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RETIRED STAFF WELFARE NETWORK NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 28 **NOVEMBER** 26

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to issue number 28 of the Retired Staff Newsletter.
I hope it contains something that you will find of interest. The 'From the Archive' article was pencilled in to be included before the events of this summer to mark 50 years since the period which many former firefighters of a certain age have continuously talked about. Perhaps that can now be laid to rest at last!

The Fire Fighters Charity has recently undergone a re-branding, funded by a legacy received specifically for that purpose. It continues to provide help and support to many serving and former fire service employees and their families in a variety of ways and does some amazing work.
If anyone needs any help from the charity the support Line number is **0800 389 88210** or email **helpline@firefighterscharity.ork.uk.**

There is also a 24/7 crisis line which is confidential and independent **0300 373 0896.**

It is still important that I increase the numbers of email contacts in order to reduce the burden of posting out hard copy versions and to ensure that as many people as possible are able to receive regular updates and information. If you receive this newsletter by post and have an email address, please let me have your details. You will also receive updates and news on a variety of matters of interest e.g. walking groups, charity and social events, Service updates etc.

Please note that all details are held securely on a Service database and are not shared with anyone. All emails are sent out without showing any individual addresses.

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Retied Personnel Welfare Network Volunteer

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In aid of
Fire Fighters Charity





International Firefighters Memorial Day

St Florian's Day

In May, a number of fire service veterans gathered in the memorial garden at Pirehill to lay a wreath to mark **St Florian's Day** and to remember all those of the fire community who have lost their lives in the course of their duty. The wreath was laid by 105-year-old veteran Jeff Brereton. Also in attendance were many serving members and another wreath was laid by Deputy Chief Fire Officer (now Chief Fire Officer) Glynn Luznyj. The Service Chaplain, Andrew Wragg also conducted a brief service of prayers and readings.

Following the wreath laying, the retired members had a chance to have a catch up over a buffet lunch in the HQ canteen.

The event was deemed to be a success and will, hopefully, be repeated next year.

Chaplaincy

May I introduce myself?
My name is **Andrew Wragg,** and I am the **Lead Chaplain** for **Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service.**

We are a small team of chaplains and are currently looking to expand. Having an emergency services background myself, I understand the unique pressures, challenges, and demands that emergency service personnel face throughout their careers.

The role of our chaplaincy team is to provide a listening ear and offer support to all members of the Service. Our work is not primarily about religion, although we are always happy to discuss matters of faith if that is something an individual wishes to explore. Our main focus is on building relationships and providing pastoral care.

Much of what we do is simple but valuable; taking time to sit and talk, visiting stations, joining crews for breakfast, and being present when support is needed. We also take part in memorial events and celebrations, helping to mark important occasions within the Service. Each year, we organise an Emergency Services Christmas Carol Service for all three emergency services as an opportunity to come together and give thanks for all that you do.

All of our chaplains are volunteers who freely give their time to support others. We are available 24 hours a day and are committed to being there whenever support is needed.

This is only a brief overview of what we do, but I would also like to emphasise that our support extends to members of the retired network. Whether you need support during a difficult time or simply want someone to talk to, we are here for you and your families. We value our retired colleagues and recognise that you remain an important part of the wider fire service family.

At some point in life, we all need support, and I am here to help in any way I can.

I look forward to working alongside you all.

Andrew Wragg
Lead Chaplain

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Andrew.Wragg@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

The importance and effects of Social Group Membership following Retirement

An often quoted and cited piece of academic research carried out in the UK by Queensland University highlights the importance of maintaining social connections into retirement. A brief summary of the research states that retirees who had two group memberships prior to retirement had a 2% risk of death in the first 6 years of retirement if they maintained membership of those groups, a 5% risk if they lost one group and a 12% risk if they lost both groups. In addition, for every group membership that participants lost in the year following retirement, their experienced quality of life 6 years later was approximately 10% lower. **The effect of social group memberships on mortality was found to be comparable to that of physical exercise.** This research would have been carried out with those of normal state retirement and it is recognised that operational fire service staff would have retired earlier and, in most cases, would have taken up other employment or similar activities.

The various activities and events carried out within our network provide an opportunity for fire service veterans to keep their connections to former colleagues and the Service. Some of these are detailed below.

Details of groups and activities are regularly circulated by email and social media. If you are not on the email circulation and would like to be included please contact me on:

a.buttery@staffordshfire.gov.uk

PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

The Prostate Cancer Support Group has now met several times giving participants the opportunity to share experiences from diagnosis through to treatment and the challenges that they face. Those taking part say they find it a very positive experience and welcome the opportunity to share their thoughts with others from a similar background. We also invite speakers including healthcare professionals to come along and talk to the group and answer any questions that they have.

WALKING GROUP

The walking group continues to attract new participants and is well supported. Walks are arranged to be about 5/6 miles in length together with an option for those who prefer to have a shorter walk. After the walk we have lunch (usually in a nearby pub). Walking and walking in groups has many health benefits including reducing blood pressure, body fat, total cholesterol and risk of depression. These walks provide an opportunity for former colleagues to get together and reminisce, take some exercise and enjoy the fresh air. The most important aspect however, is having a social event - to share stories, maintain contact with former colleagues and just to have an enjoyable few hours together.





"Walking is man's (and woman's) best medicine" - Hippocrates

LIVING WELL GROUPS

The Fire Fighters Charity Living Well Group meetings are still being held Leek, Lichfield and Newcastle and will soon be holding a meeting at Sandyford Fire Station. It is through the Living Well Groups that the Health Checks which are open to all retired staff, have been organised.

The Living Well Group meetings are held for all retired beneficiaries of the Fire Fighters Charity which means anyone who has worked for the fire service for at least 5 years in any capacity and their partners.

Meet The PO Team

With several recent promotions across the Service, our Principal Officer team has had a refresh and what better time to get to know the people behind the roles? Read on as we introduce our POs and share a little more about the leaders helping shape our Service:

Glynn Luznyj

Chief Fire Officer (CFO)



Glynn joined Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service back in 1996 as a trainee firefighter and worked his way through the ranks and roles across the Service. In 2015, Glynn joined the PO Team and most recently held the role
of Deputy Chief Fire Officer in 2021. Glynn has held a number of national roles with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and is currently the national Secretary of the Fire Leaders Association.

Over the next 6-12 months, Glynn will be focusing on seeing us through the follow up of our recent HMICFRS inspection, ensuring a positive culture in the Service and developing trusted leaders who inspire and guide our teams with confidence.

Here is Glynn's vision for our Service:

Vision: to create a future where more lives are saved than ever before, the wellbeing of our people is protected, and our Service is transformed to make our communities and environment safer. It is essential that we build a fire and rescue service that is smarter, stronger and ready for the future.

We asked Glynn some quick fire questions... here's what he said!

Tea or coffee? Tea

Do you have a favourite TV series that you've watched recently? I enjoyed the Dear England series, but I also enjoy dramatised adaptations of real-life events.

What is the one thing you can't start your day without? Taking my dog for a walk.

What is one song that you never get tired of? Oasis – Rock 'N' Roll Star

What helps you to switch off after a busy day? Exercise, it always helps to clear my mind.

What is your ideal way to spend a day off? Spending time with my family and/or catching up with friends.

What is your dream travel destination? I'd love to go hiking along the Appalachian Trail in America.

What motivates you most at work? Working with people both within the organisation and across our community and importantly, seeing them flourish.

If you could have a superpower, what would it be? Probably the power to self-heal/regeneration – that way I could still enjoy competitive sports like I used to.

Books or Podcasts? Generally books but I've started to get into podcasts recently – I'm enjoying the Steven Bartlett 'The Diary of a CEO series at the moment.

What is your go to oatcake order? Bacon, cheese and HP Fruity sauce.

What is something that you are most proud of? I have three... Most important is how my family have dealt with adversity, receiving the King's Fire Service Medal in 2024 and my recent promotion.

What does a great team look like to you? Manchester United in 1999... but seriously a great team is multiskilled, adaptable, trustworthy and hard working.

Finally, what is the best piece of advice you've ever had? I would say the whole quote from 'The Man in the Arena' by Teddy Roosevelt is a piece of wisdom that I relate to – The Script have just released a good track about it.



Michelle Hickmott

Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO)

Michelle joined Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2022 as our Assistant Chief Fire Officer and was recently appointed DCFO. Michelle has just under two decades of experience in the fire and rescue sector, beginning her career in Warwickshire and then moving to London Fire Brigade. Michelle has also contributed her expertise at the National Fire Service College.

Michelle will be supporting our CFO's vision and will be helping the Service to action and put into place the steps to achieve our collective goals and objectives. In addition to this, Michelle wants to continue our journey with community engagement – it is such a fundamental part of what we do, and with the changes in the landscape, we aspire to be the trusted professionals in our communities. There are also all of the pressures from the future governance changes and financial challenges that Michelle will be supporting, but paramount to all of these are everyone in the Service and our community's safety.

We put Michelle to the test with our quick fire questions – here's what she had to say!

Tea or coffee? Tea

Do you have a favourite TV series that you've watched recently? Anything David Attenborough, those sort of environmental/natural history shows.

What is the one thing you can't start your day without? Having a cup of tea!

What is one song that you never get tired of? The Cranberries – Linger

What helps you to switch off after a busy day? Exercise – either going to the gym or playing golf.

What is your ideal way to spend a day off? Being with family and friends, and being outdoors.

What is your dream travel destination? Bangladesh, my grandad was born there so I'd like to see where he grew up.

What motivates you most at work? It is the sense of making a difference to people's lives.

If you could have a superpower, what would it be? I would say to time travel.

Books or Podcasts? I like books – mostly fiction. My favourite of all time is probably To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee.

What is your go to oatcake order? Sausage, no cheese.

What is something that you are most proud of? Completing my Master's Degree and my recent promotion.

What does a great team look like to you? A team that has different views, perspectives and thoughts. I would hope that in a team people feel trusted and safe to express themselves and feel valued to work towards a common outcome.

Finally, what is the best piece of advice you've ever had? The poem 'Ithaca' by Constantine P. Cavafy is something I like to live by.



Jim Bywater

Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO)

Jim joined Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2000 originally as an on-calll firefighter, having previously worked in the private sector. Jim then moved to wholetime as a Crew Manager and worked in many areas of the Service. Most recently, Jim was the Area Manager heading up Response, focusing on areas such as L&D, JETS, Fire Control, Emergency Response Team (ERT), Operational Assurance and Clean Concept.

Jim is also our Environmental lead and works with a number of colleagues across the Service to improve our environmental impact, as well as leading on the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) waste fire and recycling group.

Jim's areas of focus as ACFO will be to support the vision and values of the Service and ensuring the Service is ready to deal with the ongoing changes that are currently taking place. There are lots of elements of change happening both within the Service and nationally and Jim will be prioritising our people whilst also maintaining performance. Following on from this period, Jim wants to support the continuous improvement agenda, ensuring our Service is in the best shape possible – ready to take on any challenges thrown our way. Jim is also keen to continue to build on the relationships between us and our partner agencies and develop the solid foundations we have with our communities.

Here's what Jim had to say when we put him to the test with our quick fire questions...

Tea or coffee? Tea

Do you have a favourite TV series that you've watched recently?

My favourite series would be Game of Thrones/ House of the Dragon.

What is the one thing you can't start your day without? Tea!

What is one song that you never get tired of? Dexys Midnight Runners - There, There, My Dear

What helps you to switch off after a busy day?

Reading helps me to unwind after a busy day

What is your ideal way to spend a day off?

I am a big Wolves fan so my ideal day off involves watching them.

What is your dream travel destination?

Next on my list is Nepal. I have recently been to Costa Rica and Vietnam - both were amazing experiences.

What motivates you most at work?

Continuous improvement and seeing the Service and people within the Service develop and provide the best service to our communities.

If you could have a superpower, what would it be? Probably to fly.

Books or Podcasts? Books - I am a fan of the Jason Bourne series by Robert Ludlum but anything action-thriller.

What is your go to oatcake order? I like oatcakes, but I wouldn't say I have a go to order... If I had to pick, I'd say ham and cheese.

What is something that you are most proud of? I would say achieving my Master's Degree.

What does a great team look like to you?

A great team to me is everyone being involved, everyone bringing ideas and challenges to the table.

Finally, what is the best piece of advice you've ever had? I like this Socrates quote - 'The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing.'



Sarah Wilkes

Director of Finance, Assets and Resources (S151)

Sarah joined Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service in March this year, having previously worked in the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office. Sarah started her career in the private sector where she worked for accountancy firms in Newcastle-under-Lyme and Nantwich. After 12 years she moved into local government working in the internal audit team at Stoke-on-Trent City Council before being seconded to the finance team. Prior to joining the Commissioner's Office, Sarah worked for Newcastle Borough Council leaving as the Director of Finance.

Through her time at the Commissioner's Office, Sarah gained an insight into the fire and rescue sector and the Service and three months in, she's very happy to be part of the PO team.

Over the next 6-12 months and beyond, Sarah will be supporting the CFO's vision for the Service by ensuring our finances are aligned and meet the objectives of our CRMP. It is the responsibility of Sarah and the wider finance team to ensure we have the resources to perform successfully as a fire and rescue service. There are lots of challenges and changes coming our way and Sarah will be ensuring we transition smoothly, understanding how we adapt and move forward. We also have a number of savings we need to make over the coming years to ensure we have financial stability and resilience to make sure we have the equipment and resources to support our evolving Service.

You know the drill... find out more about Sarah with our quick fire questions...

Tea or coffee? Coffee

Do you have a favourite TV series that you've watched recently? I like Yellowstone – I've started watching Dutton Ranch which is good too.

What is the one thing you can't start your day without? A coffee!

What is one song that you never get tired of? You've got the love – Candi Staton

What helps you to switch off after a busy day? Taking my dog for a walk.

What is your ideal way to spend a day off? Spending time with my family – either a walk and lunch or a fun day out at Alton Towers.

What is your dream travel destination? I have three... New York, the Maldives/ Mauritius – somewhere to properly relax and Japan

What motivates you most at work? Helping people.

If you could have a superpower, what would it be? Invisibility

Books or Podcasts? I like podcasts – I don't have a favourite but I enjoy topical conversational ones.

What is your go to oatcake order? Bacon and mushroom

What is something that you are most proud of? I'm proud of my new role here in the Service, I'm really enjoying getting to know everyone – it is nice to see how committed everyone is to the Service and the community.

What does a great team look like to you? Very open and honest, trustworthiness is important to me. A good team should all be on the same page and work together. There's no 'i' in team!

Finally, what is the best piece of advice you've ever had? Treat people how you want to be treated.



HERBERT PROTOCOL

At one of our Living Well group meetings the subject of **'The Herbert Protocol'** was raised which is a national, preventative scheme designed to help make sure that people living with dementia or other care needs who are at risk of going missing and becoming lost can be found and brought home safely. Police forces (and local search and rescue teams and other emergency services) use the Herbert Protocol as a proactive way to help when someone with dementia is reported missing.

It involves the completion of a form (usually online) that holds important information about a person who is living with dementia including a description of what they look like, a recent photo, any medication they take, important phone numbers, places from their past where they may find comfort and familiarity. Information is securely held by Medic Alert and can be accessed by the police if someone is reported missing. Care homes looking after residents with dementia or cognitive impairment frequently use the Herbert Protocol.

If anyone has any concerns regarding a family member or friend who may be at risk of wandering off and going missing, a Herbert Protocol form can be created online via Medic Alert which can be updated at any time and printed off if required by using the following link.**https://share.google/XKUXx5YwNtMEDvR45**

Further information can be found on:
https://herbertprotocol.com

This information including the link to the on line form can also be found on the Service website **https://www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk/what-we-do/welfare-and-retired-network/**

SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE CONTINUES

A firefighter based at Burton Community Fire Station has helped with the successful delivery of a ninth convoy of life-saving firefighting equipment to Ukraine.

The convoy, which departed the UK on Monday 29 June, reached the Polish border with Ukraine on Thursday 2 July, with vehicles and equipment being transferred to Ukrainian partners as part of a coordinated handover process.

Watch Manager Ant Doolan was one of the approximately 80 volunteers from fire and rescue services across the UK who gave their time to prepare, drive and deliver equipment.

Ant said: *"This was my sixth convoy to Ukraine and I am proud to be able to help international firefighting colleagues during their time of need.*

"This latest convoy delivered 21 fire vehicles and more than 2,300 pieces of essential firefighting equipment, helping to replace resources lost during the war."

National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Chair, Phil Garrigan, said: *"The UK fire and rescue community remains unwavering in its support for colleagues in Ukraine. Four years on from the start of the full-scale invasion, Ukrainian firefighters continue to operate in the most challenging and dangerous conditions imaginable.*

"This ninth convoy demonstrates the enduring commitment of UK fire and rescue services to stand shoulder to shoulder with our Ukrainian counterparts. The equipment being donated will help replace vital resources lost during the conflict and ensure firefighters can continue their life-saving work.

"This is about firefighters supporting firefighters. It is a powerful example of the friendship that transcends borders.

"It is crucial we recognise the challenges our colleagues face and that we continue to play our part."

HOW TO FALL ASLEEP AND SLEEP BETTER

If you're finding it hard to fall sleep or stay asleep, you are not alone. Many people have problems with sleep at some point.

Making small changes to habits and routines that help you sleep can make a real difference. This is sometimes called sleep hygiene.

Here are some practical tips and advice you can try to help you sleep better over time.

Tip 1.

Keep a regular sleep routine

When you have a regular sleep routine, it can make it easier to fall asleep. This is because going to bed and getting up at similar times each day helps your body know when it's time to sleep. Try to **keep your routine the same** when you can, even on days when you're not working.

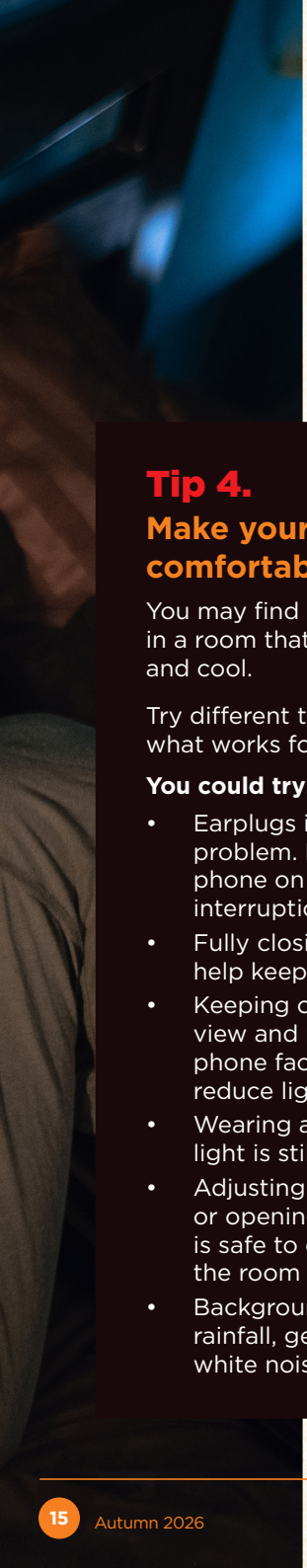
Tip 2.

Relax before bed.

A **calm bedtime routine** can help you prepare for sleep. Try not to use phones, tablets or computers for an hour before bed. The blue light from screens can make it harder to fall asleep.

Some things you could try to help you relax: reading something you enjoy, meditation, breathing exercises, listening to calming music listening to a podcast.





Tip 3.

Manage worries and stress.

Worry, stress and **anxiety can make it harder to sleep.** Talking to someone you trust or writing down your worries can help you manage them.

If you often worry in bed, try making a list of things you need to do the next day before you go to sleep. Writing things down can help clear your mind before bed.

Tip 4.

Make your bedroom comfortable for sleep.

You may find it easier to sleep in a room that is quiet, dark and cool.

Try different things to find what works for you.

You could try:

- Earplugs if noise is a problem. Putting your phone on silent to avoid interruptions.
- Fully closing curtains to help keep your room dark.
- Keeping clocks out of view and placing your phone face down to reduce light.
- Wearing an eye mask if light is still a problem.
- Adjusting the temperature or opening a window (if it is safe to do so) to make the room cooler.
- Background sounds like rainfall, gentle music or white noise.

Tip 5.

Try not to force sleep.

If you're lying awake and unable to sleep, **try not to force it.** When you're comfortable and resting, you may find you fall asleep naturally. But if you're still awake after around 20 minutes, get up and sit somewhere comfortable. Try a relaxing activity like gentle yoga, reading a book or listening to quiet music. **Go back to bed when you feel sleepy.**

Tip 6.

Get active to help you sleep better.

Regular physical activity and **exercise improves your body and mind.** It can also help you sleep better too. Even small amounts of activity can make a difference, and you can build up gradually over time. Some people find that exercising close to bedtime affects their sleep. If this happens to you, try being active earlier in the day.

Fall asleep faster and sleep better - Every Mind Matters - NHS

Funded by

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NHS



Your NHS Health Check Results

Visit: **staffordshire.everyonehealth.co.uk**
Email: **eh.staffs@nhs.net**
Text: **HEART** to **60777**
Tel: **0333 005 0095**

NHS HEALTH CHECK

Helping you prevent

- diabetes
- heart disease
- kidney disease
- stroke & dementia

For more information or support to stop smoking or lose weight contact us

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FREE HEALTH CHECKS

The Service is continuing to hold health checks for serving fire and police staff and while it is possible for retired staff to attend these clinics subject to availability, further specific events for veterans will again be organised subject to demand.

Dates have not yet been arranged but will be advertised via email and social media. If you aren't on the email list and would like a health check please get in touch via **a.buttery@staffordshirefire.gov.uk**

If you don't have access to email please give me a ring or send a text to **07866951110.**

The clinics are provided following engagement with Everyone Health to provide NHS approved Health Checks for those aged between **40** and **74,** and **Mini MOT's** for those under who fall outside of the criteria which also includes; Living in Staffordshire, not had a health check or cholesterol test in the last 5 year, not on statins or blood pressure meds and not already got a long-term condition such as diabetes or heart disease.

The health check will take approximately 30-minutes, during the appointment the practitioners will conduct a thorough assessment, if any potential issues are identified you may be advised to attend your GP for further assessment. They will also provide guidance in relation to maintaining a healthy lifestyle. your results will be sent directly to your GP,

If you prefer you can book a check directly with **'everyonehealth'** on **eh.staffs@nhs.net** or **0333 005 0095.**

These events are open to the general public and held at a variety of venues across the county sometimes including fire stations.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED FIRE SERVICE PERSONNEL (NARF)

The National Association of Retired Fire Service Personnel welcomes all former fire service staff to become members regardless of their role.

The aims of the Association are:

- To actively promote and safeguard the interests of members by representing their concerns, advocating for their rights and fostering collaboration with similar associations for industry-wide support.
- To introduce and support initiatives that enhance the wellbeing, safety and professional development of our members, ensuring their welfare remains a priority.
- To maintain strong and effective links with the fire service by fostering communication, and shared training opportunities to enhance mutual understanding and support.

More information can be found on their new website **www.narfire.uk**

If anyone wishes to join the Staffordshire Branch, which has a growing membership and is instrumental in organising events such as the annual hog roast and Christmas lunch, please contact the branch secretary Ron Biggs on **ronniethewolf@me.com**

SNOMED CT CODES FOR YOUR GP

It has been brought to my attention that there is a need to remind former firefighters that it is recommended that you inform your GP of your former occupation on your health records and in particular the potential toxic exposures that may have occurred during your service. This is done by using **SNOMED CT codes.**

All NHS healthcare providers in England must now use **SNOMED CT** for capturing clinical terms within electronic patient record systems. (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have other arrangements in place)

The following link will give you more information and a template letter and/or email that you can use to inform your GP of the relevant codes.

https://share.google/7v5Fy9aIqqNOIZQw9

INSTRUCTIONS FOR NEXT OF KIN

While this may seem a subject that most of us like to avoid I would like to remind you of a document that has been put together in conjunction with our National Association of Retired Fire Service Personnel (NARF) branch officials, that gives advice and information on preparing for the inevitable.

A number of tragic events over the last twelve months have highlighted the need for all of us to give the matter some thought in order to help our loved ones to cope with the difficulties that they may face at a traumatic time.

This document is available on the Service website www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk in the Welfare and Retired Network section or by using the following link. For those without access to internet who wish to have a copy please get in touch and I send you one in the post.

Welfare and Retired Network

Fire Fighters Charity

BAG IT BANK IT
CLOTHES RECYCLING

You can donate the following textiles

Adult and children's clothing
Socks • Coats • Underwear
Paired shoes • Handbags • Linen

#BagitandBankit

There are a number of recycling banks located around the county in which you can donate old and unwanted clothing which can raise valuable funds for the charity. January 2026 the charity held a '**Bag it and Bank it'** recycling campaign which saw a total of **536 tonnes of clothing being donated** which generated **£63,760** of income.

They can be found at:
Fire Stations Lopngnor, Ipstones, Biddulph, Kidsgrove, Burslem, Eccleshall, Abbots Bromley, Gnosall, Burton, Barton U Needwood, Lichfield and at Tesco Express Biddulph Road Chell, Stoke-on-Trent and B&M Home Store Berry Hill Rd Stoke-on-Trent.



FFC Living Well Meeting
5th November 10:30-12:30
Lichfield Fire Station

Wreath Laying & Walk
17th November 10:30
Royal British Legion
National Remembrance Gardens
(formerly the National
Memorial Arboretum)

Prostate Cancer Support Group
23rd November 10:30 - 12:30
Service HQ

Christmas Lunch
3rd December 12:30
Staffordshire Fire and Rescue HQ
Open to all retired staff and partners
Get in touch to book your place

Kidsgrove Rotary
Christmas collection
in aid of Fire Fighters Charity
11th December 6pm
Oldcott Drive, Goldenhill

Contact Andy using the details above for any queries

Diary dates

Fire Fighters Charity Living Well Groups hold monthly events in Leek, Sandyford, and Lichfield. Dates are shared via **email** and on **social media.**

If you're not on the email list and would like to receive updates, please contact:
a.buttery@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

If you don't use email but are interested in attending the Living Well Group meetings, feel free to **contact Andy** on **07866 951110.**



IN MEMORY OF

I've been asked to include a list of former colleagues who have sadly passed away.

Here are the names of those I've been notified of since the last newsletter.

John Leese

Keith Doughty

Terry Pedley

Dave Holbrook

Barry Knapper

Stuart Claughton

Brett Hames

Nigel Taylor – Brown

Bernard Gidman

Robert Stonier

Dixie Roden

Dave Hammersley

Clive Plant

Andy Leak

ATTENDANCE ALLOWANCE

Following a discussion with a retired colleague who has recently successfully applied for Attendance Allowance this note gives a brief outline of how this may provide some financial assistance for anyone who has a disability or health condition.

Attendance Allowance helps with extra costs if you have a disability or health condition severe enough that you need someone to help look after you.

It's paid at two different rates and how much you get depends on the level of care that you need because of your disability or health condition. You could currently get £76.70 or £114.60 a week to help with personal support if both of the following apply:

- you have a physical disability, a mental disability, or a health condition
- you're state pension age or older – Other benefits may be available if you have not yet reached state pension age e.g.PIPs

It does not cover mobility needs.

You could get extra Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction if you get Attendance Allowance.

You do not have to have someone caring for you in order to claim. If you do have a carer, they could get carers allowance if you have substantial caring needs.

How to claim

You can apply for Attendance Allowance online or by post.

To apply, you'll need:

- your National Insurance number
- your address and contact details
- details of the disability or health condition that you need extra help for
- details of your GP surgery or medical centre
- details of your care home, hospital or hospice if you're currently staying in one

Further information including details on how to apply can be found on **www.gov.uk**

Fire Fighters Charity

FIRE FIGHTERS CHARITY RE-BRAND

The launch of the re-branding of the charity comes as we reported our busiest year ever, with **13,507 people across the UK** fire services community accessing our services while demand for **our psychological care services rose by 10%.**

Even so, we estimate we are currently reaching only around 15% of those who need our care and support. Our strategy to 2030 sets out a clear ambition to double that reach, supporting around 30% of estimated annual need within the next five years.

To achieve this, more people need to recognise our charity, understand what we do, know how to access our services, and feel moved to support our work. While our existing brand has served us well, it no longer fully reflects the breadth of our work, the people we support, or our ambitions for the future.

Launching alongside the strategy is our new brand, which reflects our evolution and supports our ambition to reach more people with earlier, more accessible and more joined-up care. We are grateful to the family of a late firefighter, whose generous legacy gift helped make the project possible.

To mark the launch, we will be releasing a short film, The Silence Between Calls, which aims to raise awareness of the psychological impact of working in fire and rescue and encourage more people to seek support earlier.

Created pro bono by Emmy Award-winning director Daryl Goodrich and Mad Cow Films in partnership with Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, the film was unscripted, giving firefighters and fire control personnel the space to tell their own stories in their own words. In just 269 seconds, this powerful and honest film reveals the hidden emotional toll of working in fire and rescue, and the lasting psychological impact those experiences can have.

Sherine Wheeler

Chief Executive

Fire FIghters Charity

"Every day, firefighters, fire control personnel and everyone who supports emergency response are there for us on some of the worst days of our lives. They witness trauma, endure immense pressure and carry extraordinary responsibility, often while putting the needs of others before their own. The impact of working in the fire service can take its toll – sometimes immediately, sometimes many years later. Yet too many people are still reaching crisis before they access the specialist health and wellbeing support they need.

"We're determined to change that. Our new strategy sets out an ambitious plan to double the number of people we support by 2030, reaching more members of the fire services community earlier, in more places and in ways that work for them. By investing in prevention, embracing innovation and working in partnership with Fire and Rescue Services and other organisations, we can help more people stay well, recover sooner and continue serving their communities across the UK.

"Our new brand reflects who we are today and the future we're building. We want the people who spend their careers answering calls for help to never wonder where to turn when they need confidential, independent, and tailored help themselves"

From the archive

50 YEARS SINCE THE FAMOUS 1976 HEATWAVE

This year marks 50 years since the famous 1976 heatwave that occurred between 23rd June to 27th August across the UK. Temperatures exceeded 32°C somewhere in the country every day for 15 days straight between late June and early July.

When we originally prepared this article back in the summer we were also experiencing a heatwave across the country, with temperatures ranging during the day between 30°C-37°C so it looks like this year will easily surpass the much talked about summer of '76! There have also been a significant number of wildfires across the county including some that have affected houses and other properties.

However, let's go back to 1976 – perhaps for the last time as we will probably now start talking about the 'summer of 26'

Cannock Chase sizzled in a heatwave long remembered by those who experienced it. Months of meagre rainfall had left the countryside tinder dry and fire after fire broke out, with crews battling heroically to save the area from destruction.

As the summer neared the August Bank Holiday, firefighters were stretched to breaking point – many of them exhausted from constant action. There were major incidents across the county not just on the Chase including Hopwas Woods near Tamworth, Apedale and Tittensor Chase to name a few. It was reported that many of the local firefighters had gone 72 hours with very little rest. With more fires than available appliances and the Service receiving up to 250 calls every day that month.

At a time when smoking was common, a police official complained that 'despite numerous warning, many people are still wandering about smoking cigarettes. It only needs a spark from one cigarette to start a major fire'. Assistant Divisional Officer Roy Anslow, from Cannock, noted that the number of fires starting near roads suggested motorists were discarding cigarette ends from car windows as they drove past. A special plea to walkers not to smoke was made as the August Bank Holiday approached. This is a message that is still being put out by the Service.



The efforts of the Service were also apparently hampered by members of the public waiting until a fire had been burning for some time before dialling '999', denying the fire-fighters the chance to extinguish small fires in their early stages. Other callers summoned the Service back to areas where fires had been largely extinguished but the peat soil was smouldering deep underground. In these instances, the only options would have been for the crews to drench the area in gallons of water or to dig deeply into the soil to find the fire – both of which they simply did not have the resources to do.

Most sinister of all were the 'fire bugs' – individuals who went out of their way to set fresh fires. Often starting a second blaze as the firefighters battled the first.

Welcome support arrived for the overstretched Service in the form of military assistance from bases near the Chase. Over 150 recruits from Whittington Barracks brought with them 12 iconic 'Green Goddess' emergency pumps. (known at that time as E.P.s) and 120 men at RAF Stafford were put on standby. In a 'wartime spirit', inmates from Sudbury Open Prison were drafted in to help out in Burton and inmates from HMP Stafford were used at Stafford Fire Station to help wash delivery hose, whilst the county's firefighters received on-the-spot refreshments from the Women's Royal Voluntary Service and the Salvation Army. Other community organisations offered their help, including council forestry workers, members of the Royal British Legion and the Rotary Club.

Another organisation to get involved was Raynet (a nationwide voluntary service of radio amateurs), which, in conjunction with the local Land Rover club, helped with fire watching on the Chase. Land Rover owners would drive up to high spots and look out for smoke, radioing back the location once noted. They also helped roll up the hoses to give the exhausted firefighters a well-deserved rest.

With the Service stretched so thinly, on several occasions members of the public had to step in as unofficial firefighters to save property. Over 800 people signed up to help patrol high-risk areas, fight small fires and report fresh outbreaks.

The Bank Holiday ironically brought the first rain of the summer, and things could be relaxed a little. However, the ground was still dangerously under-saturated and the risk of fire remained high.

Further autumn rain reduced the risk of fire and Cannock Chase was gradually re-opened to visitors, although those who returned found a 'lunar landscape', with the blackened devastation of 100,000 trees and more than 250 acres of countryside. It was feared it could take a further three years before anything grew again. The local Rotary Clubs came to the rescue, planning to plant some 700 trees in burnt areas, whilst Councillor Eric Roberts suggested planting new trees to mark the Silver Jubilee of 1977.

Thank you to local historian Ben Cunliffe for providing the information and photos used for this article

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service

Armed Forces Network

Towards the end of last year, the Service launched an Armed Forces Network which provides support to ALL members of the military family in Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The Service has now been presented with a Gold Employer Recognition Award from the Ministry of Defence for it's commitment to supporting it's armed forces and veteran communities in Staffordshire.

The Gold award is the Ministry of Defence's highest badge of honour in recognition of supporting the armed force community and only 10 employers have been given the award in total.

To achieve the Gold Award status, the Service has committed to provide at least 10 days' additional paid leave for Reservists each year. It also has supportive HR policies for reservists, service families, veterans and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers.

Chief Fire Officer, Glynn Luznyj, said: *"I am proud that this recognition acknowledges the lasting commitment we have shown to the Armed Forces Covenant over many years.*

"It also celebrates how that commitment continues to evolve, most recently through the creation of our internal Armed Forces Network, which strengthens the support and connection for the armed forces community within Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service."

Minister for Veterans and People, Calvin Bailey MBE MP said: *"For a veteran starting a new chapter, or a Reservist balancing two demanding roles, having an employer in your corner makes an enormous difference. These 162 organisations have gone out of their way to make veterans, Reservists and military families feel genuinely welcome and supported. I'm incredibly proud to recognise them, and I hope their example inspires many more."*

As part of the continued commitment to strengthening the Gold Status under the Armed Forces Covenant, the service has extended the Armed Forces Network to include any retired firefighters who served in the military that are interested and to date a number have already done so. If anyone else from the retired network who served in the armed forces would like to join or to get more information you can contact the coordinators on:

armedforces@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

Sources of support

FFC Support to improve health and wellbeing
0800 389 8820

FFC Crisis Line 24/7 Having thoughts of suicide
0300 373 0896

Andys Man Club
info@andysmanclub
Meetings at various locations including Lichfield Fire Station, Stafford Rugby Club, Port Vale FC normally on - **Mondays 7.00pm** (except bank holidays)

Fire Service Chaplains
Andrew Wragg 07407 708321

NHS Crisis Support
North Staffs and Stoke on Trent 0800 0328 728 option 1.
Rest of Staffordshire 0808 196 3002

Drug and Alcohol NHS run rehab
CAMHS South Staffordshire 01785221665
STARS 01785 270 080
Turning Point Stafford 01785243712
North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare 07739 775202

Samaritans
116 123 www.samaritans.org

Citizens Advice
Various locations across Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent
www.citizensadviceorg.uk

University Hospitals North Midlands Macmillan Cancer Support and Information Centre
01782 676333

NHS Op Restore
A military veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service
www.oprestore.nhs.uk or contact **imperial.oprestore@nhs.net** or via GP referral

Thank you for reading



Staffordshire
Fire and Rescue Service
preventing • protecting • responding

