



ON THE RADAR

KEEPING YOU UP TO DATE WITH THE RAF BENEVOLENT FUND



WELCOME TO ON THE RADAR

We hope you enjoy our latest newsletter, full of information about the support we provide for the RAF Family, and how donations can truly make a difference to those in need

Spring has officially sprung! And with it, this April marks the Month of the Military Child, a time to highlight the efforts, challenges and achievements RAF children may experience as part of a serving family.

This edition of *On The Radar*, delves into a range of services we offer to support families across all generations – from the youngest child to the oldest veteran.

We look at our youth support programme Airplay which, along with Ben Play, has nearly 3,000 attendees across 25 RAF stations - with 1,000 new sign ups in 2023 alone! We also explore how we supported a family in their time of need, our holiday home offering available for year-round breaks, as well as the importance of leaving a Will to look after your family.



RAF Family members at RAF Waddington

If you or someone you know needs our support, call **0300 102 1919** or email welfare Navigators@rafbf.org.uk

Any gift you send today will help make a life-changing difference to members of our RAF Family who are struggling. You can call **020 7580 8343** or visit rafbf.org/lucia to donate

- ✓ EMOTIONAL WELLBEING
- ✓ FRIENDSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS
- ✓ FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIPS

- ✓ INDEPENDENT LIVING
- ✓ FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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SUPPORTING RAF CHILDREN THROUGH AIRPLAY

This year marks the fourteenth year of our Airplay programme, providing activities and youth work to support children and young people across 25 RAF stations since its inception in 2010

Airplay is our national youth work programme which provides a safe place for the children and young people of the RAF Family to learn and hang out with their friends.

In 2023, Airplay Station Youth Workers delivered over 4000 youth work sessions for more than 2000 children and young people. We also helped arrange a three-day residential called Airbreaks, which offered the youngsters a chance to have a break from station life, immersed into a stimulating programme of outdoor activities, teamwork games and lots of entertainment.

Airplay Youth Worker Julia Purton, based at RAF Henlow, said: "Airplay benefits military children because it gives them a support network. When everything else is changing – their home, their school, friends – they know they can go to Airplay, meet other children and get support should they need it."

A recent Airplay report has revealed that 82 per cent of young people agreed that Airplay makes them feel more confident whilst 89 per cent agreed that they feel listened to at Airplay.

Airplay attendee Cyrus, 15, said: "I love Airplay because it makes you feel at home – I think Airplay is important for kids like me as it brings us all together, and it can especially help young people who are not so confident and are a bit shy by bringing them out their comfort zone."

"THE FUND HAS HELPED US SO MUCH AS A FAMILY"

One family we helped support recently was the Ritchie's. Flight Lieutenant Graeme Ritchie and his wife Bianca reached out to the Fund for help adapting their home to meet the complex needs of their 10-year-old daughter

After years of moving from one base to another, the Ritchie family relocated to be closer to their parents for support and to build their forever home. The overall cost of the works looked like an impossibility for the family of five, but with our help, they were able to make the necessary adaptations to meet the complex needs of their 10-year-old daughter, Lucia, and create a more comfortable future for the entire family. >>

The couple have three children – Lucia, 10, Jenson, eight, and Pippa, five. Bianca is a full-time carer for Lucia, who was diagnosed with a rare congenital disorder as a baby.

Lucia's congenital disorder means that she is non-verbal, has mobility issues, epilepsy, and heart defects.

As Lucia grew older, navigating the bath and the stairs became increasingly difficult for Bianca and was causing her to have serious back problems. With the local authority unable to provide financial assistance for the necessary home renovations, we provided the Ritchie family with a grant and a loan to adapt their home with a downstairs bedroom and wash facility for Lucia, as well as making the ground floor wheelchair accessible.

Bianca said: "We're truly so grateful for your support. I'm just amazed that the help was there for us, and the extent of the support has been incredible."

Speaking on the relief this has brought to the family, Bianca said: "The best part for us is that she is in a safe bedroom that's her own downstairs with an accessible bathroom. It's perfect, I don't have to lift her in and out of the bath anymore. It's life-changing for all of us."

// Our adapted home has been life-changing for our children"

Could you help contribute towards home adaptations for a family like the Ritchie's? Visit rafbf.org/lucia to donate

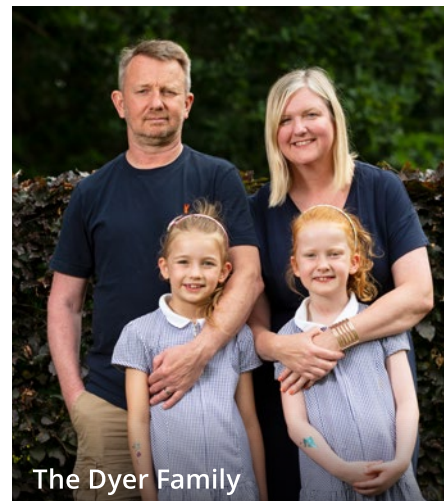


Get in touch if you need support by calling **0300 102 1919**, or email us on welfare Navigators@rafbf.org.uk

FANCY A SPRING GETAWAY?

Book your family in for a stay at The Folly!

Our holiday home, The Folly, has availability for welfare breaks for serving RAF personnel and RAF veterans all year round. Located in the seaside town of Bridlington, the modern, detached



bungalow boasts a large, open-plan living space with a separate lounge in addition to four bedrooms and four bathrooms. The property is located just 15 minutes' walk from the town centre with a variety of shops, restaurants, and attractions.

For the Dyer family, their holiday stay at The Folly was more than ideal. After experiencing a stroke and spending two years in rehab, Al and his wife Gina were desperate for some time away with their seven-year-old twin girls. After such a difficult period, the family craved some much-needed quality time together to relax and enjoy themselves, and The Folly was fully accessible for Al's needs.

Gina said: "The house was lovely – the disabled access was great; all of the showers were walk in and we made ourselves at home straightaway. The kids loved it too, especially playing hide and seek!

"There was a dark cloud above our heads when Al was discharged from the RAF, and we really needed a break. It was everything to us – we're so glad we did it and spent the time together we needed so much."

Visit rafbf.org/thefolly to apply for your break

FUND BENEFICIARY AND FUNDRAISER WINS CHILD OF COURAGE AWARD

Emily is recognised for her remarkable fundraising efforts



Emily Caffrey at the Children of Courage Awards

Beneficiary and supporter Emily Caffrey was awarded the 'Sporting Superstar' award (12 and under) at the Yorkshire Children of Courage Awards 2023 for taking part in a triathlon and raising money for the Fund.

Emily was 10 years old when she took part in the Yorkshire Abilities Triathlon last summer, a triathlon put on for participants with disabilities. Emily, who has cerebral palsy, completed a 50m swim, a 1500m bike ride and a 800m run with her walker raising over £3000.

The youngster said of her fundraiser: "I raised money for the Fund because they have helped me so much in the past. They paid for a specially adapted horse-riding saddle for me, contributed towards my special trike and helped to get my mum and dad's house adapted to make things easier."

Jon served in the RAF Police for 22 years meaning the family were eligible for support from the Fund.

Interested in fundraising for us?
To get involved, please email
fundraise@rafbf.org.uk or visit
rafbf.org/fundraise

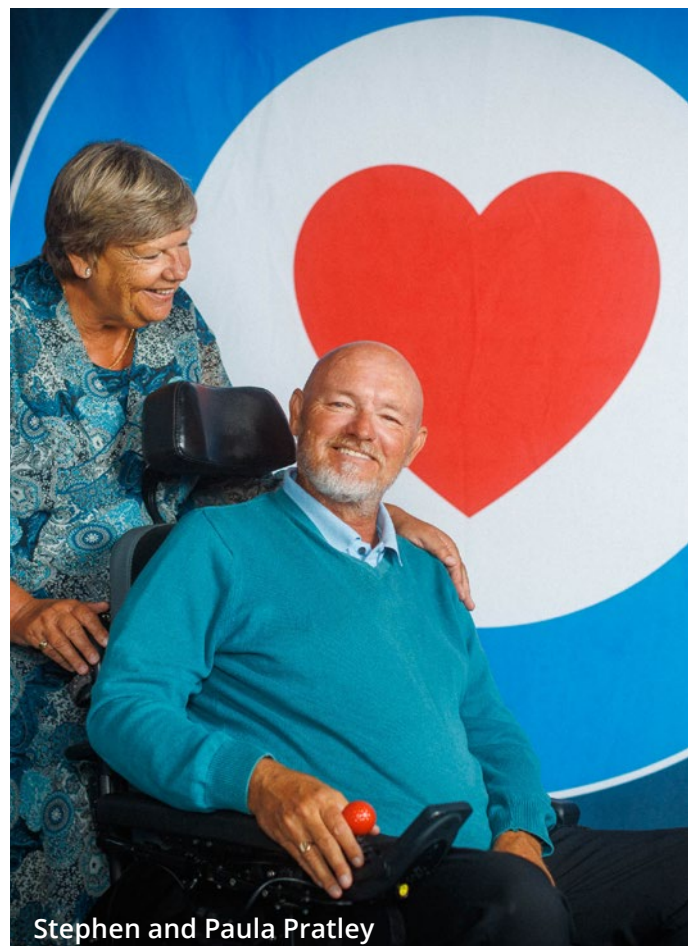
FREE WILL WRITING SERVICES FOR THE RAF FAMILY

Need to write or update your Will?

Writing your Will can help you and your family feel reassured about the future. We have partnered with two services to help you write or update your Will for free.

- Farewill can be found at farewill.com/rafbf-web or you can call **020 4538 2378** and ask for a call back.
- National Free Wills Network is reached by emailing legacies@rafbf.org.uk or calling **0300 102 1919** and we will refer you to a solicitor in your area.

For more information, and to find out which service may be best for you, please contact the friendly Gifts in Wills team on **0300 102 1919** or email legacies@rafbf.org.uk



Stephen and Paula Pratley



RAF Family members at the RAF Museum

YOUR EXPERIENCE COULD HELP OTHER RAF FAMILY MEMBERS

Are you a member of the RAF Family and happy to take part in our new Lived Experience Network? Get in touch!

We've recently launched a new volunteering initiative called the Lived Experience Network which aims to increase inclusion in the RAF Family.

The new initiative will bring together a group of serving and former RAF personnel, as well as partners and spouses from across the UK to share their lived experiences of the air force, to help shape our service offering and drive innovation.

Volunteers who join the Network can help in a variety of ways, from completing surveys, joining focus groups, or participating in long-term working groups for internal projects. All volunteering opportunities will be remote roles and can be done from home.

The Network will provide invaluable insight into the challenges and nuances of life in the RAF and will

ensure we are tailoring our services to meet the specific needs of the RAF Family.

Joining the Network and contributing your point of view can help maximise our impact and ensure that we remain a beacon of support for the RAF Family.

If you are a current or former member of the RAF, or a partner or spouse, we would love to hear your point of view. Whether you can spare 10 minutes or an hour every so often, sharing your perspective can make a real difference.

Contact our Volunteer Manager
for more information at
volunteering@rafbf.org.uk

HOW OUR BENEFITS ADVICE TEAM CAN HELP THE RAF FAMILY

Helping families understand what they are entitled to

Over the last two years, our welfare teams have noticed an increase in enquiries for family benefit support, including a 70 per cent rise in the number of parents reaching out for assistance with childcare and children's needs. Thanks to our supporters, we've been able to provide the suitable advice and guidance needed for the RAF Family.

Our benefits advice and advocacy team can help beneficiaries navigate through every step of the complicated benefits system. We help carry out checks to ensure families are not missing out on benefits they are entitled to claim. We also provide the RAF Family information about any relevant income maximisation schemes that may be available to them, such as council tax discounts and reductions, or help with energy costs.

It is thanks to our supporters that we can help make the benefits process easier for the RAF Family.

How do I find out what benefits I may be eligible for?

You can contact the RAF Benevolent Fund at advice@rafbf.org.uk. Alternatively, you can check your entitlement using an online calculator: entitledto.co.uk

WORD SEARCH

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

Words can be found in any direction (including diagonals) and can overlap each other.

AIRPLAY
CONFIDENCE
FRIENDSHIP
FAMILY

SUPPORT
RELATIONSHIPS
YOUTH

WELLBEING
CONNECT
BELONGING

To read previous editions visit:
rafbf.org/ontheradar



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