



The Fire Fighters
Charity

Issue 23
Winter 2020

Shout!

Official magazine of The Fire Fighters Charity

www.firefighterscharity.org.uk

LOCKDOWN HOPE

How firefighter Zak Shafique made the most of lockdown to get the online support he needed to turn his life around following a brain injury.



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Spirit of Fire Awards 2020

HRH The Duke of Cambridge opens virtual ceremony

Fire Family Challenge

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Editorial



Welcome to the Autumn/Winter 2020 issue of *Shout!* As I write this, the country is bracing itself for the coming winter and the prospect of a second wave of coronavirus that looks set to bring more heartache and hardship for millions. It has been the strangest of years for us all. So before I talk about all that you can find over the coming pages, I'd like to take a moment to remind you all that we are here for you if you need us.

Since March, we have been doing all we can to ensure that we follow and abide by all the latest restrictions, while also continuing to support as many of you as we can with the issues, concerns and worries you may have faced this year. Sharon Bailey, our Director of Beneficiary Services, goes into more detail on this page 35 and our Health and Wellbeing section in this issue also explains how you can access the support you need over the coming weeks and months.

So, please do pick up the phone or get in touch through the website if there's something weighing on your mind. We're always here for you.

Earlier this month it was fantastic to be able to celebrate the achievements of our supporters

through our virtual *Spirit of Fire Awards*. We were honoured, once again, to welcome His Royal Highness The Duke of Cambridge who introduced the awards ceremony and announced the deserving winner of our Special Recognition Award for Excellence in the Field of Mental Health, Shilla Patel.

The Duke's uplifting message set the tone for a memorable evening in which a host of famous faces helped us to announce the winners across 12 *Spirit of Fire* categories, details of which you can read from page six. During such challenging times, it was inspiring to share in your success and I was delighted to see so many of you joining us for the 'as live' broadcast on YouTube.

Also in this issue, you can read the incredible story of

Zak Shafique who we have supported virtually during lockdown and through an innovative partnership project with another charity. There's also plenty to read in regards to how you can fundraise for us over the winter months and I have written a few words to shed some light on our new Strategic Plan for you too.

Thank you once again for your continued support. Keep in touch over the coming months, stay safe and have a peaceful festive season.

Dr Jill Tolfrey
Chief Executive

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Your chance to win a bucket load of prizes courtesy of our National Car Wash partner AutoGlym.

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NEWS

Shout! about it

Here's where you'll find out what we and our supporters have been working on over the last six 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



Virtual London Marathon glory

The coronavirus may have stopped London Marathoners from hitting the streets of the capital this year, but that didn't stop our determined runners. They took to their local pavements and back gardens to complete the 40th running of the famous marathon instead. Congratulations to all those who took part including Lee Poole, Katie Grant, Lee Colton, Lorna Rider, Karl Turill, Brian Stacey and Darren Beard.



HRH hosts Emergency Responder Senior Leader Board

Chief Executive, Dr Jill Tolfrey, joined His Royal Highness The Duke of Cambridge and other leaders from across the UK's emergency services for the inaugural meeting of the Emergency Responder Senior Leader Board in September.

The Board is the first of its kind, bringing leaders together on the issue of mental health. It will promote collaborative working across the nation's emergency services to ensure that all emergency responders receive the mental health support they need.



Big White Wall relaunches as Togetherall

Our partners at Big White Wall have relaunched with their newly-named service, Togetherall.

The only digital mental health service to be registered with the Care Quality Commission, this online platform is moderated 24/7 by trained practitioners and offers a safe, anonymous, judgement-free space to talk about your mental health concerns.

You can find out more and register for Togetherall via our website



Wimbledon Foundation grant success

Earlier this year we were delighted to receive confirmation of a successful application for grant funding from the Wimbledon Foundation.

Over three years we will receive a total of £110,000 from the Foundation, with money going towards our Living Well Groups and Wellness Coaches.

Speaking of the grant, Chief Executive Dr Jill Tolfrey said: "On behalf of everyone at The Fire Fighters Charity, I'd like to thank the Wimbledon Foundation for its incredible generosity. This donation will make a huge difference to members of the fire services community across the UK and we are grateful for the Foundation's continued support during this most challenging of years. Our thanks also go to London Fire Brigade who, through its stewardship support of The Championships, first introduced us to the Wimbledon Foundation and made this charitable partnership possible."

Elvis and Kresse exhibition announced

Sustainable luxury accessory manufacturer Elvis and Kresse donates 50% of profits from its fire hose range to us each year and will, over the course of the next year, be exhibiting one such bag as part of a new exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Running throughout most of next year, the exhibition on the history of the bag will also travel to museums around the world. Speaking of the opportunity, co-founder Kresse Wesling said: "There is our bag, next to some of the most iconic luxury brands in the world. It is a statement of where the future of luxury is going, how you can have something that is beautiful but has impact and purpose at its core."

Spirit of Fire Awards 2020

Special Recognition Award for Excellence in the Field of Mental Health

Presented by: HRH The Duke of Cambridge
Winner: Shilla Patel

Opening the Spirit of Fire 2020 Awards, His Royal Highness The Duke of Cambridge reflected on his visit to Harcombe House in September 2019 and congratulated all the evening's nominees, before proceeding to announce the winner of the Special Recognition Award for Excellence in the Field of Mental Health.

Shilla works as Inclusion Manager at London Fire Brigade and has been with the Brigade for 15 years. Alongside her busy day job, she launched the Brigade's first mental health support network, United Minds, in March 2019. Aiming to break down the stigma around mental health and help London Fire Brigade personnel to access support when they need it, United Minds has gone from strength to strength under Shilla's leadership, now boasting over 200 members.

Shilla has herself lived with anxiety and depression for most of her life, only opening up about her own battles after spending time with The Fire Fighters Charity. And it was after that experience that she set about doing what she could to help others, as well as fundraising for the Charity by running the

London Marathon. Today, Shilla continues to do all she can to help her colleagues, offering them a safe and friendly place to talk openly about whatever's on their minds.

In the words of The Duke: "Congratulations Shilla, your story is an inspiration and you thoroughly deserve this Special Recognition award. Well done."



HRH The Duke of Cambridge opened the **Spirit of Fire Awards 2020** as nominees from across the UK gathered around screens to watch a host of famous faces announce the winners across 12 categories. Broadcast as live to allow viewers to come together and watch the awards at the same time, here are the winners and nominees from a memorable evening of celebration.

Watch the whole show: www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/spirit



Supporter of the Year: Control

Presented by: Dame Katherine Grainger DBE



WINNER

Linda Coughlan, from Scottish Fire and Rescue Service: Born to a firefighter father, Linda has been raising money for the Charity since she was old enough to hold a collection tin. Today, having worked her way up the ranks at Strathclyde Fire Brigade Control, she is central to fundraising across her region, taking on numerous roles and dedicating untold hours to supporting the charity.

NOMINEES

Nikki Haxton-Jones, from Kent Fire and Rescue Service: Nikki's firefighter husband Danny tragically died on duty in London in 2017. Since then, Nikki has honoured his memory – and been an inspiration to her children and colleagues – by taking on numerous challenges and organising events to raise money for the Charity.

Paul Watts, from Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service: Paul has supported the Charity for over 20 years and today runs two tuck shops at Royal Berkshire HQ, dedicating his own time to purchasing stock, organising the shops, sorting out all the money and encouraging his colleagues to support the Charity.

Kat Frost, from Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service: Kat has taken part in a number of high profile fundraising events for us, including the London Marathon, in which she raised over £5,000. She was also an integral part of the team that produced The Fire Tones' charity single in 2018, as well as that which organised the first charity ball to be held in Shropshire in 2018.

Supporter of the Year: Non-Uniform

Presented by: Jason Watkins



WINNER

Emma Satchell from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service: Emma was one of the founding members of the Service's hugely successful fundraising committee, leading on the organisation of events across the Service. Now Chair of that committee she organises charity balls, Santa's' grottos, open days, bake sales, raffles and more, helping to raise almost £50,000 a year.

NOMINEES

Lynn Twite from Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service: Lynn has organised three major Land Rover rally events over recent years to raise over £14,000 for the Charity. Seeing how popular the 4x4s were amongst firefighters at the King's Lynn fire station where she works, she took it upon herself to organise the events in her spare time. As well as raising thousands, she has also raised the profile of the Charity across the whole service.

Helen Crick from Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service: As Car Wash Coordinator for the Service, Helen worked tirelessly to ensure that every single station in the service took part in the Charity event. She's also gone on to organise two Gun Dog Scurries – events for gun dog owners – that have raised well over £3,000 and now heads up Cheshire's highly effective fundraising committee.

Robyn Hall from Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service: Robyn is central to the Service's fundraising success, especially with the National Car Wash competition. She encourages stations to take part in a range of events and promotes the Charity widely through communications across the service and to the public.

Supporter of the Year: Retired

Presented by: Simon Day



WINNER

Michele Carter, formerly of Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service: Michele has been a Welfare Visitor for the past seven years and a fundraiser for the past 30. Often found running keep fit classes, she donates every penny she takes from her classes to the Charity, raising over £20,000 to date.

NOMINEES

Alan Gibson, formerly of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service: Alan has been a stalwart supporter and ambassador for the charity throughout his career and retirement, organising events, raising awareness and being an ever present at Charity meetings.

Joe Harkins, now retired from Strathclyde and Scottish Fire And Rescue Services: Joe has been an active fundraiser since his first sponsored walk in 1980 and taken on numerous roles including being a home visitor. His enthusiasm remains as strong today as it has ever been.

Violet Davidson, a former member of support staff for Scottish Fire and Rescue Service: Violet has been instrumental to the fundraising success seen in recent years across the Highlands, as well as across Aberdeenshire and the Moray Area. Dedicated and hard working, Violet can be found at the heart of all Charity activity in her area.

Young Supporter of the Year

Presented by: Greg Foot and Maddie Moate



WINNER

11-year old Michael Bottomley, from Leeds: After moving to a new secondary school, Michael befriended firefighters at the station next door. Taking them biscuits and getting to know them he began to fundraise and has since organised auctions and raffles, reaching out to local businesses to source prizes. He's also run a stall at his school's Christmas Fair and raised well over £2,000

NOMINEES

8-year-old Katie Keay, from Scotland: Katie's father is a volunteer for The Fire Fighters Charity and she has followed in his footsteps, giving up her time to support all kinds of fundraising events, in all kinds of ways, and always with bags of enthusiasm and energy.

17-year-old Abbie Wishart, from Durham Cadet Group: Abbie has been fundraising for the Charity for five years, helping at open days before she became a cadet at 14. Since then she has inspired other cadets to fundraise through a host of great events and has even completed the Junior Great North Run.

13-year old Tom Goodall, from West Yorkshire: Both Tom's parents work for West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service and over the past seven years he has given up his free time to design posters and flyers to support fundraising events and thrown his energies into car washes, bonfire nights, galas and car boot sales.

Corporate Supporter of the Year

Presented by: Andrew Lynch, Chair



WINNER



The Co-op, Danny Howarth and Shane Reeves: On-call firefighter Shane works for both Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service and The Co-op. First choosing The Fire Fighters Charity as Charity of The Year at his own store, Shane went on to work with Regional Operations Manager, Danny Howarth, to persuade 29 other managers to follow suit. Together the Co-op stores have since raised over £45,000 for the Charity.

NOMINEES

The Ivy Springfields, Manchester: Fire ravaged the third floor of the newly opened restaurant in January 2019, but Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service crews stopped it spreading to the lower floors, meaning it could open the next day. As a thank you The Ivy held a relaunch event in aid of the Charity and raised £47,000.

D Robinson & Co: The leading textile recycling partner for the Charity, D Robinson & Co have generated well over a staggering £4million, over 11 years, through the management of a nationwide consortium of recycling partners. That's a huge amount of the nation's unwanted clothing also saved from landfill.

Aspray: A national insurance loss assessor company, Aspray is familiar with the devastation that can be left following a fire. Keen to give something back to the firefighters who work in those situations, the company has agreed a two year partnership with the Charity and run a host of fundraising events, from firefighter experience days to raffles, auctions, car washes and marathons.

Special Recognition Award for Volunteer Fundraising By An Employee

Presented by: Rev Kate Bottley



WINNER

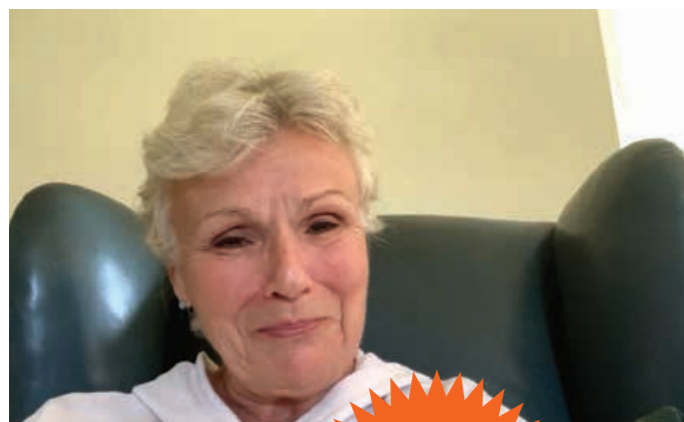
Kevin Biles, Sales Manager: Kevin has worked for the Charity for 12 and a half years. Since 2015 he has completed 20 challenges to raise money, all in full fire kit, including breathing apparatus. These have included climbing Ben Nevis and Snowdon, three half marathons, one full marathon and a 75-mile point-to-point run over three days.

Kevin did all this under the anonymous persona of 'The Flame,' his face hidden behind a mirrored visor. As well as raising almost £6,500, The Flame raised awareness of the Charity at every step, with numerous press articles bringing the charity to the attention of new audiences.

His colleagues across the Charity had no idea it was him taking on the challenges and raising the money, until he completed them all and revealed his identity. Described by his colleagues as selfless, modest and dedicated, with a wicked sense of humour and a penchant for dad jokes, Kevin is passionate about doing whatever he can – in his role and in his spare time – to support the fire services community.

Supporter of the Year: Dependant

Presented by: Dame Julie Walters DBE



WINNER



Louise Moody: Partner to Crew Commander Josh Matthews of Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Louise is a fundraising machine. She most recently climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in aid of the Charity and regularly runs raffles, quizzes and tombolas – as well as taking on physical challenges – to raise thousands of pounds.

NOMINEES

Laura Moore: Married to Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service Crew Manager, Ian Moore, Laura helps to run a charity stall at station open days, sourcing children's toys and selling ice creams, she raises huge sums and dedicates her weekends to raising money and awareness of the Charity.

Shona Mellon: Partner to Dave Shaw, a firefighter with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, and mother to Isla and Oliver, Shona cares 24-hours a day for the couple's six-year-old daughter, who has complex medical needs. She has also raised thousands of pounds and works tirelessly to promote the Charity.

Julie Munro: Married to a London Fire Brigade Group Manager, Julie wanted to raise money to support all those firefighters – like her husband – who attended the Grenfell Tower Fire. She ran the London Marathon in 2018 and fundraised almost £10,000 by organising a sell-out charity ball.



Shout!

Supporter of the Year: Public

Presented by: Susanna Reid



WINNER



Emma Hughes from Greater Manchester: Emma, whose father was a firefighter, has been a tireless supporter of the Charity, raising money and promoting its work by running a community group for newly retired fire and rescue service personnel.

NOMINEES

Jo-Anne Stovell, from Derbyshire: Jo-Anne is an incredible ambassador who has pledged to leave half her estate to the Charity as a thank you for the support it gave to her father Bob following a motorbike crash that tragically killed her mother.

Carol Lord from Greater Manchester: Carol passionately promotes positive mental health amongst the fire community and who swam the 22 mile length of Loch Lomond in 19 hours and 32 minutes to raise almost £3,000

Mary Naugher-Kennedy from Northern Ireland: Mary tragically lost her 18-year-old son Shane following a road traffic collision in 2009. However, she has never forgotten the actions of firefighters at the scene that day and last year organised a 5km fun run event that raised £8,665 for The Fire Fighters Charity.

Beneficiary of Courage

Presented by: Clare Balding OBE



WINNER



Bob Stovell, formerly of Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service: Eleven years ago Bob was involved in a catastrophic motorbike accident that killed his wife and left him fighting for his own life. Literally pieced back together by surgeons he has defied the odds to walk again and has been supported regularly by the Charity in his extraordinary rehabilitation.

NOMINEES

Paul Weller, formerly of West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service: Paul had to be talked down from Beachy Head by police after his life, as he saw it, had hit rock bottom. However, he bravely sought psychological support from the Charity and today he is a dedicated fundraiser and advocate, encouraging others to recognise their own mental health needs.

Alistair McNab from Scottish Fire And Rescue: Suffering with chronic pain, Alistair's mental health declined to the point where he tried to take his own life. After also becoming homeless, he reached out for help and today, with the Charity's support, he has turned his life around, moving into a new home last year.

Supporter of the Year: Team

Presented by: Adam Hills



WINNER



The Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Charity Committee: In just a few years, the committee has – through sheer hard work and dedication – transformed Merseyside into one of the most effective and well run fundraising and awareness raising services in the UK.

NOMINEES

Team Noble, Scottish Fire and Rescue: Otherwise known as Kris and Blair Elliot, the brothers took part in an epic 3,000 mile, 55-day endurance rowing race across the Atlantic Ocean to raise money for the Charity in memory of Kris's colleague at Scottish Fire and Rescue, John Noble.

A21Run4Grenfell, Paddington Red Watch, London Fire Brigade: The 2018 London Marathon was one of the hottest on record but Paddington Red Watch ran it in full kit, including breathing apparatus, to raise over £52,000 to say thanks to the Charity for the support shown to their colleagues in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire.

Littleport Fire Station in Cambridgeshire: which has been fundraising for the Charity for the last 40 years, with crews going to extraordinary lengths, supported by the local community, to organise numerous events each year. A feat all the more remarkable, given that Littleport is a retained station.

Supporter of the Year: Fire and Rescue Service

Presented by: Brian May CBE



WINNER



Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service which, led by a brilliant fundraising committee, has an enviable calendar of fundraising events each year, from bonfire nights to new recruit challenges and Christmas balls. The team at Lancashire has truly taken event fundraising to a new level.

NOMINEES

London Fire Brigade, which has shown fantastic support to The Fire Fighters Charity through the establishment of a fundraising committee, the introduction of the car wash campaign and numerous events, fully supported from the top down by former Commissioner Dany Cotton and new Commissioner Andy Roe.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, which has spectacularly turned around its fundraising fortunes in recent years, today consistently beating its own targets in all fundraising areas and uniting employees across all areas of the service to raise money and awareness through innovative means.

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service which, over the past two years, has seen its fundraising income come on leaps and bounds, thanks mainly to the formation of a dynamic fundraising committee which works tirelessly to raise awareness of the Charity and explore new fundraising opportunities.

Supporter of the Year: Firefighter

Presented by: Les Ferdinand MBE



WINNER

Chris Birdsell-Jones from Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service, who masterminded The Fire Tones' bid for Christmas No.1 in 2018 with their version of *Do They Know It's Christmas?* Tirelessly promoting the single on TV and Radio, Chris helped raise thousands and increased awareness of the Charity amongst the public.

NOMINEES

David Millward MBE from Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, who has raised thousands for the charity within a small community in the West Highlands of Scotland after receiving support himself following a spinal injury 18 years ago.

Sam Pick from Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service, who has run car washes, long distance cycle events, Car boot sales, landrover events and countless others over 20 years, raising huge sums in the process and helping many to access support from the charity.

Robbie Sturrock from Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, who has led fundraising efforts at Peterhead Fire Station for 20 years, organising countless successful challenge events, car washes, summer fetes and Santa sleighs, as well as driving their recycling efforts and bringing the local community together.

Lifetime Achievement

Presented by: Michael Sheen OBE



WINNER
Harry Binyon

Harry was a firefighter for 30 years, throughout which time he was always involved in supporting The Fire Fighters Charity. He retired 15 years ago, but never let up on his fundraising work for the Charity and, in fact, over that time, has been central to raising around £200,000.

He knows a fair bit about fireworks, helping to arrange countless Bonfire Night events, raising money and helping to keep his local community safe in the process. He has helped countless colleagues and peers to access support from the Charity, and has inspired just as many to also get involved in fundraising. He even raised over £1,800 for the Charity at his own 70th birthday party!



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SHM/1

WINTER FUND-ERLAND

We have been overwhelmed by your incredible Fire Family Challenge fundraising achievements. Here are some socially-distanced ideas for you to consider if you'd like to take on another challenge over the winter months. Remember to follow your local restrictions, stay safe and have fun!

Fire Family Santa Dash

Dust off your Santa hat or dress up in your favourite reindeer onesie and get running, jogging, walking or dancing as part of our Santa Dash event.

Dash around your local neighbourhood, along the beach, on a treadmill, around the drill yard, or even in your back garden.

Entry fees:

- Adults – £13 with the optional choice of 'I'm feeling Festively Generous' – round me up to £20
- Under 16 – £5 (Under 5s free)
- Pound for a Pooch – £1

By taking part and sharing your photos on social media, you'll also be entered into our competition to win one of our cuddly Blaze Bear toys. Use #FireFamilySantaDash or tag us in your posts.

Find out more on how to get involved:
www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/christmas



Out with the Old

Instead of running our annual competition, next year we're asking all stations to work together as one fire community in a combined effort to support our Charity. Find your nearest bank at: www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/recycling and encourage friends, family and colleagues to join you.

Show the love

When Valentine's Day comes around in February, Covid-19 might force you to postpone a romantic meal, so why not show your love to us by donating instead? Such a kind gesture will surely impress your valentine!

Things to remember

- Check social-distancing restrictions in your local area before you start any fundraising events.
- Whatever you're doing, make sure you make it clear where donors' funds are going through clear signs or posters. If there is a cost element, please make it clear that all profits will go towards The Fire Fighters Charity.
- We have an 'in aid of' logo that should be used on all promotional materials. Find it on our website by searching 'posters'.
- Any food being sold or offered as prizes needs to have relevant allergy information clearly stated.
- Ask people to complete a GiftAid form so we can claim an additional 25% on their donations.
- Don't forget to apply for event insurance. You can find out more information about our Public Liability Insurance and apply on our website.

Whether you plan a physical, musical, quizzical or creative activity this winter, we are so grateful for your support. Register your winter Fire Family Challenge here: www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/firefamilychallenge



A BALD DECISION

How one man, and 16 friends, turned a personal negative into a fire family positive.

It's one thing to top the league for the highest amount earned by an individual so far during The Fire Family Challenge. It's another thing to do so while in the middle of treatment for aggressive bone marrow cancer. But for Scottish firefighter David Kerr, he says it's all about having a positive mental attitude.

David has worked at North Berwick Fire Station for 27 years, starting his career there in March 1993. He developed a sore back last autumn and in February went to his doctor with a suspected kidney infection, only to be delivered a devastating blow.

"He said to bring someone with me, which is never a good sign," says David. "He started talking about radiation and chemotherapy, using these words we'd never heard of, so we had to actually ask what it was I'd got. When he explained it was cancer, I nearly fell off the chair."

David was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a type of bone marrow cancer that can affect several areas of the body. For the apparently healthy 59-year-old, the news that his condition was incurable came as a shock. Especially for his wife, Karen.

"We were just plodding along, leading an active life doing what we wanted to do," she says. "Then suddenly everything is different, everything we wanted to do is just halted."

Scans revealed a tumour on David's spine, which could rupture his spinal cord if left untouched. So within a matter of days of being given this life-changing news, he began a course of radiation and then chemotherapy.

"It all happened so quickly, we had no time to prepare or to take a breath," says Karen. "The whole of March just passed by in a complete daze. I didn't handle the diagnosis particularly well and both of us went off work sick. We were worried about money; I'm a self-employed carer and a part-time pub cleaner, but everything just stopped."

What little money they were receiving from statutory sick pay was going on fuel to drive David the 30 miles to hospital each day.

"We were desperate and didn't know where to turn," says Karen. "Every organisation I turned to said they couldn't help, or they'd have endless paperwork that we didn't know how to complete."

Meanwhile, the rest of the world was adjusting to a life in lockdown due to the pandemic. For David and Karen this meant no visits with friends or family could happen and they were suddenly on their own, left to fight the disease without support.

Until, that is, help came in an unexpected form.

"Someone suggested I contact The Fire Fighters Charity," says Karen. "I rang them and was put through to the Welfare team. This lovely angel called Jason came on the phone and said, 'what do you need and how can we help?' Ten minutes and a quick form later, he had arranged for us to receive £50 each week to put towards petrol. Jason filled the void of family during COVID; he was a constantly reassuring voice on the end of the phone. Someone was there to help us, it just meant so much."

With financial worries temporarily taken care of, the couple faced their next hurdle. After two and a half months of undergoing chemotherapy, David's hands and feet started swelling and going numb. The chemo had caused peripheral neuropathy to occur in his body's extremities, and he would have to stop treatment immediately.

"The good news was that although I had to end chemo three and a half months early, they found it had got the myeloma cells under control and I was actually in remission," says David. "Now I just need one last op, to get the neuropathy under control and things will be all good."

For someone who has been given such huge news, and gone through aggressive

treatment, David has remained decidedly upbeat throughout the year.

"None of this has ever got me down," he says. "I've been determined to be cheerful and happy, and keep Karen going. There's light at the end of the tunnel now, we're nearly there."

At the time we speak to the couple, David is a few days away from a three-week hospital stay which will involve major surgery. During a stem cell transplant, doctors will collect and freeze his stem cells, then give him a huge dose of chemotherapy to rid his body of any remaining myelopathy. Such a large dose will mean David would lose all of his hair overnight.

"That upset me because I was worried he would suddenly look sick," says Karen. "I felt like him losing his hair would be the start of something we wouldn't come back from."



It was this news that planted the seed for what would go on to become a huge fundraising venture, turning a negative very much into a positive.

"I decided I would shave it all off beforehand, to give Karen time to adjust," says David. "I was going to be bald when I came out anyway, so I figured I might as well be bald when I went in. And I could get people to sponsor me, so we could raise money for The Fire Fighters Charity as a way of saying thank you."

David shared his intentions with his father-in-law who, inspired, decided to join him. So too did his brother-in-law, best man, son and fire colleagues. Before he knew it, 17 people were involved.

David smashed his initial fundraising target of £500 within a matter of days, doing the same thing when he upped it to £1,000. Deciding to just leave it to run and see what happens, the couple had raised £3,600 at the time we went to press.

"One of the best things about it was that organising it served as a distraction from everything that was going on," says Karen. "It made all the doctors appointments bearable and gave us a sense of purpose, building up to this day. We got everyone T-shirts, organised balloons and medals. Some of our friends even bought us a remote-control fire engine so we could safely give everyone their medals! Yes it was all to raise money for the Charity, but it also masked the reason why we had to do it in the first place."

On a Wednesday evening in August, 17 men and women lined up (socially distanced) at North Berwick Fire Station to brave the shave in David's honour.

"To say it was emotional is an understatement," says Karen. "I was in floods of tears by the end of the night. Here was Dave, who hadn't been out of the house for months, walking around, laughing and joking with all these people who had turned out to support him. I looked at him and I

"I was in floods of tears by the end of the night. Here was Dave, who hadn't been out of the house for months, walking around, laughing and joking with all these people who had turned out to support him."



thought, this is all for you, look at the love and support you've got from everyone. Who wouldn't get emotional? And it turns out he really suits a shaved head, it's taken years off him!

"I know I'm biased because I'm his wife, but I just think to do what David has done for Charity while going through such intensive treatment is just amazing. We're not two years down the line, reflecting on the support we received and wanting to do something to say thanks. He's still in the middle of cancer treatment. Some people couldn't muster the energy to go shopping, far less pull off this huge fundraiser."

As they face the preparation for his surgery and the uncertainty of the years that will follow, David and Karen are just taking each day as it comes.

"Myeloma is incurable, it will never go away altogether," says David. "The stem cells they removed will still have traces of the cancer. But doctors are trying to get it to under a certain level to class it as being dormant, so it's not getting any worse or putting my life at risk in the short term. Having the transplant means I should hopefully be given another five or ten years before I have to resume treatment."

"I just can't tell you how much the support we've received from the Charity has meant to us," says Karen. "Through all these horrible things, the Charity was the one solid thing in our lives. It wasn't even really about the money (although obviously that helped), it was just knowing there was somebody there. I'd phone Jason because my head was turning in all directions, not knowing what to do, and half an hour later we'd have a plan in place and I'd just feel calm. How do you find the words to thank someone for being there through the worst months of your life?"

GET IN TOUCH

If you or your family is trying to adjust to a life-changing health diagnosis and you don't know how to cope, get in touch with us. Our Welfare Caseworkers are waiting to support, signpost and empower you to help you navigate whatever life has put in your path.

0800 389 8820
www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/support



OUR FIRE FAMILY CHALLENGE SUPERSTARS

The Fire Family Challenge asks you to test your physical, mental or creative strength and raise vital funds to help us provide support to the UK's fire services community through these challenging times.

Well, you've certainly risen to the challenge! The responses we've received so far have been incredible. From tyre flips and team static cycle rides, to virtual quizzes and even an impressive 24-hour crochet marathon! Your amazing efforts have helped us to raise over £200,000 so far.

So, we would like to say a massive thank you to anyone who has taken on a challenge or donated to support one being undertaken by a friend or loved one. Here are some of the epic challenges that have taken place over the last six months.



Aspray hosted a 'Kick Start the Weekend' live quiz on YouTube in spring and raised £520. They also took part in our virtual 999 Car Wash Challenge throughout Autumn to raise more cash for us.



Firefighters at Hounslow Fire Station took part in a treadmill relay for 24 hours a day, over seven days, raising over £10,000 for us and NHS charities.



Adam Taleb raised £910 by hosting a variety of virtual themed quiz nights including *Harry Potter*, *Peaky Blinders* and *Top Gun*.



Dave Hunt braved the shave in more ways than one. He shaved off half his beard and half his hair and raised a fantastic £1,725.



Firefighters of Eastbourne Fire Station completed 24 hours on a treadmill for eight consecutive days, raising an incredible £3,442.

Samuel Cullis completed a 15-mile triathlon at Evesham Fire Station, raising over £700. But he didn't stop there. He also completed a 70-mile bike ride to raise further funds in September.



Well done to the Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service new Recruits for raising an incredible £1,323 by completing a team run of 9.99km, carrying a 30kg dummy casualty.



To demonstrate the wonderful diversity of challenges, Waltham Abbey resident Nicola Matthews took inspiration from a celebrity and raised over £630 by pushing a wheelie bin for 3.5 miles from her home to Waltham Abbey Fire Station and back again wearing an evening dress, heels and rubber gloves!

London Fire Brigade Training and Professional Development Department held an online bingo event and raised a fantastic £210.

UK FIRE CADETS EPIC FUNDRAISING CHALLENGE

In May this year all Fire Cadet branches across the UK were encouraged to take part in a National 999 Challenge to raise money for us, in their own unique take on our Fire Family Challenge.

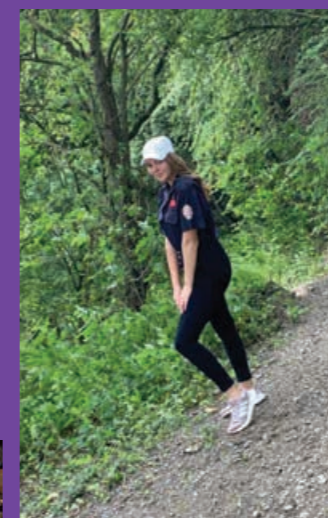
The UK Fire Cadet 999 Challenge aimed to improve the mental wellbeing of young people as well as reducing their risk of isolation during lockdown, by inviting brigades to create their own team fundraising challenge.

There was only one rule; the fire cadets had to use the theme of 9-9-9 in any combination or format they wished.

Here are some of the fantastic challenges that were completed by the UK Fire Cadets, which raised over £8,000 for us.



South Wales Fire Cadets did an amazing job with their fundraising. Well done to Saul, Megan, Callum and to everyone who took part.



Amy Garrod, a Fire Cadet from Marley Park Fire Station in Sunderland, completed 9 walks over 9km, over 9 days following 9 different routes around her local area of Washington.



Luke Fuller from DFRS Ascot Drive Fire Cadets cycled 999 miles in his garage in nine days.



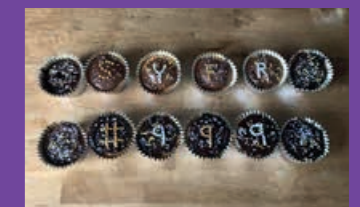
LFB Fire Cadets Tom, Bethany and Chloe completed a 9 lap sponsored walk around a cathedral ruin in Bexley.



Chloe and Isabelle from Bromley Fire Cadets held a socially-distanced neighbourhood bake sale with a fire service theme.



Keeping it in the emergency services family, St John's Ambulance Cadet Olivia also took up our call to arms and ran 9km with her sister to raise funds for us.



Phoebe from Cudworth walked 17 miles in one incredibly hot day for her challenge with South Yorkshire Fire Cadets. And Paige from Dearne made some delicious cupcakes with 'SYFR 999 challenge' applied in icing. Some cadets even persuaded members of their families to get involved too.



Merseyside Fire Cadets took on a number of great challenges. Lewis made cakes for his mum's colleagues to enjoy at their Police Control Room, while Toby cycled 99 miles over 9 days and Jack did 99 press ups. Well done, guys!

FINDING MYSELF

London Fire Brigade firefighter, Zak Shafique, reflects on the support he has received for his brain injury during lockdown and how it has set him on the road to recovery.

Zak Shafique says his life went from 'hero to zero' in a matter of seconds on an ordinary Friday evening in March 2019. The then-26-year-old firefighter was driving home from a day shift at Barnet Fire Station when he came to a halt behind a broken-down vehicle on London's North Circular Road.

"I was waiting there for about 10 seconds before someone drove into the back of me," he says. "I'd had my foot hovering over the brake and the impact caused me to slam it down, which thrust me forwards. They were only doing maybe 10-15mph, but it made me twist my neck as I was thrust backward and forwards. I had no idea at the time just how much damage had been done, or that I had suffered a mildly traumatic brain injury."

Zak had only joined London Fire Brigade 15 months earlier, after deciding he wanted to do something to challenge himself: "I'd been a personal trainer, but I had that itch to want to do more with my life in a meaningful way. I really liked it and the shift pattern meant I could fit in around my semi-professional swimming career. To me, being a firefighter was the perfect medium of giving back to society, while also creating a better version of yourself."

After the accident, it was not immediately apparent that something was seriously wrong.

"I thought I had mild whiplash as I was getting really bad headaches and felt tired all the time," says Zak. "I was signed off work sick for six weeks and doctors gave me a lot of drugs for the pain. I didn't feel too cognitively off, it felt a bit like I was drunk as my head was floating and I felt a bit dizzy. But I still didn't think anything major was going on; as a firefighter, you attend road traffic accidents that are a total wipe out, and mine was just a bump from behind, so I thought things couldn't be that bad."

Zak's quality of life began to decline, with headaches exhausting him to the point where he couldn't get out of bed for days on end and his 56-year-old dad had to carry him up the stairs.

Barnet Fire Station shares its premises with an ambulance station, and Zak mentioned just how ill he felt to paramedic friends, who insisted he go to hospital and ask for a brain scan. However, scans proved inconclusive and were unable to pinpoint any reason for Zak's symptoms.

"It was frustrating and scary, because no one could tell me what was wrong," he says. "I tried paying to go private, but over the

few months things got progressively worse. A busy room would make me physically sick and the effort of socialising would wipe me out for days. I couldn't watch TV because of the light sensitivity, I couldn't read because my eyes wouldn't focus, I couldn't do colouring because the scratching gave me headaches. So I started doing paint-by-numbers, gardening and even baking.

"I didn't know it then, but my autonomic nervous system had been damaged, so my brain was getting confused as it wasn't getting enough oxygen. The autonomic system controls all the things in your body you don't think about, like dilating your pupils in light or controlling your blood pressure, so my heart rate would plummet from 80 to 30 in a matter of seconds. It was like that for about nine months."

During his passing out week, Zak had heard about The Fire Fighters Charity and the services on offer and he kept the leaflet he'd been given: "I just thought you never know what's going to happen and it was nice to know the fire service had a Charity that would be there just in case. If I never needed it, I would do my bit to fundraise and donate each month. I had no idea how soon into my career I would be contacting The Fire Fighters Charity."

Seven months after his accident, Zak was offered a week of rest and relaxation at Marine Court, our centre in West Sussex. While still too sick to take part in the full programme of activities, the team was still keen that Zak benefit from his stay and suggested some exercises he could do to strengthen his neck muscles and help improve things. Unfortunately, even this period of relaxation proved too much.

"My dad had to come get me after a few days, because I just had no energy. I couldn't do anything, couldn't go for a walk, couldn't hold a conversation with anyone. It was all I could do to sit up straight. My brain was using all its energy trying to get better, I just had nothing else to spare."

Given a counsellor through London Fire Brigade to help him come to terms with things, Zak struggled to adjust to this sudden change to his life, especially its impact on his support network: "No one prepares you for

the emotional toll of having to manage other people's reactions to an accident. You're just about coping with your own reaction, but then you also have to manage the impact on your family, partner, friends and colleagues."

He says before his accident, he never considered what an impact having a disability could have on his daily life.

"I was definitely guilty of being in the ableism category and was someone who took my health for granted," he says. "You never think the last time you do something is going to be the last. But then you wake up one morning and have to adjust to the fact you might never get better. I went from feeling like a hero in the fire brigade to feeling like someone with zero prospects. People are sympathetic to begin with of course, but as months passed, everyone just moved on with their lives when you couldn't meet the expectation to be who you were before. It's incredibly lonely, when you're sick and at home while everyone else is out living as they always have done. I remember the moment I had to pack up my locker at work and send off my firefighting gear being a particularly low point, realising just how much I was saying goodbye to."

Zak says the enforcement of a global lockdown to try and contain the spread of the coronavirus actually helped with his healing, both physically and mentally.

"Before lockdown, I was so desperate to make progress that if I ever felt a little bit better, I'd go for a swim or go see friends and then would end up feeling even worse," he says. "But when lockdown came along, there wasn't any demand to go to social events and suddenly everyone was living like I had done for the last 12 months, hardly going out and taking things at a much slower pace. Plus I had more company during the days as my girlfriend was working from home, which really helped my mood. And I found the more my mood improved, the more I was able to accept things a bit more, even if progress was not as fast as I'd have liked."

One thing that has helped Zak's progress during lockdown was the constant communication he was in with Tom, one of our practitioners from Marine Court.

"It was nice to know the fire service has a Charity that would be there just in case. If I never needed it, I would do my bit to fundraise and donate each month. I had no idea how soon into my career I would be contacting The Fire Fighters Charity."



Tom regularly held video calls with Zak to check in on his progress, using our remote consultation technology, Attend Anywhere.

"Tom was brilliant, coming up with all these different exercises I could do to strengthen my neck muscles, so it no longer hurts 24-7 like it used to," says Zak. "Also, I was really having trouble sleeping, because I'd be in pain if I lay on my side and these strengthening techniques have really helped. Tom would make my exercises slightly harder each time and we've come up with a longer-term plan to help me build up my fitness and stamina, which will hopefully include a visit in person in the future. So I've learned to appreciate that an extra 10 seconds of standing up compared to the week before is still progress.

"I'm still very much in the middle of my recovery and the nature of a brain injury is that it's an ever-evolving thing. But I've managed to meet people who have gone through similar experiences, which has really helped."

Zak, who follows us on social media, saw an article we published about our partnership with outdoor activities charity Climbing Out

and an opportunity for our beneficiaries to join them. The charity was holding a special week in Cumbria for members of the emergency services community, to help them to build resilience in the face of adversity.

"I saw your advert and I just thought, I need to do this," he says. "For me, taking part in Climbing Out was a test to see if people could accept this new me and judge me for what I am now, rather than the judgement and comparison I kept making to who I was before my accident."

At the end of the summer, Zak, who had barely left his London home in 16 months, headed to Cumbria to join other emergency services personnel on the course. Combining outdoor activity with mind management and personal development coaching, the week was aimed at helping police, fire, ambulance and prison services personnel dealing with different forms of trauma.

The charity operates out of two locations in the UK: the Lake District and North Wales. It runs a variety of outdoor activities, including rock climbing, kayaking, gully scrambling and hill walking, all of which are adapted to

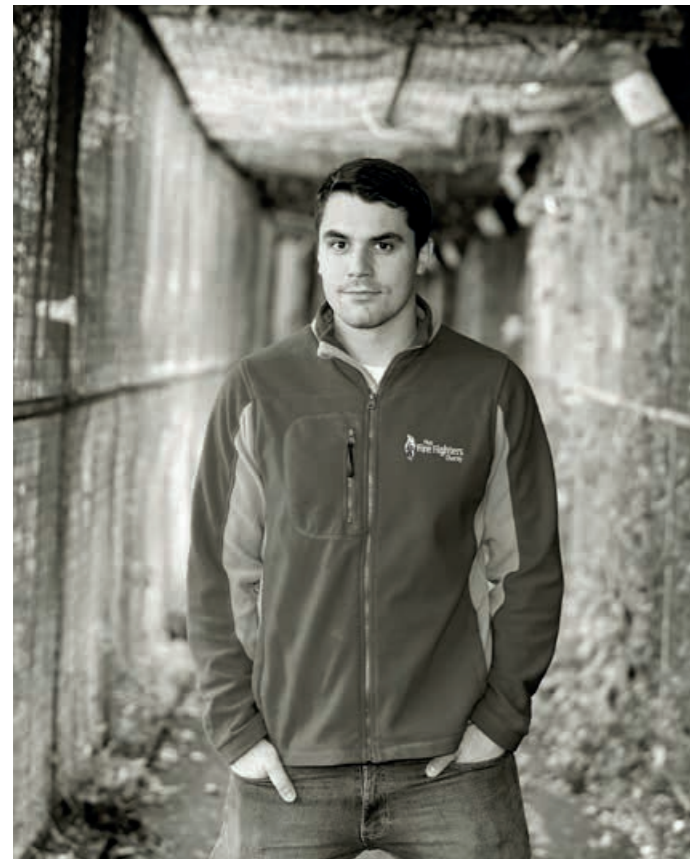
meet the needs and capabilities of groups, including those with higher levels of physical challenges as well as wheelchair uses.

For Zak, the week was utterly transformative.

“As soon as you arrived, you just felt so safe,” he says. “There aren’t many places where you feel safe to be vulnerable, especially as a firefighter, whose tough exteriors are not always true of what’s going on underneath. But everyone there was so lovely and understanding, completely accepting of your limits. During a hike, when my vision started to go, instead of fussing or panicking, they just let me have a lie down while everyone stopped for lunch. And then later, during a kayaking session, knowing how comfortable I feel in the water, they paired me with someone who couldn’t swim. For the first time in a long time,



“Sometimes you have to admit you need help, and I was willing to be open and challenged. I found myself placed on this pedestal of confidence and self-belief, which was so high I could suddenly see the road ahead of me, giving me faith in my long-term recovery.”



I felt helpful again. We spent five hours on the water and I was so impressed with myself, because I just didn’t think I had that in me anymore. It was like seeing flashes of myself heading in the right direction.”

The Fire Fighters Charity partnership with Climbing Out is just one example of how we look to work with third parties to support our own service delivery. Such complementary opportunities allow us to offer beneficiaries, like Zak, the chance to put into practice some of the things we may have discussed or worked through in regards to their individual recovery programmes.

Working with partners also allows us to expand the variety of ways we can support people and to utilise complementary expertise from a broad range of health and wellbeing professionals.

As Zak reflects, the impact of this joined up approach to supporting individuals can pay dividends: “The support I’ve received from The Fire Fighters Charity and Climbing Out has helped me to acknowledge and accept things, but also to add some actions for myself,” he explains. “Sometimes you have to admit you need help. I think I spent the first year trying to find new ways to do everything for myself, but you don’t need to be your own case manager all the time.

“I was willing to be open and challenged. I found myself placed on this pedestal of confidence and self-belief, which was so high I could suddenly see the road ahead of me, giving me faith in my long-term recovery.

“I don’t know what the future holds for my career with the fire service and I may have to be medically retired. But I have felt so supported by organisations I could only have accessed and continue to access because of my time in the service, even if it has been cut short. Tom said something to me that has really stayed with me. He said, ‘even if you don’t manage to get back on the run, we can still help you get a better quality of life.’ It’s nice to feel that people still believe in you, even if you can’t be the person you thought you were going to be.

“I’ve been donating to The Fire Fighters Charity since the word go, because I just thought you never know what might happen. And I’ve continued to donate throughout this period, because I think it’s such a worthwhile cause and resource available to the fire community. The support I’ve received hasn’t helped me find the old me, or even a new me. But it’s helped me find the most ‘me’ version of myself for who I am right now. And that means everything.”

If you’re struggling to adjust to a life-changing injury or health diagnosis, get in touch with us. Call our Support Line on **0800 389 8820** or make an enquiry online at **www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/support**.



Keep calm and wash cars

Crews adapt in order to continue our National Car Wash fundraising campaign

This year has been difficult for those fire stations and crews who would usually host car washes for us. But where possible, stations have been hosting socially-distanced events that still meet restrictions. Here’s how you can too.

Making it work

Like everything else in our lives right now, fire station car washes have had to adapt in order to keep everyone safe as they raise much-needed funds to support the fire services community. Supporters have stayed in their cars, crews have worn masks and cashless donations were promoted so people could give online via our website or JustGiving, or donate via text message.

As geographical location and available resources have varied across the country, not all fire stations have been able to host their washes. Therefore we temporarily parked our National Car Wash competition until March 2021, instead focusing on the whole country coming together as one fire family to raise money in any way they could. For example, at Liskeard Fire Station, car wash efforts were combined with a team triathlon, with online promotion also adding to their fundraising totals.

Despite things looking different, our fantastic National Car Wash sponsor, Autoglym, continued to support us, providing teams with car shampoo, and even kindly donating a prize for the *Shout!* competition, which you can enter on page 50.



Virtual Challenge

If a public car wash wasn’t possible some crews have been taking part in our Virtual 999 Car Wash Challenge. The challenge was to record your team washing a car in under 9 minutes, donate £9 and then nominate 9 others to take on the challenge.



A national effort

Our interim Regional Fundraising Team Manager Kerry James says she is ‘so thankful’ for the support stations are showing in organising fundraising activity during such a challenging year.

“We’re so thankful to all fire stations who have been able to host a car wash to raise money for us while keeping crews and supporters safe,” she says. “It’s been amazing to see all the local communities donating to support their local fire stations both in person and online. We’re so grateful that despite all the obstacles this year, people are still doing what they can to support our fire and rescue community.

“This year from April – October our National Car Wash raised over £39,000. To put this into perspective, in years we have raised approximately £100,000 during the same months. This shows why it’s so important for us to increase the money we raise from other sources such as the Fire Family Challenge and our Appeal for monthly donations.”

Stocking fillers yule love

Stockings are often a highlight for many kids at Christmas (and big kids, too!) Here's a selection of fun stocking filler ideas for all the family this year, for £8 and under:

1. Travel mug from **£5.95**
2. FFC mug **£5.00**
3. Blaze Bear **£8.00**
4. Nee-naw mug **£4.00**
5. Water bottle **£5.99**
6. Try me fire engines **£6.50**
7. Lapel pin **£1.00**
8. Torch keyrings – Blaze Bear or fire engine **£1.50**
9. Thin Red Line lapel pin **£2.00**
10. Thin Red line badge **£1.50**
11. Colour pencils **£1.50**
12. Blaze Bear fun book **£2.00**



Treat someone special

Why not treat yourself or your loved ones this winter to a gift from our luxury collection?

Elvis & Kresse

50% of profits from the sales of Elvis and Kresse's fire hose range is donated to The Fire Fighters Charity.

1. Wallet from **£75**
2. Wash bags from **£62.50**
3. Purse **£110**
4. Keyring from **£15.75**
5. Handbags from **£180**



Engraved Crystalware and Tankards

1. Beer tankard from **£31.50**
2. Pair of engraved glasses **£60.30**
3. Engraved hip flask **£31.86**



William Wood Watches

The Fire Fighters Charity will receive a donation from for each William Wood Watch that is sold from our online shop.

Chivalrous collection **£345**

Valiant collection from **£695**



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

All orders must be placed by 16 December 2020 to be guaranteed dispatch before Christmas.

Watch out for our Winter Sale

Find yourself a bargain this New Year in our fantastic Winter Sale. Look out for updates on our website and social media.



Head of the House

By Linda Dunscombe, Head Housekeeper, Harcombe House

I've been working at Harcombe House since October 1993. My mum actually got me a job, as she worked here part time as a cleaner herself, as did my Dad who was a gardener here three days a week. I did six hours a week to begin with, which fitted in with caring for my son, Dean, who was four at the time. Then, as people left, I took on more hours and did more cleaning, eventually becoming full time. And now, nearly 30 years later, I'm Head Housekeeper.

After my parents passed away, I stayed on because I've always loved working here so much. I never thought I would be here so long, but time goes by so quick. I celebrated my 40th birthday here not long after my Dad died and some of the beneficiaries threw me a mini party in one of the bungalows, getting me there under the ruse of an ant infestation! I've celebrated my 50th here and hopefully I'll be celebrating my 60th here next year as well.

I take pride in the work of our housekeepers as we've always maintained a very high standard of cleanliness and our work is integral to the beneficiaries' experience. Here at Harcombe, we're all one team; the chefs, Reception, Housekeeping, Estates and Facilities teams, the physios and psychological therapists, we can't do what we

do without everyone playing their parts. And they couldn't do their work without us doing ours.

We have our ups and downs like any team, but everyone gets on and mucks in to help each other out when needed. If anyone needs a hand, no matter what it is, someone will help out, it's one of the nicest things about working here.

I love working at Harcombe House. How many people can come to work and say they have the glorious views that we do? Plus the people you meet are just fantastic. Interacting with beneficiaries is my favourite part of the job. You don't know their cases or reasons for coming to us and you never pry, but people open up and share their stories with you, which is so special. Most of the time, you

know you're never going to see someone again, but fire personnel are like one big family wherever you go.

It's great seeing how the Charity's services have developed over the years, especially with providing more mental health support. I really agree with making it more visible, people don't realise just how much the fire community needs that help.

You get to know people while they're with you, sometimes

they come back and sometimes they don't. You sort of hope they don't, because it means they don't have need of us anymore. But whoever they are, there's no hierarchy, and you do everything you can to make sure they have everything they need for their stay. Whether it's clean towels, an adjustment to their room, or just an extra lot of tea or coffee, if it needs doing and I can help, I will do it, that's just me. I don't like to see anyone struggling, so if I can help them, I will always do my best.

"It's great seeing how the Charity's services have developed over the years, especially with providing more mental health support. I really agree with making it more visible, people don't realise just how much the fire community needs that help."



Mexican Magic

David Lancaster, our Head Chef at Jubilee House, shares one of his favourite healthy recipes.



Sweet potato and black bean quesadillas

This great dish is not only fresh and delicious but it is also something that is very easy to prepare and can be made for big parties or just for yourself. It is always better fresh, but if necessary, the mixture can be made in advance and kept in the fridge or even the freezer for when you need something super quick.

This recipe is balanced with plenty of vitamins and minerals. The beans provide a good sustainable source of protein and the sweet potato is a low GI food giving you longer lasting energy.

To make your own (enough for six servings) here's all that you'll need:

Ingredients

- 6 soft flour tortilla wraps
- 3 small sweet potatoes
- 1 tin of black beans
- 1 red onion
- 1 green pepper
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 tsp chilli powder
- 1 tbsp smoked paprika
- 1 tbsp ground cumin
- 1 handful frozen sweetcorn
- 1/2 tsp salt
- Fresh coriander
- 100g cheddar cheese
- 1 lime wedge, plus guacamole and/or soured cream to serve

Method

1. Dice the onions, garlic and green pepper. Peel and grate the sweet potato.
2. Sweat off the onion, garlic and peppers until soft.
3. Add the grated potato, salt, chilli, cumin, paprika and salt and cook until the potato starts to soften.
4. Drain the black beans and add to the mixture along with the sweetcorn and as much coriander as you like.
5. Add a little oil to a frying pan and place a tortilla flat on the bottom of the pan, add enough of the potato mixture to cover half of the tortilla and top with cheese.
6. Fold the tortilla over and fry on both sides until the cheese has melted and the tortilla is light brown.
7. Cut the tortilla in half and serve with guacamole, sliced red chillies, soured cream and a wedge of lime.



LET'S GET THROUGH THIS TOGETHER

Start Donating Today at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/appeal

In response to the coronavirus pandemic and the cancellation of our face-to-face fundraising activities, we launched an appeal for monthly donations to counter the significant decrease we had seen in our fundraising income. This is an update on the response so far and how you can support the appeal today.

As our lives went into lockdown in the Spring, all our planned fundraising activities across the country were cancelled or postponed. As a result, our monthly income fell significantly. So, to offset this fundraising shortfall, we launched an appeal with the aim of increasing the number of people who donate to us on a monthly basis.

However, while things may have paused in terms of our fundraising, and while our centres had to temporarily close their doors, we have never stopped providing support to the fire services community. Indeed, our practitioners have been helping people via one-to-one telephone and video calls, we have continued to run virtual Living Well Groups and have been providing as much health and wellbeing advice and information online as we can.

Our welfare team, meanwhile, has continued its support for fire and rescue families, providing food packages, funding required home modifications and helping families facing hardship to apply for and secure income support, as well as by a whole host of other means.

We couldn't continue this support without those who make a monthly donation. It is the most effective way to fund the support we provide because it gives us stability and helps us to prepare and plan for the future.

The good news is that we have made changes to our centres and procedures to make them Covid safe and in September all three of them reopened, allowing us to once again support people in person, in addition to our remote support services. However, this required additional investment in PPE, signage and cleaning processes to ensure the safety of everyone visiting and working at our centres.

Your regular donations are helping us to cover these additional costs, here's how:

- It costs £25 for one set of medical grade washable scrubs for a member of our practitioner team.
- £10 could cover the cost of refilling one of our 124 hand sanitising units.
- £4.50 could pay for the daily amount of disposable personal protective equipment required for practitioners at one of our centres.



> We launched our appeal for monthly donations at the end of June with a video featuring Stu Vince, a firefighter from Hampshire who reached out to us for support when he was struggling with anxiety, depression and stress. In the video Stu explained the current situation and appeal to the firefighting community for their support so we can get through this together.



Watch the videos at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/appeal



< Following our first appeal video we started sharing a series of films featuring messages sent to us by supporters in which they explained why they make a monthly donation and why they encourage others to do the same.

> In October, meanwhile, we shared a new appeal video featuring the story of Lee and Dawn Colton and how the Charity helped their family through a challenging time by providing Lee with mental health support at Harcombe House. Lee's story illustrates why it's so important that members of our fire services community have somewhere to turn when they're in need, as well as how much of a life-changing difference our supporters are making by donating every month.

Appeal progress

In response to our initial appeal over 350 people started a monthly donation or increased the amount of their current regular donation. This is equates to a £48,000 increase in our annual income when Gift Aid is included. We also received over £25,000 (including Gift Aid) in one-off donations. We're so grateful to everyone who's responded to the appeal so far. Thank you!

Our Income Generation and Engagement Manager, Kate Griffiths said of the response: "It's been inspiring to see how the fire services community has responded to our appeal. Monthly donations are the lifeblood of our Charity and provide the stable income needed to fund our range of support services.

"Normally our Charity Fundraisers would be visiting fire stations in person to talk to them about the support that we provide and sign-up anyone who wants to start a regular monthly donation, but this wasn't possible for much of this year. Our appeal has been a way for us to remind our fire family that we're still supporting people in need in our community and that their monthly donations are a vital source of funding that makes a life-changing



difference to so many people in our community."

How you can support

Although the initial response to our campaign was great and provided a much-needed boost to our monthly donation income we are still appealing for more donations. There are still thousands of people in our community who aren't aware of the support that we provide and don't yet donate.

Thank you to everyone who responded to the appeal or who already makes a

regular monthly donation. Without you, we wouldn't be able to provide the level of support that we do. If you already donate monthly and want to do more to support the appeal you can:

- Share the appeal with your friends, family and colleagues.
- Contact us to increase your monthly donation amount
- Make a single donation www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/donate

Support our appeal

by going to www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/appeal or contact us on 01256 366 566.

Stepping Forward

This Autumn our Board of Trustees approved a new five-year Strategic Plan, committing The Fire Fighters Charity to a series of ambitious projects that will enhance the health and wellbeing of every member of the fire services community. Here, in an open letter, Chief Executive Dr Jill Tolfrey explains more.

Dear Shout readers and supporters,

Following the successful conclusion of our 2017-20 Strategic Plan, my colleagues across the Charity have – over the best part of the last year – been working together to shape, define and create a Strategic Plan to ensure that The Fire Fighters Charity supports as many people as it possibly can over the coming years.

Of course, as with everything in 2020, this important work has had to be adapted and evolved to take the coronavirus pandemic into account, but I am pleased to say that our Board of Trustees has recently approved our new Strategic Plan for 2020-2025.

So what is in it and what can you expect?

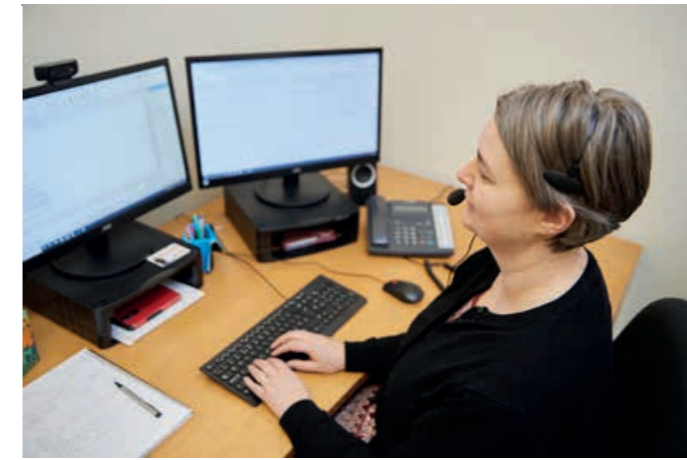
I believe that we have an exciting plan that will take the Charity in innovative new directions, while also building on what we currently do well, in order to ultimately make a life-changing difference to markedly more deserving people across the UK's fire services community.

At the heart of this plan is a desire to expand the reach of the Charity and to show you, our beneficiaries, that the support we can offer you expands beyond our three centres and into your

local communities and homes. I believe that The Fire Fighters Charity should be a charity for every member of the fire services community, regardless of where you live or the circumstances in which you find yourself. Indeed, the support we offer should be accessible to you all, so this plan sets out how we will remove barriers that may previously have held you back from reaching out to us for support, in order to provide services that you and every member of our community can easily access.

Today, we support around 5,000 people a year, which is a creditable figure, but when you consider that this represents a mere two percent of all those who are eligible for our support, it is simply not good enough.

Our new Strategic Plan therefore sets out to address this. Through investment in innovative new digital technologies; the development of community-based initiatives; the dissemination of health and wellbeing content and resources; close partnership working with fire and rescue services and organisations which complement our work; and major campaigns to raise awareness of who we are, what we do and how we can help, we are confident that we can transform our Charity into the nationwide provider



of health and wellbeing support to the fire services community.

What will this mean for you? It will mean that you can get the digital or face-to-face support you need, when you need it, using intuitive technology to access it anywhere. It will mean that we will campaign on your behalf to raise awareness of common health and wellbeing conditions, helping you to address them before they negatively impact your life. It will mean that you can simply and effectively access the information you need to help you to live healthier and happier. It will mean that we will work with your fire and rescue service to ensure that the health and wellbeing support and advice you need is aligned and available to you. And we'll make much of this available to you through a new app and online portal, offering you a way to monitor your health and wellbeing progress and engage in two-way communications with us and your peers.

In other words, by 2025, we will be the first organisation that you, your fire and rescue service and everyone else across the fire service community will think of and turn to when you need health and wellbeing support.

However, to achieve this, there are

challenges ahead. We know that we need to improve the way we communicate with you all so that, whatever your role, you understand how we can help you and how you can access support when you need it. We will need to ensure that the information and advice we provide for you is as accessible, detailed and relevant as possible for the specific needs of the fire services community. We have to ensure that our own technologies, systems and processes are as efficient as possible, in order to provide you with seamless and easy-to-access support. And we will have to do all this – and more – while navigating the uncertainties brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.

Regardless of the challenges ahead, I am confident that we have a plan in place now that will see The Fire Fighters Charity evolve into an organisation that is uniquely positioned to impact the health and wellbeing of the entire fire services community. However, the one crucial component to the new plan's success is you.

We need your continued support, dedication and enthusiasm in order to help us generate the funds we need to keep our doors open and drive us forward. We also need you to help us to raise

awareness of the Charity, to reach those of your colleagues, friends, peers and family members who may not be aware of who we are and how we can help them.

Indeed, it is only through increasing awareness that we can affect real change across our community and help the 98% of people who have never picked up the phone or reached out for support.

So, I urge you to visit our website and to read full details of our Strategic Plan 2020-2025 once it is published. We will also update you regularly on its progress over the months and years ahead and publicise all the many ways you can get involved in helping us to fulfil its ambitions.

Here's to an exciting future.

Kind regards,

Dr Jill Tolfrey
Chief Executive

SAFETY AND SUPPORT

Covid-19 may have changed the world, but embracing new technology in the delivery of services has been in our plans for years. Here's how we've integrated it in the ways we support you today and what you can expect when you get in touch.

Being able to reach more members of the UK's fire services community and offer them personalised support that is tailored to them. This is the cornerstone on which our support philosophy is based.

Over the years we have been continually developing how and where we provide help to the people who turn to us. From the days of convalescence and grant giving through to residential rehabilitation and online support to meet both physical and psychological health needs, our services have never stopped developing.

Today we need to adapt once more in order to support more people, to reflect your changing needs, to accommodate new ways of working across the fire services community and to take into account other factors that may influence your health and wellbeing. From your age, gender, genes, access to healthcare, communities, social and economic factors, and lifestyle choices, the changing health and social care arena in which we all find ourselves is influenced by a broad range of factors.

We want to work in partnership with you to improve your quality of life and make positive differences.

In the UK's fire and rescue services, poor mental health and musculoskeletal issues are the two biggest causes of sickness absence in the workforce. It also cannot be understated what impact having a member of the fire service in the family has on partners and

dependants. On top of this, we must consider the effects of an ageing population and changing lifestyle choices. All of these, as well as life's unexpected turns, are factors we must consider in how we support you.

In the years ahead our aim has always been to enhance and add to our existing portfolio of services, embracing the technology, tools and opportunities that reflect the modern world. The restrictions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic have acted as a catalyst in progressing these plans.

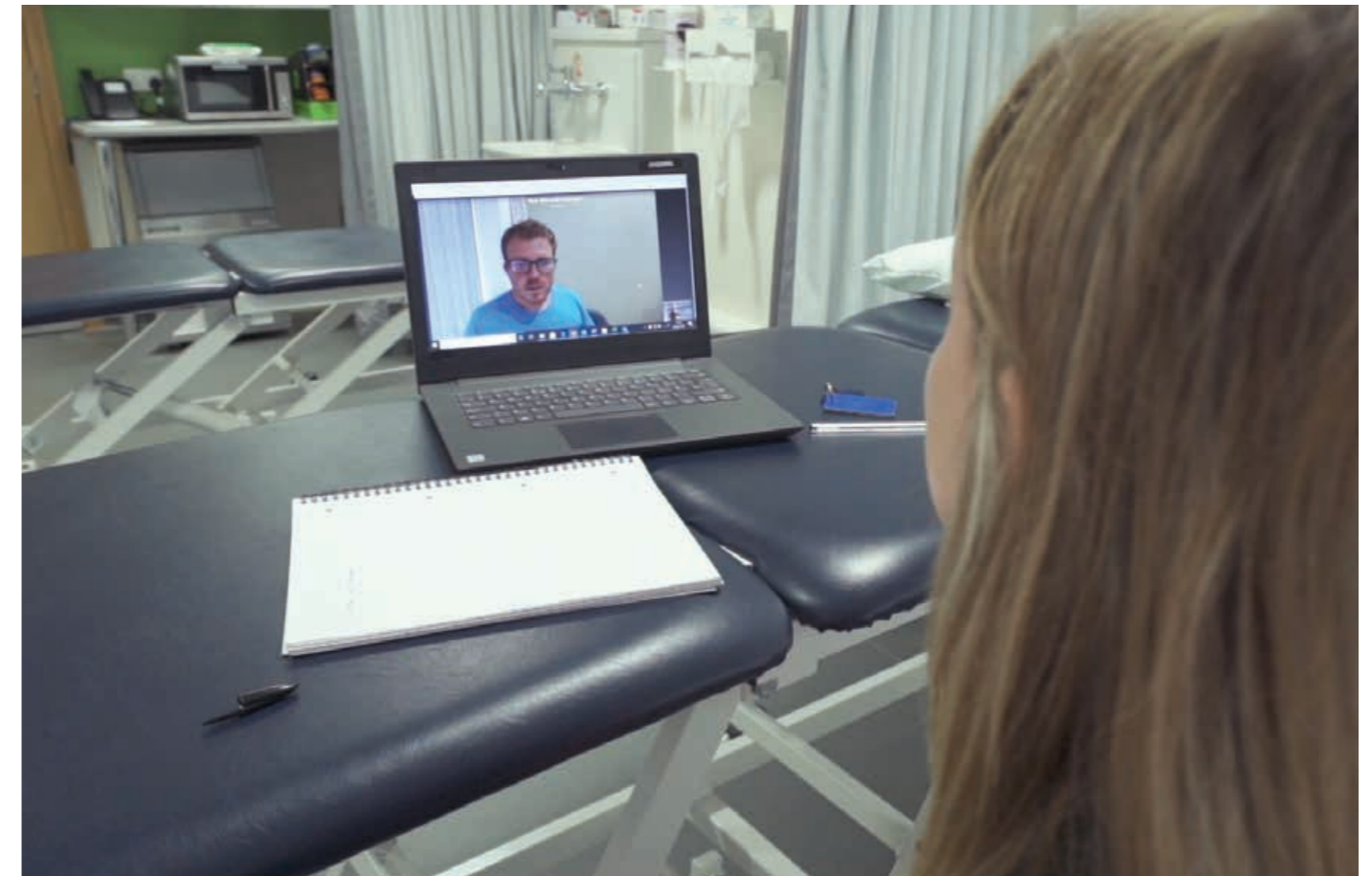
We are aware that the changing restrictions on movement may impact on your ability and possible willingness to travel but, by embracing technology, the use of online communities and the digital dissemination of health and wellbeing resources, we can still offer you high quality support and complement our existing mental, physical and welfare services.



Everything we offer is underpinned by our philosophy of recovery, with pathways and outcomes as unique as each individual who comes to us. We will support you in defining your own goals, identifying solutions to meet your individual needs.

Recovery is not what services do to or for people, nor is it always about a 'cure' from injury or ill health. Recovery is about enabling people to live a meaningful life in a community of choice to achieve his or her full potential.

We are aware too, that the ongoing pandemic and the restrictions on life can cause increases in stress and anxiety. As we move into the darker winter months and towards the festive period, for some people this is always a difficult time; remember we are here for you, whatever the season and whatever the external challenges, please call and we can help.



So what does all this look like for our services?

THE CONVERSATION

From the moment you reach out to us through our Support Line, our assessment practitioners will work in partnership with you to establish exactly what the best solution is to meet your needs.

These conversations will replace our previous application forms, which some people found got in the way of their seeking support. Practitioners will take a whole-person approach to understand the impact someone's primary reason for contact is having on their physical, mental and social needs. Therefore, the offer of support will look different for everyone.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING RESOURCES

For many beneficiaries who need our support, they may be able to find the answers they seek in our library of health and wellbeing resources on our website, which we continue to develop and promote. Through ORCHA, we

offer free access to a library of tried and tested wellbeing apps that cover a broad range of topics to promote a healthier lifestyle. An online community will also be launched in 2021 to help people to access a wealth of further advice and information.

We will also continue our prevention and education work with fire and rescue services, offering support for health and wellbeing through health coaching, enabling the developing of health literacy to support behaviour change. This helps not just the individual but the whole service – happy healthy people leads to a happy and well-functioning organisation.

SPECIALIST SUPPORT

For some people contacting us, signposting to our resources or other specialist organisations or charities, such as the MS Society or Alzheimer's UK may be the solution they need. If someone is in psychological distress, we will signpost towards crisis support,

or if something is affecting your welfare, we can signpost you towards statutory resources or specialist organisations. We also work in partnership with other organisations such as Togetherral (formerly Big White Wall), Soldier On, Surfwell and Climbing Out, whose work complements our own to help find beneficiaries the right support to meet their needs.

CHARITY SUPPORT

For those of you who need further support from us, we will work together to find a support pathway that works for you. For some this may ultimately result in the need for a residential stay, but this is not a necessity for everyone. For some with physical health issues, a video consultation through Attend Anywhere and subsequent prescribed exercise programme through the Salaso app will meet their needs. While for others it may mean a referral for telephone or online counselling, or a conversation with one of our Welfare caseworkers.





RESIDENTIAL STAYS

Our residential stays – traditionally referred to as rehabilitation or recuperation – are also evolving. Stays will be either activity-based to meet physical or psychological need, or non-activity based to offer a period of rest and relaxation. The centre you attend is decided by your primary need for support.

If you have a clear physical need, you will attend either Jubilee House in Cumbria or Marine Court in West Sussex, while programmes at Harcombe House will be for people coming to us with a psychological need. Group sessions and wellbeing workshops that combine physical and mental health will be available at all three centres.

And as we will have already had conversations with you before your visit, to understand your needs, your time at a centre will build on these to help you move forwards positively with your life.

Before arrival, we'll also discuss your objectives and what your stay will focus on, but should something arise while you're with us that requires further support, we'll make arrangements for you to speak to a relevant practitioner.

Programmes will be four days long with staggered start and arrival times (but there is no change to the length of programme for nursing clients). As our days are now longer with more choices available, some sessions will be optional. As always, though, our aim is to find a solution that is the best fit for you, so we will work in partnership with you to agree exactly which sessions you'll attend, creating a personalised timetable to meet your specific objectives.

We have put stringent social distancing and infection control measures in place at all our premises, with ways of working adjusting to keep all visitors

to our sites safe during the pandemic. As well as staggered arrival and end times, you will also be grouped into bubbles with whom you'll spend your time on the programme, with capacity reduced to keep everyone safe. We continue to monitor the situation and act in accordance with the latest Government guidelines.

SOCIAL WELLBEING

Our Welfare Services provision has not changed significantly during the Covid pandemic, although all assessments are now carried out remotely and we are ever mindful of the financial impact of the coronavirus when we identify solutions to meet people's needs.

Like the rest of the world, our Living Well Groups had to go online during lockdown and remain so temporarily until it is safe for our retirees to meet in person again. With regular keeping-in-touch calls to those of you who identified as being



lonely or feeling isolated, and a nation-wide digital group, we continue to use technology to help us support the older members of our beneficiary base.

Non-activity-based residential stays at our centres are still available for those of you needing some rest and relaxation to help cope with matters at home that may be affecting their social wellbeing, but our capacity is currently reduced in line with social distancing measures.

NURSING

During lockdown we have been in regular contact with our nursing clients either by telephone, email or through Attend Anywhere and this work will continue when our nursing services resume.

Continuing our commitment to make carers more visible, we've been shining a light on those people looking after a family member or friend who has a

disability, mental or physical illness or who needs extra help as they grow older. We know lockdown has been difficult for our country's unsung heroes who have had to adjust to a life as a carer without their usual support network, so to try and connect some of these amazing people, we've created a Carers Network group via our Facebook page.

HERE'S TO THE FUTURE

Although we are still adapting to new ways of working in light of the coronavirus, this is an exciting time for us. Every member of the UK's fire services community should be able to turn to us when they need support and this next chapter for our services will help us reach more people in ways that are convenient and appropriate for them, whatever is affecting their health and wellbeing.

Through this approach, we can provide faster access to support more beneficiaries, working more smartly and cost-effectively



while still reaching more people in need. This is a hugely positive step forward for us.

So here's to the future. If the coronavirus has shown us anything, it's that life is unexpected. But we've come this far together and we're entering this next chapter full of hope for all that we want to achieve for you.

Get in touch

If you need support, get in touch today. Call us on **0800 3898820** or visit **www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/support**

We're here for you.

Make the switch to Smart Energy, visit our Energy Hub today.

Utilita Energy takes pride in being part of the community and strives to give customers a better deal and assist those who need help the most.



Specialising in smart Pay As You Go energy, we use the latest technology to allow households and companies to manage their energy usage and spend.

It's that determination to do the right thing, through innovation, that drives us forward. We demonstrated this in July 2018 when we opened our first ever high street Energy Hub in Gosport, Hampshire.

Since then a whole flurry of Hubs have opened for business up and down the county, from Newport, Isle of Wight, and Shirley, Southampton, all the way up to Leith, Edinburgh.

Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, two further Utilita Hubs opened their doors during the summer, in Derby and West Bromwich, and there are more in the pipeline.

Many companies are abandoning the high street – but not us. We believe in it and we see great opportunities to help revive it, while engaging with our communities.

Utilita is the supplier of choice for more than 800,000 customers across England, Scotland and Wales, but we appreciate that not everyone wants to communicate via a telephone or laptop.



Our Energy Hubs bring back the 'old school' value of face-to-face service, giving customers the opportunity to speak to our friendly teams and get energy efficiency advice.

Customers can access their account in-store, get a quote to see if Utilita can save them money and check if they qualify for schemes like the Warm Home Discount, which helped more than 50,000 households with their winter energy bills in 2019.

Customers – even those not with Utilita – can pop into our Energy Hubs to use Paypoint to help manage their household finances and make essential payments like council tax, energy, rent, TV Licence, mobile top-ups or broadband.

We have interactive demo areas to show energy usage in a domestic home and there's even a PlayStation to keep the kids occupied.

Each Hub has also a community space available for local groups and charities to use free of charge.

And our friendly Hub teams are always busy reaching out to the community and getting involved in fundraising events for locally-based good causes.

During the summer our Hub2Hub Challenge saw teams in their lycra

and either walk, run, cycle or skip the equivalent distance between our six Hubs. All told, they totted up 3,324 miles, **raising more than £16,000** for local charities and support groups during lockdown.

From supporting worthy causes and going green to improving the lives of people in the communities we serve, we want to make a difference.

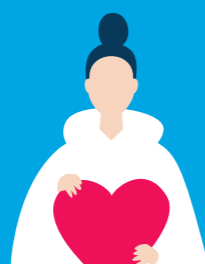
Explaining Utilita's philosophy, CEO Bill Bullen says: "We thought it was really important to change the nature of the dialogue between energy businesses and their customers – and turn it back into a face-to-face relationship.

"We've listened to feedback from our customers who have told us they want to be able to interact with us directly rather than rely solely on the phone, email or social media; our Energy Hubs provide this option."

"While a number of firms, including famous household brands, are closing shops, we believe there is still huge potential on Britain's high streets."

Join us before 31 March 2021
and get a **£50 Amazon.co.uk Gift Card***

To get a quote, visit your local hub or go to join.utilita.co.uk. Follow the steps to complete your switch and don't forget to use the below promo code. You'll receive your **£50 Amazon.co.uk Gift Card** when you go live with us.



HUB2020

Visit your local hub
or go to join.utilita.co.uk



*Offer ends 31/03/21. Utilita's Standard Terms & Conditions apply. Visit utilita.co.uk/terms. Amazon.co.uk is not a sponsor of this promotion. Amazon.co.uk Gift Cards (GCs) may be redeemed on the Amazon.co.uk website towards the purchase of eligible products available on www.amazon.co.uk. GCs cannot be reloaded, resold, transferred for value, redeemed for cash or applied to any other account. Amazon.co.uk is not responsible if a GC is lost, stolen, destroyed or used without permission. See www.amazon.co.uk/gc-legal for complete terms and conditions. GCs are issued by Amazon EU S.à r.l. All Amazon, ®, & © are IP of Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates.

GO AT YOUR OWN PACE

Pace yourself. It's one of the first things we're told when getting into physical activity. But why is pacing yourself so important? Jubilee House Physiotherapist Bethany Wiggett is here to explain.



The old proverb says 'no pain, no gain.' But struggling on if you're in pain can actually be detrimental to your health and wellbeing. In fact, this attitude of pushing through regardless can cause flare ups in pain or fatigue, leaving you debilitated, demotivated and possibly depressed. It might be days or weeks before you can have another go and this time around, pain may come even earlier due to increased sensitivities in your tissues, which ultimately leads to a decrease in your overall activity levels. This is known as the boom-bust cycle and is why pacing yourself is so important

Pacing yourself allows you to continue physical activity without being hampered by pain and/or fatigue. It means listening to your body and knowing your limits, adjusting things where needed and gradually increasing over

time, so you can get back to the things you enjoy.

Pacing isn't only relevant to exercise either, you should also pace yourself when doing day-to-day activities such as shopping, cleaning or gardening. It's important to note that when it comes to long-term conditions or ill health, recovery is not a straight line; it's quite normal to have good and bad days. But just ensure you don't overdo things on the good days.

Successful pacing will create a balance between your energy and activity levels, increase your confidence with exercise, maintain your motivation with activity, reduce pain and increase your endurance, both muscular and cardiovascular. To know what pacing means for you, you need to know how much activity you can do before

a flare up occurs, which we call your baseline level. This is different for everyone and depends on you, your condition, your existing fitness and any other factors that affect your physical health.

Let's use an everyday example to work out our baseline. Arthur has fibromyalgia, and wants to vacuum his whole house, which takes roughly 50 minutes, but he's never finished without having a flare up. He's not sure, he thinks 30 minutes would cause a flare up, but that he might be able to manage 20 minutes. He knows for sure that he could manage 15 minutes. Therefore 15 minutes is his baseline. You can repeat this process for every activity and measure your baseline in distance or number of repetitions you can do.



We won't be able to make progress if we only ever stay at our baseline though, which is why we should aim to make small improvements over time. A gradual increase in the frequency, intensity, time, weight or distance is required for successful pacing. You could also try a gradual decrease in rest time.

Whatever it is, just make sure you're comfortable with the adjustment before you increase further. And you don't need to increase things every day or even every week or month. You could increase activity by 30 seconds in six weeks, that's still progress. Just go at your own pace.

Tips for successful pacing.

- Set yourself realistic targets and don't exceed them.
- Start small, any movement is good, especially if you're not normally very active.
- Pick things you enjoy, like gardening or walking, so you're more likely to stick with them.
- Be kind to yourself. If you do have a flare up, don't give yourself a hard time.
- Record achievements and celebrate successes, it will keep you motivated.
- Persistence is key. This isn't about a quick fix, it's about seeking long-term, lasting improvement.

HOW RESILIENT ARE YOU?

What is resilience, why is it useful and what does a resilient person look like? Behaviour Change and Wellness Coach Sally Walker explains.



Sometimes known as our ability to “bounce back” from disruptive life events, resilience is incredibly useful as we navigate our way through life’s uncertainties, which we have seen an abundance of this year. Resilience can help us view difficulties as challenges; see failures not as weaknesses but as opportunities to grow; accept responsibility when mistakes are made and look for solutions; have awareness of how our beliefs influence our ability to be resilient and make positive changes to increase our ability to be resilient.

Resilient people tend to think positively, commit to goals and see challenges as opportunities, accepting situations as they are even if they don’t like them. They learn how to take care of their physical and psychological health, creating strong relationships and often have good self-awareness. Significantly, they focus on what

they can control rather than what they can’t.

We aren’t born with resilience, we must learn it and there are lots of strategies we can develop to do so. Here are some tips.

1. Relax: Stress, tension and feeling emotional shut down our ability to explore the options open to us. When we feel rested we can view our situation and make choices and decisions from a more logical place.

2. Consider your options: If you feel like you’re backed into a corner, chances are you’re missing an alternative option. It’s worth taking time to question things and think outside the box, talking things through with a trusted confidante if it helps.

3. Set realistic goals: Targets give us purpose, helping us move forwards with focus. Set SMART goals that are specific, measurable, achievable,

realistic and time-limited, and allow flexibility to give you contingency plans.

4. Identify your areas of control: When overwhelmed it can be helpful to focus our energies on things we do have influence over, rather than those outside our control. Write a list of things you can control, no matter how small, such as what music to listen to, what to wear, where to go for your walk, what to watch on TV, what to eat for lunch etc.

5. Acknowledge areas where you have little or no control: We’ve mentioned resilient people tend to be more accepting of situations or people, which doesn’t mean agreeing with or liking them. It just means acknowledging they are who they are, and things will still be how they are whether we worry about them or not, so channel that energy elsewhere.

6. It’s ok to make mistakes:

It’s how we learn and move forwards from mistakes that counts. Resilient people tend to be less judgemental both of themselves and others, so meet yourself where you are, not where you think you should be! Developing an inner cheerleader instead of an inner critic helps us be kinder to ourselves. Listening out for repetitive self-critical messages and replacing them with self-supporting messages creates a new habit over time which softens our expectations of ourselves.

7. Ask for help: Developing resilience also means knowing when extra support is needed and being ok with asking. Again, it’s not always easy, particularly if you are the one usually doing the supporting! Think of it as a two-way street that gives us a different perspective - you may enjoy helping others so giving them the same opportunity could be doing them a favour.

TEN TIPS FOR CHRISTMAS KINDNESS

Welfare Services Lead Carrie Pearce shares her top tips for acts of kindness, to help others and boost your own mental wellbeing, this festive season.



1. Help the homeless: With over 4,260 people thought to be living outdoors with no access to essentials such as shelter, warmth or hot foot, why not consider donating hats, scarves, coats, blankets or non-perishable food to a homeless charity or night shelter near you.

2. Check in with others: It has been a tough year for everyone, but the holiday period is often more difficult than most. Social isolation and loneliness remain huge issues, and it’s not just with elderly people either. Loneliness is also increasingly an issue for people aged between 17-25. So make time to check in with friends, family, colleagues and neighbours to see how they’re doing, even if it’s only virtually.

3. Share the burden: The financial worries of hosting seasonal events when you’re already on a budget can be a huge cause of stress, so take the pressure off yourself. If you’re able to spend Christmas together, divide up some of the work, such as the cooking or meal preparation among all those attending to share some of the strain, and have conversations with your family about realistic gift expectations.

4. Volunteer: Can you volunteer your time with a local organisation? As movement restrictions

increase, there are many people in our communities for whom volunteer-led local support is a desperately-needed lifeline. Could you help sort donations at a local food bank, or pick up prescriptions for an elderly neighbour?

5. Reach out: Why not enlist friends and family in gathering small hampers or shoe boxes for vulnerable members of your community? Or find out what local appeals are going on in your area and what steps they’re asking people to take.

6. Make a note: In the UK, there are 12 million people aged over 65 and 11 million people living with limiting long-term health conditions or disability. Many of these people live alone or rely on

family, who may be unable to visit due to local movement restrictions. Maybe you could put a note through their door to see if they need help with anything that you can do from a safe distance.

7. Be kind to yourself: This does not come naturally to many of us, but taking a bit of time out of each day for some self-care might just be the best thing you could do for your own wellbeing. Maybe it’s reading a magazine or sitting quietly in the garden. It’s about taking an active role in protecting our own sense of wellbeing, doing something kind for ourselves.

8. Be kind to others: Take time to say “hello” to a stranger, let someone go in front of you in the supermarket

queue or simply pay a compliment. You’ll be surprised what a difference this can make.

9. Do the little things: Grandparents, parents and siblings... we all take each other for granted. So show just how much they mean to you by offering to make breakfast or wash the dishes without being asked. Hand over the remote control and let someone else choose what to watch.

10. Fundraise: If socially-distanced events are happening, why not organise some fundraising at your school, workplace or in your street, something small like a table top sale or a sponsored event and get your whole community involved.



STAY WELL THIS WINTER

As the nights draw in, it's important we look after our health each year, but especially so with the coronavirus. Nursing Services Lead Kath Savage offers some practical tips to help the vulnerable among us to stay healthy this winter.



FOOD AND DRINK

Make sure you're eating a balanced diet and drinking plenty of water, resisting the temptation to indulge too much in some of the more tempting treats. You can find information in our health and wellbeing library online about what a healthy plate looks like, how to know your alcohol limits, understanding food labelling and some good food habits.

KEEP ACTIVE

You may not feel like it during the cold, wet winter but staying physically active is important as it helps boost your immune system by improving circulation and getting white blood cells circulating around the body (which help protect you against bugs). That doesn't mean you need to hit the gym or go for

a run, it can just be a gentle walk or being active around the house.

JOIN IN AT HOME

We've produced a series of exercise videos you can join in with at home for differing levels of mobility, and even the chair-based activities are great way of increasing your activity levels. Or have some fun with it, put on your favourite music and have a dance in your kitchen.

HAVE A SINGSONG

Singing has been proven to make people feel happier, less anxious and less depressed, which can have a direct impact on your physical health as you feel less stressed, which in turn makes your immune system function better. Singing releases endorphins and oxytocin, two

of the feel-good hormones sure to lift your mood. It's also believed to be good for asthma, because it's good for your lungs and requires you to have good breath control.

ARE YOU A CARER?

For those who are caring for loved ones during this time, make sure you take time out for yourself. Easier said than done I hear you say, but it's important to look after yourself as well. Call or Facetime friends while you each share a coffee and try to accept any offers of help or support from those around you, however that may come. Keep yourself mentally stimulated, so pull out a favourite jigsaw or crossword puzzle to take your mind off things and ground you in the moment.

KEEP WARM

Cold weather can affect your health with some people being at increased risk of heart attack, stroke, flu, pneumonia, hypothermia and falling over, not to mention the effect on depression or dementia. Remember to wear several layers while indoors and outdoors, as layers trap warm air. If you can afford to do so, heat your home to at least 18 degrees, especially if you're over 65 or have reduced mobility or heart or lung conditions. Keep bedroom windows closed at night, as breathing cold air can increase the risk of chest infection.

GET YOUR JABS

The flu vaccine is safe and effective, offered annually to help protect people from flu and its complications. So if you're entitled to receive one, make an appointment with your GP or local flu clinic. You can find a full list of everyone who can have a flu jab on the NHS website.



APP FOR IT



Apps are a great way to quickly and conveniently access health and mental wellbeing information. But with so many on the market, how do you know which to trust? We've partnered with ORCHA, (the Organisation for the Review of Care and Health Applications) to provide you with a library of reviewed health and care apps. Each is rated according to user experience, clinical assurance and data privacy, so you can feel confident in the app that you are choosing. Here are Exercise Therapist Rachel Rees' recommendations.



APP: NHS WEIGHT LOSS PLAN

What it's good for?: Weight loss and healthy eating

Who would benefit?: Anyone looking to make a change to their lifestyle and weight.

Rachel says: The app provides an easy-to-follow 12-week diet and exercise plan, guiding you along the way towards a balanced diet and helping you stick to a daily calorie target. Based on BMI the app advises the amount of calories you should be eating each day, and each week has a guide with hints and tips for reaching your goal. To keep track of your progress you can regularly input what you are eating by using a food diary and by entering your weight.

Who would benefit?: Anyone wanting to make healthier food and drink choices

Rachel says: The Food Scanner app helps you and your family make healthier food and drink choices by allowing you to quickly scan a barcode to see its nutritional value. You may be surprised by what you learn, as the app will tell you just how much sugar, fat and salt is in the product. The app is constantly adding more products to keep you in the know.

APP: COUCH TO 5K

What it's good for?: Easing into exercise

Who would benefit?: Anyone wanting to get into exercise

Rachel says: There's a reason everyone has heard of the Couch to 5k. The app is a perfect way to gradually build up your fitness and ability so

that you can eventually run 5km without stopping. The app does this by getting you to alternate between walk and run intervals, with run segments gradually increasing over the weeks whilst the walk elements shorten. Choose which celebrity coach will guide you, interrupting your own music to tell you exactly when to walk and when to run, as well as offering motivational tips. You can repeat weeks if you need to until you feel physically ready to move on, and a built-in GPS and distance tracker shows your progress, as well as a mood tracker to rate how you feel before and after exercising.

Check out Orcha

Find out more at <https://firefighters.orch.co.uk/>

APP: OUCHIE

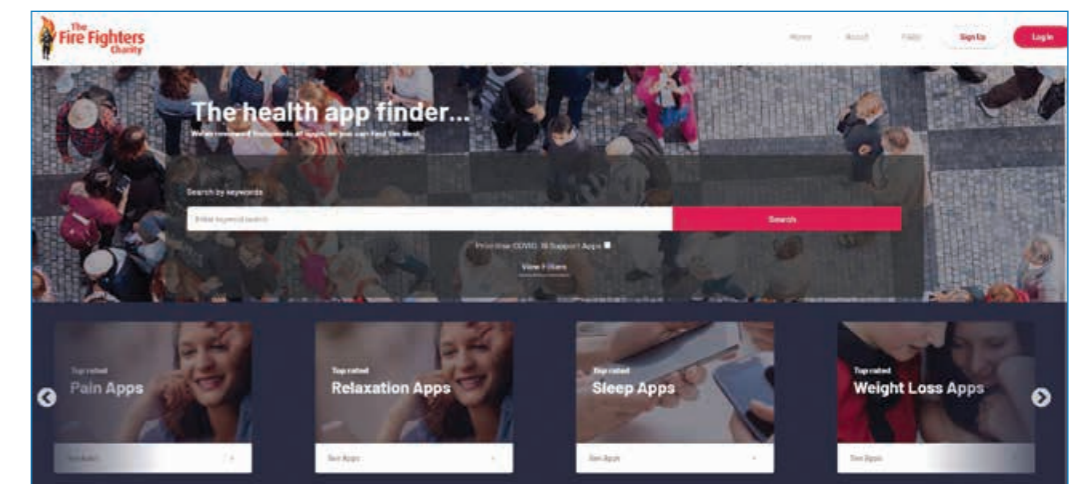
What it's good for?: Pain management

Who would benefit?: People with long-term chronic pain conditions.

Rachel says: We often recommend Ouchie because it's very easy to use and allows you to track your pain over time, recoding any changes to pain levels, medication usage, treatments, mood, sleep patterns, accomplishments, challenges, goals and much more. Ouchie is all about recognising your daily efforts, allowing you to set targeted goals and work towards them. There are also educational resources which provide valuable tools to manage the pain. The app is also fun and engaging to use.

APP: CHANGE FOR LIFE, FOOD SCANNER

What it's good for?: Being better informed on nutritional values



A Gift for The Future

Leave a gift in your Will to support the future of our fire services community.

The donations that supporters leave in their Wills are crucial in helping us to provide support to an increasing number of people and support future generations in our community.

Learn more about leaving a gift in your Will at www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/will

Shout+

Retire, renew, refresh, review and rewind

FLASH BACK

A photographic flashback to a moment in time, supplied by the Shout+ community. This issue's contribution comes from Alf Moreton.



The Royal Treatment
Alf Moreton has had a busy and full career in the fire service. Having joined Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service in 1959 and retired from Wiltshire in 1989, with the rank of Divisional Officer, Alf reflects on one of the most memorial days during his career in the fire service.

"During my time in the fire brigade I moved up and down the country after being promoted and was lucky enough to serve at the Fire Service College in Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire,

from 1982 until 1985. My good fortune continued at the College when Prince Charles made an official visit and I was given the important task of accompanying HRH around. It was a very proud day for me, and one I'll hopefully never forget."

Now 83 years old, and after being a dedicated fundraiser for the Charity over many decades, Alf has decided to take a step back and enjoy his retirement. We would like to say a huge thank you to Alf for all his inspirational support and commitment to our Charity.

Gift of a lifetime

By making the incredible decision to remember us in your will, you'll be leaving a legacy that will last a lifetime for future beneficiaries. Whether it's a percentage of your estate or a fixed sum, leaving a gift in your will is a wonderful way to recognise the role that the fire services community has played in your life. Find more information on our website, where you can also order a free, no obligation will-making guide. Visit www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/will



INTRODUCING VIRTUAL LIVING WELL GROUPS



Would you like to socially connect with fellow retired fire and rescue personnel but aren't sure where to start? If so, we'd like to invite you to join our nationwide virtual Living Well Group.

Run by volunteers, our Living Well Groups offer places across the country for retirees to meet and share a nostalgic trip down memory lane, sometimes with ex-colleagues and other times with new friends.

When the pandemic hit, the groups had to move from their usual monthly meetups in person to a new online world.

"Up until now, our virtual Living Well Groups have been held in the same geographical areas as existing groups," says Community Development Lead,

Clare Hannaford, who leads the Living Well Groups. "But we know there are still people out there feeling lonely or isolated who may not live near a group or just never had the chance to go in person. Virtual groups are a fantastic way for us to come together at a time when restrictions are keeping us apart. So we're creating a nationwide Living Well Group network, connected by the magic of technology."

If you would like to join, email Clare at channaford@firefighterscharity.org.uk

And don't forget, we're here for whatever may be affecting your mental, physical or social wellbeing in retirement. To find out more, visit www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/how-we-can-help/retirement



Hi everyone, welcome to another Junior Shout! Isn't it getting cold now? The winter is all about dressing up warm, getting outdoors and kicking up leaves, cosying in with your family and having fun. So why don't you grab yourself a hot chocolate, dig out a pen and have a go at this issue's collection of puzzles and activities.

Blaze Bear



Blaze's Banter

As it's getting in cold, here are three of my favourite winter weather jokes.

What do you call an old snowman?

Water

How do polar bears make their beds?

With sheets of ice and blankets of snow.

Knock, knock.
Who's there?
Lettuce
Lettuce who?
Lettuce in, it's cold outside

Wordsearch and Rescue

In this issue I've hidden 10 of my favourite healthy foods in this grid, can you find them all?

APPLE	MUESLI	BROWN
BANANA	NATURAL	BREAD
CARROT	YOGURT	AUBERGINE
GRAPE	AVOCADO	RAISINS

R A I S I N S A I C W B
B R O W N M T N R A H R
V S R B U R M A Z R A E
H B Z E U E E N A R P A
I X S G M P N A V O P D
N L O R N A I B O T L E
I Y C N A R G L C Z E L
D M E D T G R P A X S H
F J C M U X E I D X X G
B X L B R J B Z O O A W
P V B J A L U H B U J M
Y V J I L Z A I G S E U

Winter mash up

I've mashed up six words you might usually associate with Autumn and Winter, can you unscramble them?

FIBREON LONEWHALE
AELVES RECKONS
CHARMSIT
MENOWNS

Ridiculous Riddles

Can you solve my trio of tricky riddles? Sometimes the obvious answers are the right ones. Good luck.

1. I am not alive, but I grow; I don't have lungs, but I need air; I don't have a mouth, but water kills me. What am I?
2. What is as big as you and sometimes even bigger, but doesn't weigh anything?
3. What can you hold without using your arms?

Bonus Blaze

Once again, there are five mini Blaze Bears hidden on other pages in this issue of Shout! Can you find them all?

Ten To Spot



You've all been taking on some amazing feats as part of the Fire Family Challenge this year, including this group of Stormtroopers who raised £675 by walking between two fire stations in Lancashire for us, in their costumes! But can you spot the 10 differences between the two pics. May the force be with you!



Win your own Blaze Bear

To win your own Blaze Bear all you need to do is to send me a picture that has something to do with The Fire Fighters Charity. It can be anything you want, perhaps a picture of me, or of a fire engine, or of you fundraising for the Charity. Whatever you choose, take a photo or scan of your creation and ask an adult to help you email it to me at Blaze@firefighterscharity.org.uk. I'll pick a winner for the next issue and, if chosen, you'll win your own Blaze Bear. Good luck gang.



Answers: Winter mash up: Fibre, Loner, Aelf, Reck, Charm, Menow. Ridiculous Riddles: 1. Fire; 2. Your shadow; 3. Your breath.



Win an Autoglym Perfect Bodywork, Wheels and Interiors gift bag.

Autoglym is generously offering *Shout!* readers an opportunity to win a fantastic gift bag with lots of goodies. The pack includes:

- Interior shampoo
- Glass cleaner
- Vinyl and rubber care
- Bodywork shampoo and conditioner
- Super resin polish
- Extra gloss protection
- Wheel cleaner
- Instant tyre dressing
- And wheel protector
- Cloths and sponge

To win this amazing prize, simply send your answer to the question below, together with your name, address and contact phone number to: shout@firefighterscharity.org.uk

Question: Which award did HRH The Duke of Cambridge announce the winner of at our virtual Spirit of Fire Awards?

- A) Support of The Year: Young Person
- B) Beneficiary of Courage
- C) Special Recognition Award for Excellence in the Field of Mental Health

The winner will be picked at random from all correct entries received on or before 31 March 2021 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.

Why have a stairlift when you can have a *real* lift?

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.

NEAT & DISCREET

A Stiltz Homelift can be installed into almost any room in your home. A Stiltz is uniquely compact with the smallest model taking up just over half a square metre – now that IS discreet. The homelift plugs directly into a standard domestic socket and uses less power than boiling a kettle. The homelifts run on self-supporting rails so there is no need to drill into walls and the motor is fully self-contained within the lift car. Neat.

YOUR FOREVER HOME

While some Stiltz customers have an immediate need for a homelift, others are looking to future-proof their existing home for when the stairs do eventually become a challenge.

Don't go through the unnecessary 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.

"We've had our lift for 2 years and were so impressed with how it was fitted from our hallway to our landing in what at first appeared to be an impossible space. And in such a short time."

Mr. Eames

PEACE OF MIND

Stiltz are proud to hold the highly-regarded Which? Trusted Trader status meaning they are a reputable, established and trustworthy company. Stiltz customers love them too, rating them 'Great' on Trustpilot. They use their own teams of expert installers, so you can choose a Stiltz Homelift with complete peace of mind, knowing you and your home are in a safe pair of hands.

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

Mark via Trustpilot



Elegant, practical and discreet. A Stiltz Homelift will transform your home and your life.

TEST DRIVE A HOMELIFT

When you're ready, a Stiltz Homelifts consultant will conduct a FREE, no obligation survey in your home. There may also be the opportunity to meet with an existing Stiltz customer local to where you live to see a homelift and 'test drive' it for yourself!

So, why not give your lifestyle a lift with Stiltz. Call FREE today.



The UK's No.1 Homelift

- Urgent install service
- Ready to take your call now
- Cost-effective
- Small footprint
- Freestanding design - no wall needed
- Wheelchair model available
- Manufactured, installed and fully guaranteed by Stiltz
- 3-floor travel available

For a FREE brochure or no obligation survey
Call FREE on 0808 274 1494
 or visit www.stiltz.co.uk

Stiltz
 Homelifts



ELVIS & KRESSE

RESCUING FIRE-HOSE AND GIVING BACK SINCE 2005

Since 2005 Elvis & Kresse have been rescuing London's decommissioned fire-hose, transforming them into luxury lifestyle accessories and donating 50% of the profits to the Fire Fighters Charity.

This year we are celebrating 15 years of a fantastic relationship with The Fire Fighters Charity and over £150,000 in donations.



Weekend Bag - from £310.00



Small Post Bag - from £180.00

HOW DOES LAST YEARS' DONATION OF £51,913.63 TRANSLATE INTO REAL IMPACT?

Our donation, just for last year, could be covering 2000 exercise therapy sessions, 500 hydrotherapy sessions, 400 physio sessions, 400 psychological support sessions, 100 days of the Services Access Line and 118 food vouchers.



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For more information and to view our products visit www.elvisandkresse.com