



Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Grief Awareness Week: Veterans' charity bereavement project brings comfort

Relatives of residents who have died in Royal Star & Garter Homes have praised the love and support they have received from the charity through its new bereavement project.

Royal Star & Garter has been working with family members to shape the support it offers when they are bereaved. As a result, the charity has introduced new initiatives within its Homes to help those affected by loss, including creating a bereavement booklet, which offers practical help and emotional support to grieving relatives.

The impact it is having is being shared as part of National Grief Awareness Week, which is running from 2-8 December.



Liz, standing beside her mother's remembrance butterfly

Royal Star & Garter provides loving, compassionate care and support to veterans and their families, living with disability or dementia, through its Homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe and Worthing. It also has other services reaching out into the community.

The charity is helping support grieving relatives through its newly developed bereavement programme, which was developed with the support of a significant grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. Each Home now has a Heavenly Postbox, where grieving relatives can write letters to their loved ones on seed-embedded note paper, which are later planted in the Homes' gardens.

Some of their Homes are now also hosting in-person groups and gatherings for bereaved relatives. They also provide books to support those affected by loss, and work with healthcare professionals and external organisations to signpost



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and ensure the effective delivery of support. Each Home also has an 'In Memory' book for residents, relatives and staff to leave messages about those who have died.

In High Wycombe, Remembrance butterflies, inscribed with a resident's name, can also be placed in a specially created Reflective Garden.

Michaela's father Peter was a resident at the High Wycombe Home. She was pleased to be invited to a relative group gathering but felt some trepidation before attending. However, Michaela said, "From the moment I walked in I was made to feel very welcome. I was asked to place Dad's remembrance butterfly in the Reflective Garden, which felt wonderful." Her sister has also attended subsequent gatherings, and Michaela added, "It is wonderful to hear other families showing the love that I also have for the charity. We feel very honoured to be part of the Royal Star & Garter family."

For Liz, whose mother Kitty lived at High Wycombe, seeing tributes written in the 'In Memory' book brought solace. She said, "Reading all the lovely messages gave me great comfort. I know Mum has not been forgotten and she was loved." She continued, "I now find it easier to look beyond what happened. I am not so upset, I have a feeling of happiness, and the sadness has been lifted from me."

John died at the Solihull Home in 2024, where he had lived with his wife Margaret. She has written letters on seeded paper which were planted in May, and she looks forward to watching the flowers bloom from her words of love and remembrance. Margaret goes to the garden for "peace and reflection" and said: "It's somewhere I can just sit and think of my John. I close my eyes, and I remember him and the good times dancing and laughing."



Margaret with her late husband John at Royal Star & Garter

Chrissie Morris, who has been leading the work said: "We hope that by providing bereavement support it will help families navigate their grief and encourage them to access valuable bereavement support if needed. Relatives



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are part of the Royal Star & Garter family. Some come to regard the Homes as an extension of their own home, and the staff and other residents as an extension of their own family. Our bereavement support helps maintain this relationship. I'm delighted we are now able to provide this vital support to those who need it."

Royal Star & Garter is welcoming new residents. For more information on this, its other services or to work for the charity, go to www.starandgarter.org

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About the Royal Star & Garter group

Founded in 1916, Royal Star & Garter provides care, support and friendship for veterans and their families so that they can live well. The charity delivers nursing and dementia care through Homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe, and now in Worthing, having recently merged with the military charity Care for Veterans. It also offers a range of services reaching into the community, including Lunch Clubs, Day Care and a national Telephone Friendship Service.

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Royal Star & Garter
is a member of the
National Care Forum