, contact Emily on 020 8548 7094 or at mea@blesma.org Please note that activities are only open to Ordinary and Associate Members and Widow(er)s. Honorary Members may attend if they are helping to run the activity.

STOP PRESS:

If you have not registered your email and would like to receive the monthly Activities Update, email Emily on mea@blesma.org

Get in touch with your BSO

*Have you got a question or need advice?
Don't hesitate to get in touch with the
Blesma Support Officer in your area*

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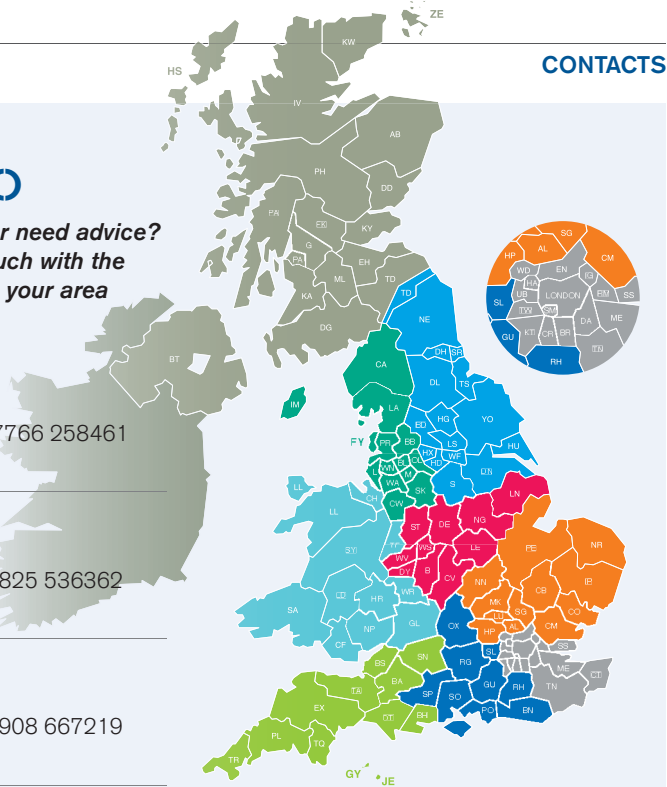
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