

Connections



**Royal Star
& Garter**

Care with courage

Supporter newsletter
Winter 2020



Photo taken before March 2020

About us



**Royal Star
& Garter**

Care with courage

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

Our Homes in Solihull, Surbiton and High Wycombe offer outstanding residential and day care. We help those who have had the courage to serve our country to live happy, fulfilled lives.



We help residents revisit old hobbies

Thanks to you,
we can provide



48,700

days of residential care
in 2020



8,000+

individual and group
physiotherapy sessions
in 2020



30+

ipads and laptops for
residents to keep in touch
with family

In 2021 we will...

Restart our day care service, when it is safe to do so

Trial a new outreach project to connect with veterans in their own homes

Provide a new website for family members to keep up to date with residents' daily lives

Welcome to Connections...



...our Winter newsletter and an opportunity to keep you in touch with life in our Homes.

As one of our loyal supporters, you are a vital part of the Royal Star & Garter family. Despite the restrictions placed on us all by the Covid pandemic, we are delighted to share stories on how life continues in our Homes.

Our staff have been working tirelessly to keep residents safe and jolly in the run up to the festive season. Autumn and winter are always busy in the Homes, with Remembrance, our Starlight services and Christmas. Usually the Homes are buzzing with visitors and entertainers. While these visits won't be possible this year, we are finding innovative ways to bring events and activities to our residents using technology. We are also investing in safe family spaces so that loved ones can spend time together. Thanks to your support, we are able to do all these things to make life fulfilling for our veterans.



From all the residents and staff at Royal Star & Garter, we wish you a safe and happy Christmas.

Cally Madden, Editor

PS: Some photos were taken before the need for social distancing. We continue to follow government guidelines to keep our residents safe.

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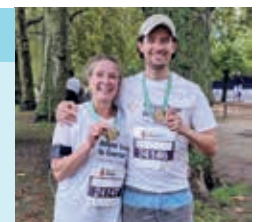


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Stories from the frontline

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We missed simple things like hugging each other, especially when somebody had passed away.

Jude, Nurse

These heartfelt stories of our care during Covid show the dedication, compassion and love our staff demonstrate.

Jude, Nurse



Working here during early lockdown was hard. We were worried about our residents, ourselves and our families.

Not knowing when the pandemic was going to be over was so hard. I think I cried every night in the car on the way home because I didn't want to take the virus home. I felt like I needed to ditch my worries, stress and frustrations somewhere on the way. I have a friend who is an NHS nurse and we'd be messaging each other for support in the early hours of the morning. So I had a support network in my friend rather than bringing it all home for my family. There's a resignation, but we coped last time and we can cope again. We have that experience.

Cheryl, Home Manager



I'm so proud of everyone here and I'll never be able to thank staff enough for what they are doing.

They have rolled up their sleeves and said 'How can we help?' This is priceless. They have covered shifts wherever needed, which meant we have never been short-staffed. The residents have been very supportive of what we are doing.

They have been happy and content and a lot of them have said they have felt safe, which is good to hear. The Home is still fun, vibrant and full of life and laughter.





**“What a remarkably
kind and talented group
of people your staff are.”**

Alison, Win's daughter



Damian, Lead Nurse



This has been one of the toughest challenges of my career, because we are fighting with ghosts. You couldn't see the

virus, but you knew that it was there.

It was almost impossible for me to switch off and let my emotions out. As a Lead Nurse I was trying to support my team even when I was at home. I felt I was at work all the time. I was going home, going to sleep and in my dreams I was still here, checking if the residents were fine. I have to pay tribute to our residents, they have been amazing. It's just unbelievable the strength that they have.

We tried to keep them company whenever we could. It broke up their day and boosted morale among the staff too. It's hard to express how difficult it was when we lost residents. Our focus was on making them as comfortable as possible and keeping them company at the end.

Hayley, Activities Manager



Activities have changed dramatically since the restrictions have come in.

Keeping residents in touch with their loved ones has also been vital to their well-being, and we've helped make this happen as much as possible. Families were very supportive and understanding. They knew we were keeping the residents safe and looking after them. They knew they were in good hands.

From an activities' perspective, we're the fun in the Home, we're seen to be the life and soul, so some days it's tough to have that smile on and to think of new ideas.

But we are spurred on by the residents. You hear their military stories, know what they've been through and some of the challenges they've faced, and you want to give it your all because they've been through so much worse.

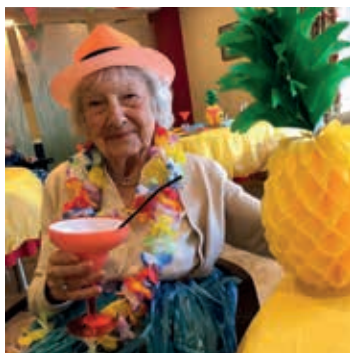
Life in our Homes

Life in the Homes has changed during the pandemic but there's still fun and laughter to share.



Technology has helped us to safely provide the therapies and activities that are key to residents' well-being.

Residents have been using video calls to enjoy entertainment, such as Jemima playing one of Bernard's favourite songs. Choir and physiotherapy sessions, run remotely, mean residents can still enjoy the benefits of activities while socially distanced.



Audrey enjoys a tropical punch on our colourful Caribbean Day.



Solihull embarked on a virtual world cruise, first stop USA!

John, dressed as the Mad Hatter, enjoying treats for Alice in Wonderland Day.



VJ Day was poignant for Navy veteran Harry, who served in the Pacific.

Harry with his wife, Sue.



Christmas



Christmas in the Homes will be different this year but we are planning to make the festive season extra special.

We'll be holding plenty of fun-filled activities including festive craft-making, carols, a traditional Christmas lunch and a visit from Santa with a personal gift for every resident. Your ongoing support helps make Christmas all the merrier for residents.



“Christmas is going to look very different ... But I'm confident that there will still be laughter, joy and singing.

Hayley, Activities Manager



Solihull's Panto 2019 and any excuse to dress up!

Living positively

Our residents have shown great resilience and courage during the pandemic.

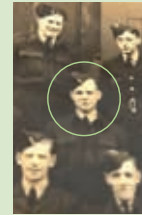


Ena's husband was killed in action in Belgium in 1944 and she brought up her daughter alone but she has a wonderfully positive outlook on life.

"I love it here. The Home couldn't have done more if they'd tried during the pandemic. They've made sure that all guidelines are followed. I did a lot when I was younger in organising things and I appreciate what they do for us. I've never been concerned that the virus could be the end of me. Maybe it's my upbringing. My mother used to say, 'Whatever's planned out for you usually happens.' So I don't worry."



Ena celebrating her 102nd birthday. With Bill on their wedding day (top)



Bernard, a 92-year-old RAF veteran, tested positive for Covid.

"There was no time at all when I thought the virus was going to kill me because I wasn't suffering at all. Having it didn't cause me any upheaval. I didn't think that this could be it, because at 92, you know you've got a certain proximity to the end... God doesn't give a sell-by date, does he?! So it didn't cause any psychological problems, because I live with the possibility of popping off any night.

I know it's been very hard and challenging for staff here during the past few months, but I have not noticed a drop or change in the standard of care they have provided. I can't praise them enough. They're so good and I count them as very good friends. I constantly thank the staff for all they do for me.

My wife was in a home which was meant to be top-notch but it was not a patch on this. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

Tips from our Homes

We asked residents and staff:
'What's the best advice you've
ever been given?'



As a family: keeping in touch



Family visits are essential to our residents' well-being.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have looked for ways to keep residents safely in touch with their loved ones.

During lockdown we invested heavily in new technology, allowing residents and relatives to keep in touch via video calls. While this plays an important part, it isn't the same as a personal visit.

Through the summer, we offered safe visiting in outdoor spaces and residents enjoyed emotional reunions with loved ones. Among the visitors was Terrie, who met her mother Amy. Terrie said: "Everybody felt safe and Royal Star & Garter has done a fantastic job."



Where it was viable, the Homes also welcomed drive-by visits which were very popular and we are now taking residents out in minibuses to see local relatives for a distanced doorstep wave. These little things make a big difference to everyone's well-being.

“

**It was absolutely wonderful.
I was so looking forward to
seeing her. She looked so well.
I cried!**

Terrie, after visiting her mother Amy

We are also developing a private web portal, called Family Connections, where relatives can log on to find out specific information about our Homes, including the weekly activities and menus available, along with a photo gallery. This has been made possible with a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund.



Investing in families



We have had to think innovatively to safely bring loved ones together.

We have built three new, Covid-secure indoor meeting spaces, already being termed our 'pods', where families can meet safely. We are extremely grateful to the Scheinberg Relief Fund who generously provided a grant to cover all the direct costs involved in this work.

We hope that over the long term, these spaces will allow 140 visits per week across our three Homes. With safety as a priority, the pods have floor-to-ceiling glazing to avoid viral



transmission and a half coffee table each side of the glass to create a sense of connection. The residents' side will closely mirror the décor of the Home. This is especially important for our residents living with dementia, limiting disruption and distress. A sound system and sound-absorbing artwork overcome background noise, supporting people with impaired hearing.

High Wycombe's first visitor was Wendy who said: "It's an actual room – it's very well done." Her husband, resident Eric, said the pod was lovely and it was great to see Wendy indoors.

We are also investigating rapid tests and more spaces to allow visits to take place safely over winter and beyond.



Covid and the care sector

“It is crucial that the government, working together with care providers, ensures that the lessons learned are taken on board.”

Andy Cole, Chief Executive

The pandemic has had a huge impact on the social care sector.

Older people in care homes are especially vulnerable so sharing our learnings from the first wave of the pandemic with other social care organisations is important.

At Royal Star & Garter, the senior team reacted quickly as the pandemic unfolded, closing the Homes to visitors ahead of governmental guidelines, putting in place enhanced infection control measures, arranging private transport for staff, ordering adequate PPE and accessing testing, all of which undoubtedly saved lives.

However, as we continue our own battle with the situation, we are acutely aware that many care homes are still suffering the devastating effects of the virus. We recognise the importance of sharing our experiences to learn from, and improve, the care being offered during the crisis.

Senior staff worked with the National Care Forum (NCF) to advise on guidance, management strategies and lessons learned, supporting the sector as a whole. We have also spoken out on social care issues and supported NCF's 'Here to care' confidence campaign, to promote the continual work by care homes to offer a safe service.

Family visits have been problematic during the pandemic, with little clear guidance from the government. Our values have influenced our decision to make significant developments in our internal spaces for residents and relatives to meet, supporting the well-being of all. We will be sharing our innovations and learnings on this with other care homes.



Remembrance



We come together as a military family at Remembrance.

Our 'Every face tells a story' campaign highlighted what Remembrance means to residents and staff.



We launched a bold and striking mailing campaign to appeal for new donors to support us at this poignant yet vital time as we continue to face the challenges of the pandemic. Within our Homes, Remembrance was marked with special services and

activities, which allowed our military family to pay their respects, despite restrictions in place.

Residents took part in socially distanced activities including war poetry readings and poppy-making. Veterans and staff observed the silence on Remembrance Sunday, with in-house services which featured wreath-laying and readings.

Sadly, we were unable to invite our wonderful supporters to write Remembrance messages to our veterans. We know this means a lot to you, and to our residents, and we hope this will return next year.



Left: Brian in the Peace Garden



Right: Alec with a wreath

Below: Margaret places a poppy in remembrance



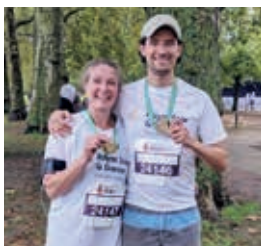
Fundraising & Community

It seems hard to look ahead to 2021, but organisers remain optimistic about the return of many events postponed this year.

We are sharing that optimism and so are delighted to offer places in the following events:

- Royal Parks Half Marathon – 11th April
- London Landmarks Half Marathon – 23rd May
- Great North Run – 19th September
- London Marathon – 3rd October

These challenges raise vital funds for Royal Star & Garter, helping us to deliver our exceptional care.



Julia and Will raised £1,680

If you are interested in participating in one of the events listed, or thinking of taking on another challenge, email our community team who will be happy to support you: community@starandgarter.org

Please make sure you adhere to government guidelines.

Festive virtual fundraising

Virtual fundraising is one of the safest and easiest ways to support us. If you would like to get into the festive spirit, try:

- Doing a spot of Christmas shopping on Amazon? Donate to us at no extra cost via www.smile.amazon.co.uk
- Ask friends and family to make a donation to Royal Star & Garter in lieu of gifts
- Host a virtual quiz night complete with mince pies and mulled wine

Community thanks

Organisations have been going the extra mile to help us through this challenging year. We want to thank them all but in particular:



Mail Force gifted over 10,000 pieces of vital PPE

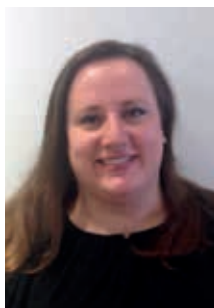
The Thrift shop at RAF Mount Pleasant, Falkland Islands, who donated £500

Squire's Garden Centre gave £50 gift certificates for our Sensational Gardens competition



Ways to give

There are many ways to support Royal Star & Garter from donations to gifts in a will.



Emily works in Supporter Care processing your donations.

"I joined Royal Star & Garter in January, just before the pandemic started, and in that time I've seen a real change in supporters moving towards donating online. It is now

so secure and easy to donate through our website, by Direct Debit, standing order or CAF.

Some people still prefer to send a cheque and letter, and it is always great to receive these and read the stories behind the gift. We take all necessary measures to keep our staff safe when opening mail. We also take phone donations and it is nice to connect with our supporters in this way.

I'm touched by the fact that some people don't feel their donation is significant but I'm in the privileged position of receiving donations, large and small, from our supporters, and I get to see the difference each one makes to our residents' lives."

Free will-writing service

Royal Star & Garter is a member of the National Free Wills Network, which offers free will-writing services to our supporters. You can write or update a simple single will (or mirror wills with your partner) with participating solicitors local to you.

To find out more about leaving a gift in your will or using our free will-writing service, call 020 8481 7676 or email legacies@starandgarter.org

Support and win!

Look out for the launch of our new weekly lottery, coming your way in March.

The first 100 people to register their interest will be entered into a prize draw to win a £50 voucher for Marks & Spencer.

Please email: supportercare@starandgarter.org or call 020 8481 7676.



Your support helps us bring a smile to Alf's face

Here to help

Royal Star & Garter has been following the government's Covid guidelines, which has led to a significant number of staff in our Administration office working from home. Your donations are being kept safe and secure, and are being processed when we are able to safely access the office a few times a week. We apologise for any inconvenience caused if you see a delay in us banking your donation or confirming that we've received it. Thank you for your support.

There are several ways to keep in touch.
Our friendly Supporter Care Team are always
on hand to help.

020 8481 7676

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

www.starandgarter.org/contact-us

supportercare@starandgarter.org



To help our planet and reduce costs, we'd love to be in touch by email. If you would like to receive our Connections newsletters in this way, please email us at supportercare@starandgarter.org

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