



Royal Air Force  
Benevolent Fund

IMPACT  
REPORT  
2021



# CONTENTS

A WELCOME FROM OUR CONTROLLER AND CHAIR	3
OUR KEY STATS	4
KEY AIM 1: EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	6
KEY AIM 2: FRIENDSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS	8
KEY AIM 3: FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS	10
KEY AIM 4: INDEPENDENT LIVING	12
KEY AIM 5: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	14
MORE SUPPORT FOR RAF STATIONS AND UNITS	16
FUNDRAISING	18
THANKING OUR DONORS	21
WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP	22

*Front cover: George Dunn, 99-year-old Second World War veteran and supporter of the Fund, at the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park, London*

# ABOUT US

We're the RAF Benevolent Fund, and we're here to support veterans, serving personnel and their families, when they need it most.

We provide the financial, emotional and practical support that helps people live with the dignity and independence they deserve.

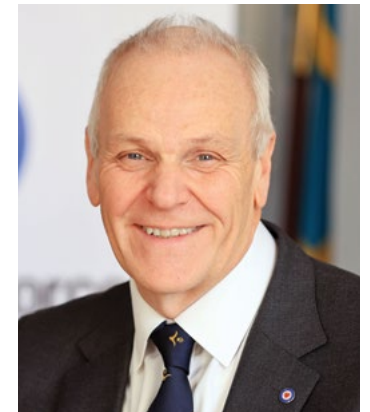
# WELCOME

2021 was another year of challenges – but of many successes too, with exciting plans unfolding as we emerged from the pandemic.

We were proud to support more than 44,600 veterans, serving personnel and their families during the challenging times of the Covid-19 pandemic and the brighter times that followed as restrictions eased. Not only did we keep delivering our crucial services despite difficult conditions, we grew and improved many of them, reacting quickly and flexibly to meet everyone's needs.

Our achievements were only possible due to the huge generosity of our supporters. Thanks to you, we managed to raise £16.3M to support the RAF Family in 2021 – £2.2M more than last year. We're so grateful to every one of our supporters for helping get the RAF Family through their toughest times.

For over 100 years, we've been the RAF's most devoted friend, supporting the whole of the RAF Family, from the oldest veteran to the youngest child. Together, we'll continue to be here in 2022 and beyond.



**Air Vice-Marshal Chris Elliot**  
CB CBE MA BSc DL  
Controller  
RAF Benevolent Fund

**Richard Daniel**  
BSc (Hons) FRAeS  
Chair  
RAF Benevolent Fund

# OUR KEY STATS

**44,600+**

MEMBERS OF THE RAF FAMILY REACHED THROUGHOUT THE UK AND AROUND THE WORLD

**22,700+**

SERVING PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES

**21,900+**

VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES



**94%**

SAID WE MADE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE TO THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE



**82%**

SAID WE MET ALL OR MOST OF THEIR NEEDS

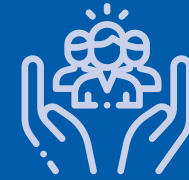
WE SUPPORTED **5,500+** PEOPLE BY GIVING THEM INFORMATION OR ANSWERING THEIR ENQUIRY



**7,300+**

PEOPLE WERE SUPPORTED THROUGH FINANCIAL GRANTS WE GAVE TO HELP THEM THROUGH TOUGH TIMES

WE HELPED **9,400+** PEOPLE THROUGH GRANTS WE GAVE TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS

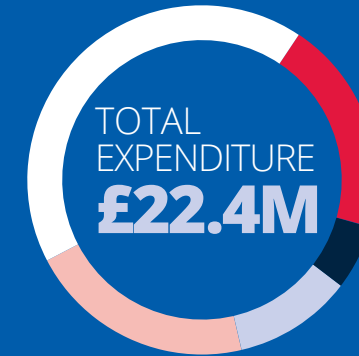


OUR EMOTIONAL WELLBEING SERVICES SUPPORTED **11,600+** PEOPLE



WE GAVE **2,500+** PEOPLE ADVICE AND ADVOCATED FOR THEM ON ISSUES INCLUDING BENEFITS AND CARE

WE HELPED **9,700+** PEOPLE THROUGH GRANTS WE GAVE TO RAF STATIONS



- Direct support to individuals: £9.5M/42%
- Welfare programmes and grants: £4.5M/20%
- Respite care: £1.3M/6%
- Housing Trust provision: £2.4M/11%
- Generating income: £4.7M/21%



- Legacies: £11.5M/45%
- Donations and other fundraising: £4.8M/19%
- Investment income: £2.5M/10%
- Charitable activities: £1M/4%
- Other income: £5.7M/22%



KEY AIM 1

# EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

2021 was another turbulent year for many. Our emotional wellbeing services were there for the RAF Family every step of the way.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- We supported 11,600+ people with their emotional wellbeing – 42% more than in 2020.
- 1,471 RAF Family members received listening and counselling support from our Wellbeing Services.
- Thanks to the free memberships we provide, almost 6,000 RAF Family members used the mindfulness app Headspace – a 26% rise on 2020. 94% felt it positively impacted their stress levels.



“ Gardening gives me the chance to escape from the real world. You feel as if a weight has been lifted off your shoulders.”

Amileigh Salt, whose husband Ash is stationed at RAF Leeming, on the difference polytunnels we funded at the station have made to her mental health



**42%**  
MORE RAF FAMILY MEMBERS SUPPORTED WITH THEIR EMOTIONAL WELLBEING VS 2020

**71%**  
SUPPORTED BY OUR SPECIALIST COUNSELLING SERVICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FELT THE SERVICE HAD A POSITIVE EFFECT

**£1M**  
SPENT ON IMPROVING THE RAF FAMILY'S EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

When Flight Sergeant Sam Parsley experienced mental health problems, counselling arranged through our Wellbeing Services helped put him on the road to recovery.

“In 2021, a perfect storm developed in my life. I was worrying about lots of things at once. Whether to leave the RAF or go for a promotion. Whether to move for the promotion, which meant leaving my children.

“Then something just tripped, and I had some kind of breakdown. Medical professionals referred me to the Fund, who put me in touch with Barbara, a cognitive behavioural therapist.

“Being an engineer, my mind was like ‘something is wrong, I just need it fixed’. But Barbara tried to get down to the root cause. She gave me tools to recognise when I’ve got too much on my plate, so it doesn’t get to that stage again.

“Eventually, I got a grip of it. I was able to wake up without feeling I was fighting for my life. I was able to take all my problems and, one at a time, dissect them and solve them.”



“ I feel like I’m on the road to being sorted again.”

KEY AIM 2

# FRIENDSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS



No member of the RAF Family should ever feel alone. Easing isolation and loneliness was an important area of our work in 2021.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Our Telephone Friendship Groups grew from 22 to 32, giving RAF veterans and their partners the chance to meet new people and feel less isolated.
- Our Community Engagement Workers helped 164 RAF Family members, aiming to introduce them to regular meaningful social activities. Two new Workers joined the team in West Sussex and Hampshire.
- During the winter lockdown staff from the Fund made over 6,000 Check and Chat calls to 214 socially-isolated RAF Family members to see how they were coping.

“In the RAF, there’s a real sense of community, but it’s different on civvy street. My local Community Engagement Worker has been amazing in connecting me to all sorts of support.”

**Connie Doull, talking about the difference her Community Engagement Worker has made to her life**

**23%**  
INCREASE IN PEOPLE TAKING PART IN OUR TELEPHONE FRIENDSHIP GROUPS

**£562K**  
SPENT ON HELPING THE RAF FAMILY FIND FRIENDSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS

**83%**  
SAID OUR TELEPHONE FRIENDSHIP GROUPS HAD IMPROVED THEIR HAPPINESS

“I think the Groups are first-class.”



RAF veteran Raymond Harris benefits hugely from being a member of one of our Telephone Friendship Groups.

“I think the Telephone Friendship Groups are perfect. I joined in early 2021, when we were all in a sort of vacuum during the lockdown. It was nice to be able to talk to people and to exchange views with people in other parts of the UK. You get to know what they did in the RAF or about the lives of spouses. It’s most interesting.

“I’m very grateful to the Fund for the groups. It brings together people who wouldn’t otherwise have the opportunity to socialise, all with the commonality of being part of the RAF Family.

“I lost my wife, Ann, six years ago. Ever since I’ve been conscious of missing all the inter-connections I used to have with her. I miss her every day. My Telephone Friendship Group helps replace part of what I had with her.”



KEY AIM 3

# FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS

This year we supported RAF families with the challenges they face, keeping them together and improving their happiness.

2021: KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- 1,000+ RAF Family members received the relationship support we offer. 78% reported an improvement in communication with their partner as a result of our relationship counselling.
- 2,000+ children and young people on RAF stations enjoyed exciting activities at our Airplay and Ben Clubs – a 6% rise on 2020.
- We restarted our wellbeing breaks, with 112 people enjoying UK trips away. 94% surveyed said it improved their family relationships.



“The Thrive courses changed the way I think about things. It’s been really effective at managing a mindset change.”

**Jenni Marchant, who benefited from our Thrive programme at RAF Lossiemouth while her husband Doug was deployed to the Falklands**



**1,000+**  
RAF FAMILY MEMBERS RECEIVED RELATIONSHIP SUPPORT

**£1.6M**  
SPENT ON IMPROVING LIFE FOR FAMILIES

**68%**  
OF PARTNERS OF SERVING RAF PERSONNEL WHO TOOK PART IN OUR THRIVE WORKSHOPS TO IMPROVE WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE SHOWED AN IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR WELLBEING

When Squadron Leader Steven Debling lost his wife Kim to cancer, we were there with emotional, practical and financial support for him and his two young children.

“I’d always wanted to be a helicopter pilot. While I was doing my training in 2003 I met Kim, who was training to be an air traffic controller. We both served in Afghanistan and Kim also served in Iraq.

“In 2018 our lives were turned upside down. Kim was diagnosed with stage four skin cancer. It was incurable, and Kim lost her battle later that year, leaving me with our children, Rose and Harvey, a baby and toddler at the time.

“I really needed support and the Fund has stepped up ever since. They’ve provided childcare – almost 24/7 to begin with – and counselling. They also helped pay for the spiralling travel costs when Kim was ill. These were all absolute game-changers and ensured that I could get out of bed and function.”

“In my experience, the Fund truly is the heart of the RAF Family.”



KEY AIM 4

# INDEPENDENT LIVING

We helped RAF Family members to live independently and with dignity in 2021.

2021: KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- We gave £1.8M in 1,865 grants to RAF Family members to pay for mobility, care and disability equipment. 96% surveyed said it contributed to their comfort.
- We spent £815K to repair and adapt housing for RAF Family members. 98% said it helped improve their day-to-day life.
- Our Advocacy Service acts for RAF Family members facing problems such as getting funding for care. We supported 587 people this year. 84% said it benefited them or a family member.



“The Fund’s support has been a godsend. The shower and wet room allow me to be independent and feel normal.”

**RAF veteran Midge Hartley, who has a rare degenerative condition, explains how the home adaptations we funded improved his life**



**£4.7M**  
SPENT ON HELPING THE RAF FAMILY LIVE INDEPENDENTLY

**£220K**  
SPENT TO HELP PAY FOR CARE AT HOME

**£332K**  
SPENT TO HELP TOP UP CARE HOME FEES

**587**  
PEOPLE SUPPORTED THROUGH OUR ADVOCACY SERVICE

We’ve supported former Corporal Vivien Almond for more than 20 years, with a home in one of our Housing Trust properties and by providing her with mobility scooters to help her keep active.

“I served in the RAF for 14 years and loved every minute of it. But unfortunately, the job I did – I was a painter and finisher – damaged my lungs, and I had to come out on medical grounds.

“I felt absolutely deflated. I was only 35. I’d lost my ability to work, I had come out of the career I absolutely loved. I was almost homeless.

“Without the Fund I don’t think I would be here today. When I phoned them shortly after leaving everything changed. They stepped in and provided me with a home. They’ve also given me back my independence by providing me with a scooter, which means I can do the things I need to do myself, like walking my dog.”

“Over 20 years the Fund has been there for me and I don’t know what I’d do if they weren’t.”





KEY AIM 5

# FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

We were a much-needed financial safety net for veterans, serving members of the RAF, and their families this year.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- From pension top-ups to paying for urgent home repairs, we gave 2,969 individual awards totalling £3M to veterans, serving members of the RAF and their families in 2021. 95% said it helped improve their quality of life.
- Our Advice and Advocacy Service identified £2M in unclaimed benefits RAF Family members could claim. 81% of people who used the service made a successful claim as a result.
- Our Legal Advice Helpline supported 163 people. 74% said the advice was of benefit to them.



“The Fund’s help has made a huge difference to our lives and comfort, and greatly relieved our monthly budget.”

**Peter Morris, an RAF veteran who now lives in Canada, on how regular financial support from the Fund has made life more comfortable**



**£4.7M**  
SPENT ON  
SUPPORTING  
THE RAF FAMILY  
FINANCIALLY

**£1M**  
SPENT TO HELP WITH  
HOUSE REPAIRS

**£508K**  
SPENT ON REGULAR  
FINANCIAL HELP FOR  
PENSIONERS

**£203K**  
SPENT ON FUNERAL  
COSTS

“I don’t know where we would be without you.”



When the local authority tried to move RAF veteran John Lambert to a new, cheaper care home, we helped fight his corner – and recoup £45K.

John Lambert joined the RAF in 1942 and served in Bomber Coastal Command. In his twilight years, worsening dementia meant he could no longer live independently, so he moved into a care home.

John’s care was self-funded and when those funds were gone, Merton Council decided to move him to a less expensive home.

John’s daughter Jane says: “We were appalled. Our father had dementia, so moving him would have had a detrimental effect. He was already confused about why we weren’t able to visit when Covid-19 restrictions were imposed.”

The family got in touch with our Advice and Advocacy Service, who supported them every step of the way. We discovered that Merton Council had unlawfully taken £45K from John to pay for his care. After a long battle, the Social Care Ombudsman ruled the council should refund the money. John was also able to move into a lovely nursing home in Richmond.

Sadly John passed away in November 2021. His family has since taken part in our Dambusters Ride and run a 10K race to raise money for the Fund.



## MORE SUPPORT FOR RAF STATIONS AND UNITS

As well as being there for the veterans who need us, we also strongly focus on supporting serving RAF personnel and their families with our life-changing station grants



IN 2021 WE SPENT **£5.2M** TO IMPROVE LIFE ON RAF STATIONS, AND TO SUPPORT SERVING PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILIES THROUGH OUR RANGE OF WELFARE SERVICES

### A NEW COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR RAF WADDINGTON

With help from our £100K grant, RAF Waddington opened its new community centre in September. It includes a coffee shop, access to social work practitioners, chaplaincy services and Citizens Advice. It's also home to groups such as the station's Airplay Youth Club and yoga classes.

Our grant was used to fit out the centre with quality furnishings and equipment. The Pip Beck Centre now provides an attractive and welcoming venue for all community members.

*Left: Prince Edward opens the new community centre at RAF Waddington*



### A NEW SOCIAL CLUB FOR RAF HONINGTON

In August, RAF Honington opened its new social club, helped by our £29K grant. It's an enticing space for serving personnel and their families to use for an array of social activities. Station Commander Group Captain Piers 'Dutch' Holland said: "There was an inadequate provision for socialising across the community, leading to social isolation and over-stretched facilities. The Club allows us to tackle those issues head on."

*Above: Our Director of Fundraising and Communications Jason Shauness opens the new social club at RAF Honington with Station Commander Group Captain Dutch Holland*



### RESEARCHING THE NEEDS OF SERVING PERSONNEL

To provide the best possible support for serving personnel and their families, we worked hard in 2021 to research their needs. We completed two key pieces of research – one into the wellbeing of children and young people in the serving RAF community, and the other with Swansea University into gambling and wellbeing in the RAF. Both gave us interesting insights to help shape our services.



# FUNDRAISING

In 2021 we were only able to support 44,600+ members of the RAF Family in need thanks to the generosity and efforts of our wonderful supporters, raising an amazing £16.3M in a difficult climate.

## GIFTS IN WILLS

In 2021, we were extremely grateful to receive £11.5M in legacies, up 49% on 2020. Gifts in Wills represent the largest form of income for the Fund and we are deeply indebted to the people who choose to support the RAF Family in this way. It is the ultimate compliment.

## INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS

We're very thankful to everyone who gave regular gifts, gifts in memory of a loved one, and fundraised for us in 2021, raising a remarkable £1.7M.

## SUPPORT FROM THE SERVING RAF

Serving personnel continued the tradition of looking after their own, recognising the vital support the Fund offers. 70% made a monthly gift through the Service Day's Pay Giving scheme, contributing an impressive £1.6M.

## PARTNERSHIPS

We were delighted to receive a generous £900K from corporates, trusts and major donors in 2021. We are extremely grateful for their continued support.



**£16.3M**  
RAISED,  
INCLUDING:

**£11.5M**  
RECEIVED FROM GIFTS  
IN WILLS

**£1.7M**  
RECEIVED FROM  
INDIVIDUALS

**£1.6M**  
RECEIVED FROM THE  
SERVICE DAY'S PAY  
GIVING SCHEME

**£900K**  
RECEIVED FROM  
PARTNERS, TRUSTS  
AND MAJOR DONORS

## LEAVING A GIFT

James Smith has kindly chosen to leave us a gift in his Will, to thank the Fund for supporting him in his time of need.

"I was in the RAF in the early 1980s but had to leave after six months. My parents had a bad car accident and needed care. Lifting them all the time meant I ended up severely disabled with arthritis myself.

"I decided to leave the Fund a gift in my Will because I'm so thankful for everything that you've done for me, including providing a new roof, kitchen, downstairs toilet, riser recliner chair and bed. These renovations have improved life for my wife and I tremendously. They've made me more independent. The things you've provided have helped us a hundred thousand times over."



## THE DAMBUSTERS RIDE

In summer 2021, more than 200 incredible fundraisers raised £146K taking part in our Dambusters Ride – a cycle challenge celebrating the centenary of George 'Johnny' Johnson DFM, the last surviving original member of Operation Chastise, also known as the Dambusters raid.

Cyclists rode either 100 or 56 miles starting and finishing at Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, the home of 617 Squadron. Participants could also sign up to ride the same distance in their own area.







RAF Air Cadets enjoying our carol concert, sponsored by MBDA

#### MBDA

MBDA UK has supported us for more than 10 years through its tremendous Charity Dinner, in support of military charities, including the Fund, and smaller charities near its office sites. MBDA's Dinner raised £37K for the Fund in 2021, and has raised more than £2M since it began. MBDA also sponsored our carol concert this year.

#### THE MERCURY FOUNDATION

Thanks to The Mercury Foundation's support, we worked with 19 RAF stations to host 305 socially-isolated veterans for Christmas lunches on stations. We also delivered 449 hampers to those unable to travel.



#### THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND

The National Lottery Community Fund's Young Start programme has kindly committed to giving us £92K over three years to fund Airplay at RAF Lossiemouth, so children on the station can enjoy fun and educational activities.

## THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| 2Excel Aviation (The Blades)               | Edith Murphy Foundation                         | Out of the Blue Foundation                       |
| Ada Hillard Charitable Trust               | ESS – Defence                                   | Princess Anne's Charities Trust                  |
| Adrian Swire Charitable Trust              | Pascal Fournier                                 | Proludic Ltd                                     |
| Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust           | George Bessell DFM Trust                        | RAFA Formby                                      |
| Babcock International Group                | Heroes Drinks                                   | Scottish Veterans Fund                           |
| BAE Systems                                | John Isabel                                     | Selkirk Charitable Trust                         |
| Duncan Barber and Jane Burrows             | James Weir Foundation                           | Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition           |
| Bill Brown's 1989 Charitable Trust         | John James Bristol Foundation                   | Thales Charitable Trust                          |
| Mr and Mrs Colin Blowers                   | Joron Charitable Trust                          | The April Fools' Club                            |
| BNA Charitable Incorporated Organisation   | Knight Sportswear                               | The Beaujolais Run                               |
| Charles S French Charitable Trust          | Lockheed Martin UK                              | The Gordon-Watkins Family                        |
| CCM Motorcycles                            | Loppylugs and Barbara Morrison Charitable Trust | The Inter-Livery Target Rifle Shoot              |
| Charles Burrell 2016 Charitable Settlement | MBDA UK   | The Mercury Foundation                           |
| Ray Daniels                                | Donagh McCullagh                                | The National Lottery Community Fund, Young Start |
| DXC Technology                             | Medlock Charitable Trust                        | Tony and Audrey Watson Charitable Trust          |
| Dyers' Company                             | Midshires Mobility Group                        |  |
|  | Miss Caroline J Spence's Fund                   |  |

# WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

## EXTERNAL GRANTS

Every year we give grants to charities and other organisations who provide direct and targeted assistance to the RAF Family, including support with employment, homelessness and substance misuse.

IN 2021 WE GAVE

**£399K**

TO **30** ORGANISATIONS INCLUDING:

- CARE FOR VETERANS **£15K**
- AGE IN SPAIN **£10K**
- DEFENCE MEDICAL WELFARE SERVICE **£13K**
- REGULAR FORCES EMPLOYMENT AGENCY **£62K**
- NOT FORGOTTEN ASSOCIATION **£7.5K**
- POPPYSCOTLAND ASAP **£20K**
- POLISH WAR WIDOWS **£5K**
- FIGHTING WITH PRIDE **£17K**

## OUR CASEWORKING PARTNERS

To supplement our own caseworking capability, we work with several organisations that investigate cases and distribute grants to the RAF Family on our behalf.

IN 2021 WE GAVE

**£8.4M**

IN GRANTS THROUGH OUR CASEWORKING PARTNERS INCLUDING:

- ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION **£3.5M**
- SSAFA **£1.3M**
- THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION **£380K**
- OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION **£16K**
- ROYAL COMMONWEALTH EX-SERVICES LEAGUE **£223K**



“ I go down to physio, and I enjoy it. I do it as much as I can and try and keep fit. Most afternoons, I go down to the Wellbeing Hub. I like to keep my mind active. Although the body's wearing out, the mind is still what it was!”

## CARING FOR RAF VETERANS

For more than 100 years, Care for Veterans in Worthing has provided long-term nursing care, rehabilitation, respite and end-of-life care to disabled ex-Service personnel. In 2021 we gave the charity a £15K grant towards the care of RAF veterans. The grant helped pay for services including physiotherapy, occupational therapy and social and recreational activities.

Former Flight Engineer John was based at RAF Watton, serving on the Washington Bomber B-29. John became part of the Care for Veterans family in October 2020.







Find out more about our  
impact and our work at  
**[rafbf.org.uk/impact](https://rafbf.org.uk/impact)**

Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund  
67 Portland Place  
London  
W1B 1AR

0300 102 1919  
[mail@rafbf.org.uk](mailto:mail@rafbf.org.uk)

The RAF Benevolent Fund is a registered charity in England  
and Wales (1081009) and Scotland (SCO38109)



Cobseo  
The Confederation  
of Service Charities



Registered with  
**FUNDRAISING  
REGULATOR**