



**Royal Star
& Garter**

Care with courage

Winter
Connections
Newsletter

2026





Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

About us

We provide loving, compassionate care to veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia.

Our Homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe and Worthing offer outstanding long-term and short-break care.

We also run services reaching into the community, including Day Care, Lunch Clubs and a Telephone Friendship Service.



Welcome to Connections...



We've had a busy winter of celebrations as we welcomed Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal to our Surbiton Home, raised our glasses to several centenarians and to our wonderful volunteers, and admired the War

Medal of one veteran after an 80-year wait.

We were honoured that The Princess, who became our new Patron in 2025, was able to spend time with residents and discuss our work and future plans.

This year, our focus is to reach even more veterans, meeting their needs in the best way for each individual. We will complete the merger with Care for Veterans and the Veteran Friendly Framework is on track to accredit its 300th care home! We are developing our services to support veterans and their families as their care needs change.

With best wishes for the new year,

Cally Madden, Editor

TFS turns three

Our Telephone Friendship Service (TFS) has celebrated its third anniversary.

The service reaches out to members of the Armed Forces community in their own homes or in care, providing companionship and connection.

Since its launch, TFS has supported 84 veterans or partners and built a community of 47 trained volunteers. Together, they have enjoyed more than 5,580 hours of conversation.



Among those who use the TFS is 93-year-old Joy. She lives in residential care and looks forwards to her chats with Kelda, who manages the service (shown together here). Joy said: "The Telephone Friendship Service makes my week a little bit brighter. The chats I have really lift my spirits and I always look forward to hearing her friendly, cheerful voice."

“ I think it’s a wonderful service and I’m happy there’s so many other people who benefit from it like I do. - Joy

Stories from our Homes



Homes news

A Royal visitor

In October, The Princess Royal made her first visit since becoming our new Patron.



The Princess was given a tour of our Surbiton Home by Manager Helena Mayer, Chief Executive Andy Cole and Chair Richard Williams, before meeting residents, including Dulcie (left) and Steve (top right).

She also met Mary Holley, whose husband was a D-Day Navy veteran. Mary said: "I was immensely proud to meet Her Royal Highness and talk to her about my life and my husband's service. She was very kind and well-informed."

Chair Richard Williams commented: "It was a privilege to introduce Her Royal Highness to residents and staff, and share with her our plans for the future."



“
We are deeply appreciative of The Princess's unwavering commitment to the welfare of veterans, their families and the many charitable and military organisations she also supports.

Chair Richard Williams



WWII veterans celebrate 100

Two residents involved in the WWII effort have celebrated 100th birthdays.

Surbiton resident Maureen (above left, main photo right) was just 13 when war broke out. She got a job at the Hawker factory in Kingston, which built the Hurricane aircraft key to our success in the Battle of Britain. She often jokes: "The Hurricane won the war, not the Spitfire!"

Anne (top right) from Solihull was also 13 when war was declared and worked in a munitions factory in Birmingham, before joining the Women's Royal Naval Service in 1944. Stationed in Belfast, she helped a team to decipher coded messages.

home front

It is a privilege for our staff to support residents like Maureen and Anne to celebrate these milestones with their families and friends.



Stories from our Homes

Homes news

Lest we forget

Residents and staff marked Remembrance with events at our Homes and at London's Cenotaph.



They took part in services in the Homes, while several residents attended the National Service of Remembrance.



Veterans from Surbiton, High Wycombe and Worthing were applauded by fellow veterans and members of the public as they marched past the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday. As the march ended, they were saluted by The Duke of Edinburgh.

There were also services in all our Homes, with laying wreaths and readings. Buglers and trumpeters played The Last Post and Reveille, and the two-minute silence was observed.

Joining forces for Jed

Staff at our Surbiton Home worked with Blind Veterans UK to support 63-year-old resident Jed.

Former RAF policeman Jeremy Sellwood lost his sight after a head injury in 1987.

Wellbeing Coordinator Lesley said: "The team haven't had to support someone who is totally blind and we wanted specialist advice."



Blind Veterans UK advised on the set-up of Jed's room and provided a box of activities. A

case worker also meets him each month. She added: "We've been able to improve the wellbeing we provide Jed since contacting them."

Jed said: "I think it's excellent that Royal Star & Garter got in contact with Blind Veterans UK. It's refreshing to see two organisations working together this way. Staff here always go the extra mile for every resident. I feel lucky to be here."



A reluctant hero

WWII veteran resident Janet has received a surprise gift.

Over 80 years after the conflict ended and she left the Armed Forces, Janet was given her War Medal 1939-45 by her children Gill and David, who applied for it on

her behalf. They believe the 102-year-old is one of the last living people to receive the medal.

The great grandmother served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1942-1945. She was a film operator, working on projectors which showed educational and instructional films to new Navy recruits.

well deserved

Janet's husband also served in the Navy in WWII but Gill said neither of her parents applied for the War Medal. She said: "It was typical of them not to, they probably thought they weren't worthy of it."

“

This is a big surprise. I'm so grateful to my family for ordering it on my behalf.

Janet, Navy veteran



Our wonderful volunteers



Homes feature

The many people who support us as volunteers play an important role in our family. This dedicated team gives up their time to help us in a variety of ways.

While every volunteer will have their own personal reasons for doing what they do, they all have one thing in common – an energy and a drive to improve the lives of our veterans and their partners.



Among our volunteers is green-fingered Penny (left), who tends to the outdoor spaces in Surbiton and leads gardening activities. Penny has volunteered for many charities and currently splits her time between the hospice which cared for her late husband and Royal Star & Garter.

Penny said, “My father was a resident here and died in 2016. I thought the Home was wonderful. They took amazing care of

Dad. He enjoyed it here and I loved coming to visit. After he died, I always said I’d come back, and now I have.”

Penny believes the role of volunteers is important in the Home.

“I think residents enjoy having somebody different to talk to.

“Volunteers are a wonderful way to bring in the outside world, to show that there are people who care and who genuinely want to do it. If I were a paid gardener, I’d work my hours and go home. I feel I give more because I’ve chosen to be here. And I think all volunteers have that in their hearts.”

Our Telephone Friendship Service (TFS) also has 47 dedicated volunteers,

lifting spirits

who speak to veterans and their partners

across the country. Among them is Navy veteran Paul. He said the support he received from military charities when his leg was amputated in 2021 motivated him to become a volunteer. Paul commented: “I love our discussions. They just want someone to tell their stories to.”

Penny added: “For me it’s not about giving back, I can never give back the care my Dad received at Royal Star & Garter. I enjoy supporting people and it’s good for my wellbeing knowing I’m helping others.”



“

They're lovely but they're lonely, and they're all people that have problems, like you and I have. I class them as my friends and I get a lot of satisfaction from this.

Paul, TFS volunteer



About volunteering

We offer a variety of rewarding volunteering roles to match our volunteers' skills and availability. From spending time with residents in our Homes to supporting outings or fundraising in the community, there's an opportunity waiting!

In High Wycombe, volunteer Jules Bendell (above right, with Carolyn) is very much part of our family. The Home's second floor is named after her husband Bugs, who served in the RAF and later became a resident.

If you would like to find out more about becoming a volunteer in our Homes or for the Telephone Friendship Service, please visit: starandgarter.org/how-you-can-help/volunteer-for-us

Make a lasting difference



Creating a Tribute Fund for someone who has died can be a meaningful way of honouring their memory.

We are offering a dedicated online space for you to post photos, light virtual candles and tell the story of someone special. It can be a place to reflect

privately or to invite friends and family to contribute together, creating a living legacy of remembrance and love.

Setting up a fund is simple, personal and completely free. You can name it after your loved one and use it in whatever way feels right: perhaps marking birthdays or anniversaries; or inviting donations in place of flowers; or fundraising for an event.

If you would like to find out more or set up a Tribute Fund in honour of someone special, please scan this QR code, visit us online at starandgarter.tributefonds.org.uk or contact our team by email at in.memory@starandgarter.org or by telephone on **020 8481 7674**.



Free Will-writing guide

Ensure your wishes are met when you die by making a Will. Our guide supports you through this process.

Contact legacies@starandgarter.org or call 020 8481 7676 to request this free guide, or for more details on our complimentary Will-writing service.



Lottery fun



We've had our first £1,000 winner!

Join our lottery for just £1 per week and you could win an amazing top prize of £25,000! Playing our lottery helps raise funds so we can keep providing loving, compassionate care.

To find out more information visit starandgarter.org/lottery or call 0370 050 9240

A chat with June



From our residents

In this feature, we ask one of our residents what's on their mind. Here, June tells us what matters to her.



June lives at our High Wycombe Home with her husband Ray, who did his National Service in the Army.

“

I want to leave a healthy planet for my great grandchildren to live on and be happy with.

June, resident

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Have your goals and go for them. That's something I've tried to do all my life.

What story do you like to tell about yourself?

I've been a Wycombe Wanderers fan since I met my husband, and we've been going together for 70 years. There's a plaque outside the ground with our names on. The last match I went to, there were four generations of us together. We lost but being there with my family and soaking up the atmosphere still made it special.

How can veterans today be better supported?

You do hear stories about some people leaving the Armed Forces and really struggling to adapt to life. I think there should be help for them, whether that's housing, education or employment. Many people won't need help, but unfortunately there are some that will.

If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?

For us to all live together in peace. Stop all these wars and everything going on at the minute, because it's only getting worse. The world feels like a very divisive place.

What are you most proud of?

My family. The proudest moment I've had was on my husband's 90th birthday. It was a beautiful sunny August day and we had a picnic in a park in Marlow. There were 24 of our relatives from all over the country, all enjoying themselves. I thought 'This is my family, I love them and I'm so proud of them.'

Join us at the Tattoo!

Charity news



The Birmingham International Tattoo takes place on 14th and 15th February.

We have once again been chosen as one of the military charities supported by this event.

Caley Eldred, Director of Fundraising at Royal Star & Garter, said: "We are so grateful to the organisers of the Tattoo for choosing to support our veterans and to all the volunteers who help out at the event. Our residents love to go along and engage with the military community."

To support the event and us, buy your tickets now: bhamtattoo.com/tickets

Our friendly team is here to help.

020 8481 7674 (Monday to Friday 8.30am-4pm)

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