Branch Community Support Volunteer Handbook

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ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

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Welcome to Branch Community Support

Thank you for volunteering with the Royal British Legion's Branch Community Support (BCS) programme.

Since 1921, the RBL has supported serving personnel, veterans, and their families. As part of this, BCS plays an important role in reducing loneliness and strengthening community connections.

As a BCS volunteer, you will provide regular companionship that helps individuals feel valued, heard, and less isolated.

Supporting RBL's Strategy

Branch Community Support helps deliver RBL's ambition to build supportive communities by connecting people, reducing loneliness and creating positive impacts across the wider Armed Forces community.

Every BCS interaction helps strengthen community connections and foster a sense of belonging.

What is Branch Community Support (BCS)?

Branch Community Support (BCS) is a network of trained Royal British Legion members who volunteer to provide companionship to individuals experiencing loneliness or isolation through:

- Telephone support
- Home visits
- Hospital visits

BCS focuses on companionship and connection.

What BCS is not

It does not provide:

- Welfare support (such as financial, housing, or employment assistance)
- Specialist mental health services
- Physical care or practical assistance

If additional needs are identified, these can be referred to the appropriate RBL welfare services, via the BCS Team, to ensure the individual receives the right support.

How BCS works

A beneficiary can contact the RBL Contact Centre directly, be supported to make contact, or be referred by a family member, friend, or external organisation. If someone is contacting the Contact Centre on the beneficiary's behalf, consent must be obtained. This can be provided verbally if the beneficiary is present and able to speak with the adviser, or in writing via email to the Contact Centre.

The beneficiary's needs are assessed by RBL's welfare team.

Eligible BCS beneficiaries are passed from the Welfare team to the local RBL Membership Team.

A suitable trained volunteer is identified and matched with the beneficiary.

Support begins either through regular telephone calls or face-to-face visits, depending on the beneficiary's needs and preferences.

Ongoing support and oversight are provided to both the volunteer and beneficiary to ensure the relationship remains effective and beneficial.

Our Values

As a Branch Community Supporter, you are representing the Royal British Legion in communities across the UK. **The companionship, kindness and support you provide help strengthen community connections and contribute to our ambition to build supportive communities that have a positive impact on the wider Armed Forces community.** The way we deliver this support is guided by RBL's values, which shape how we work with beneficiaries, volunteers, colleagues and partners every day.

Stand Together

We stand with an ever-evolving Armed Forces community, sharing a life-long commitment to support and comradeship. We share knowledge and build connections. Together with a national network of charities and partners, we ensure life during and after service is filled with purpose and community.

Behaviour Statements:
- Collaborate, create meaningful connections and partnerships
- Build trust, share knowledge and add value
- Recognise and value each other, say thank you.

Take Pride

We exist to make a positive difference to the Armed Forces community, remembering and honouring service and offering support. We are thoughtful and focus our passion in the right way, taking ownership to ensure every action counts.

Behaviour Statements:
- Take pride in everything you do
- Aim to make a positive difference
- Own your actions and outcomes.

Be Respectful

We stand with the Armed Forces community, valuing and respecting all experiences with empathy. We put people first, treating everyone with fairness and kindness, acting with integrity.

Behaviour Statements:
- Actively listen and seek to understand
- Value inclusion and demonstrate fairness
- Show empathy and respect.

Embrace Change

We look ahead to better understand the needs of those we serve, leading with confidence, expertise, and relevance. Guided by evidence and committed to learning, we are responsive and adaptable, empowered to ensure what we do is meaningful and impactful.

Behaviour Statements:
- Be curious and stay open-minded
- Embrace change. Be proactive and look ahead
- Never stop learning. Be evidence-led.

What kind of volunteer are we looking for?

Branch Community Support is built on people who genuinely care about others. **We are looking for volunteers who are:**

Compassionate

You are kind, patient, and able to empathise with others' experiences whilst respecting appropriate boundaries.

Comfortable working independently

You are confident managing your time and interactions, while knowing when to seek support for yourself or others.

Willing to learn

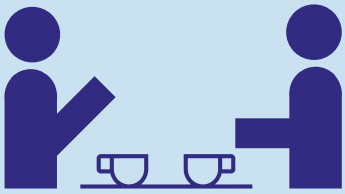
You engage with training and follow guidance to ensure safe and effective volunteering.

Reliable and committed

You can maintain regular contact and honour agreed commitments.

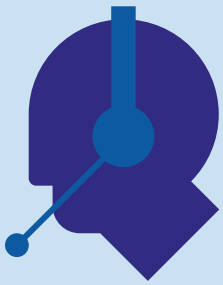
Good Listeners

You take time to listen and allow others to be heard without judgement.



Respectful

You treat everyone with dignity, understanding and sensitivity.



Getting Started as a Branch Community Supporter

Your journey begins with a simple onboarding process designed to ensure you feel confident, prepared, and supported in your role. This includes training, safeguarding checks, and guidance to help you deliver safe, effective companionship to those who need it most.

Steps to getting started

To become an active BCS volunteer, you will complete:

1 Application form

The form can be found here or accessed using this QR code:

2 Training

You will complete a face-to-face (or virtual) BCS training session alongside mandatory e-learning modules including Safeguarding, GDPR and Lone Working.

You will access training through 'Discover' which is RBL's E-learning platform which will also track your progress and refreshers.

3 Criminal Records Check (Police Check)

A Criminal Records Check is arranged and funded by the RBL and renewed every three years.

Important: Having information disclosed on a DBS check does not automatically prevent you from volunteering. All disclosures are reviewed individually, considering their relevance to the role and any associated risks. This helps us maintain a safe environment for everyone involved while ensuring a fair and inclusive recruitment process.

4 Supporter Agreement & Declarations

You will be asked to review and sign a Volunteer Agreement, Safeguarding Declaration and Code of Conduct. These documents set out what you can expect from the Royal British Legion and what we expect from you.

5 Approval and Matching

Once your onboarding is complete, you will receive an email account from the BCS Team. You also will be asked to complete a short application form for an ID card, which will be sent to your home address.

When a beneficiary requiring support is identified, your Membership Engagement Officer (MEO) will contact you to discuss a suitable match and provide guidance as you begin your role as a BCS Supporter. Please note that beneficiary matching is dependent on individual needs and availability, and opportunities may not be available immediately following onboarding.

Our Commitment to Inclusion

We welcome volunteers from all backgrounds and value the diverse experiences they bring. We are committed to ensuring volunteering opportunities are accessible, and all applications are considered fairly, respectfully, and based on the requirements of the role.

The Matching Process

Your Membership Engagement Officer (MEO) will match you with a beneficiary based on your availability, interests, and background, alongside the beneficiary's needs and preferences.

Before matching, the beneficiary is assessed, expectations are agreed, and relevant information is gathered to ensure a suitable match.

Receiving your match

- You will receive beneficiary details via your RBL email account only.
- Confidential information must never be shared outside RBL systems.
- Before undertaking a home visit, your MEO will share their basic home visit risk assessment outlining any known considerations to help you prepare and stay safe. You will also receive the contact details of RBL's Case Officer who has been working with your beneficiary.

Preparing for your first contact

Before starting your BCS calls or visits, you should give the beneficiary a call to introduce yourself, confirm a suitable time and review any information provided.

Please ensure that you understand your role and boundaries, and, if you are visiting in person, carry your ID badge.

After the first contact:

Inform your MEO that the visit/call has taken place.
Establishing boundaries (first contact)

When making first contact, it is important to clearly explain that you provide companionship only, outline your availability, agree appropriate times for contact (such as not extending beyond reasonable hours like 8pm), and clarify that you are unable to provide services such as transport, shopping support, personal care, or other practical assistance.

Communication

Communication should always remain professional; you must not share your personal phone number (use 141 when calling to withhold your phone number). Avoid connecting with beneficiaries via personal social media, and ensure all interactions are appropriate and respectful.

Building rapport

To build trust, you should focus on identifying shared interests, using active listening, asking open questions, keeping early conversations light, and ensuring the focus remains on the beneficiary rather than yourself.

If the match isn't working

Contact your MEO if you feel uncomfortable, if the beneficiary's needs change, or if the match is otherwise unsuitable; the BCS Team will then provide support and, where necessary, arrange a rematch or escalate the situation.

Escalating concerns

If you have concerns that a beneficiary may be at risk of harm, abuse, neglect, or exploitation, you must follow the safeguarding process outlined in this handbook and report your concerns without delay.

If a beneficiary requests advice, support or assistance that falls outside the scope of the BCS role, please encourage them to contact the RBL Contact Centre, quoting the name of their Case Officer where known. This will ensure they can access the most appropriate support and specialist services available to meet their needs.

Ongoing support & safety

To maintain your safety and provide effective support, you should remain aware of your surroundings at all times, raise any concerns promptly, and contact emergency services immediately if there is a serious risk.

Supporter Agreement

RBL agrees to:

1. Supervision, support and training
- Provide you with an induction on the work of RBL.
- Provide induction and refresher training on BCS.
- Provide supporters with a copy of the BCS guide, relevant policies and procedures, and a clear supporter role description.
- Hold regular check-ins for the supporter with a member of the BCS team.
- Ensure that supporters are entering a safe and conducive environment for BCS.

2. Equality and Diversity
- Respect the skills, dignity and individual needs of the supporter, and do our best to make reasonable adjustments to improve accessibility.
- Promote inclusive and anti-discriminatory practice.
- Make volunteering opportunities accessible to all sections of the community we serve.

3. Expenses
- Reimburse reasonable 'out of pocket' expenses through the branch.

4. Insurance
- Provide adequate insurance cover for supporters whilst undertaking approved and authorised BCS activities.

5. Problems
- Endeavour to resolve in a fair and just manner any problems encountered when volunteering with us.

6. Supporter Involvement
- Provide meaningful opportunities for supporters to give feedback and suggestions about RBL's BCS programme.

7. Data protection and confidentiality
- Protect the supporter's personal details in line with General Data Protection Regulations.

You, the Supporter agree to:

1. Values
Stand together. Be respectful. Take Pride. Embrace Change.

2. Responsibilities
- Participate in BCS training including online modules related to the role, which include refreshers (dependent on the course).
- Ensure you have a good understanding of and adhere to RBL's procedures and standards, as outlined in the BCS Handbook.
- Meet or phone your beneficiary on an agreed day and time.
- Only meet/call beneficiaries who have been referred by your Membership Engagement Officer (MEO).
- Adhere to the BCS Supporter role in reducing social isolation, referring into the Welfare Team, via the contact centre, for any other support requirement.
- Maintain the confidential information of your beneficiary.
- Keep us informed of any changes to your circumstances which may affect your commitment as a volunteer.
- Report and record all BCS activity using the monthly BCS reporting form.
- Ensure not to transport a beneficiary in your vehicle. It is your responsibility to inform your insurance provider if you will be using your vehicle to drive to and from visits.
- Ensure that no personal benefit or conflict of interest arises from your actions.

3. Ending BCS activity
- Accept that RBL reserves the right to suspend or end beneficiary-facing activities at any time where it considers that a Supporter has acted outside the scope of their role, failed to carry out their responsibilities appropriately, behaved in an unacceptable manner, failed to complete mandatory training or where a beneficiary has requested that the match be ended. Decisions made in these circumstances are final and are not subject to an appeals process.
- Agree not to have any contact with beneficiaries once your role has ended under the umbrella of RBL.
- Return any ID documents provided by RBL.

Finances

As a BCS volunteer, you are eligible to claim certain expenses and access resources to support you in your role. All claims are processed through your local branch, so please check with them before making any purchases.

Travel expenses

You can claim reasonable travel costs incurred while carrying out your volunteer role, whether travelling by public transport or using your own vehicle.

Mileage rates are available here:

Public Transport
The relevant second-class rail, tube, bus.

Driving*
Cars – 55p per mile for the first 10,000 miles in each tax year 25p per mile thereafter.
Motorcycle – 24p per mile.
Bicycle – 20p per mile.
The advisory rates for fully electric cars are 7p per mile for home charging and 15p per mile for public charging. Hybrid cars are treated as petrol or diesel for the purpose of advisory fuel rates.

Engine size	Petrol/Hybrid	LPG	Diesel/ Hybrid
1400cc or less	14p per mile	11p per mile	-
1401cc to 2000cc	17p per mile	13p per mile	-
Over 2000cc	26p per mile	21p per mile	-
1600cc or less	-	-	15p per mile
1601cc to 2000cc	-	-	17p per mile
Over 2000cc	-	-	23p per mile

*As of June 2026

Refreshments during visits

If you are meeting a beneficiary in a café or community venue as part of your Branch Community Support role, you may claim the reasonable cost of a tea, coffee or other non-alcoholic drink for both yourself and the beneficiary. Shared refreshments can help create a relaxed environment and support meaningful conversation and companionship.

Please note: Alcoholic beverages cannot be claimed as part of Branch Community Support expenses.

BCS gift for beneficiaries

To help build rapport, you may provide a BCS gift for your beneficiary of up to £50. We recommend waiting until you have got to know them and their interests before making a purchase. Suitable gifts might include a crossword book, flowers, or a favourite treat, particularly where a small gesture could help reduce feelings of isolation. You may also prefer to provide several smaller purchases rather than one item.

Please retain receipts for reimbursement through your branch. All expenditure must be recorded as BCS spend and comply with the BCS Guide. This allowance is not intended for initial visits and must not be used as a substitute for welfare support; where a welfare need is identified, a referral into welfare services and consideration of a crisis grant should be made instead.

BCS-branded clothing

To help you represent the service when visiting beneficiaries, you may purchase BCS-branded clothing through the RBL online shop. Please check with your local branch before ordering any items to ensure costs can be reimbursed by the branch.

Case Study

BCS supporter Rob shares his experience as a Telephone Buddy and the difference volunteering with BCS has made to him.

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

"My dad served in the British Army from 1983 to 2006, which meant much of my early childhood was spent overseas, first in Germany and later in Brunei. Growing up in this environment, I experienced some of the opportunities as well as challenges that come with military life. Given my upbringing, it was perhaps inevitable that I would eventually find myself supporting the Royal British Legion down the line."

What inspired you to take part in the BCS Programme?

"Thinking back, I realise the nature of the Armed Forces meant that those serving often felt the need to put on a brave face, even through difficult times. Supporting people who had taken the courageous step of asking for help when needed seemed like a great starting point. Being able to contribute just an hour a week also made it something I could realistically commit to alongside my other responsibilities."

Can you share an example of how you have supported someone or made a positive impact through your role?

"Both during and after service as a Royal Marine, one beneficiary was heavily involved in teaching. Following significant health and personal challenges, he was forced to step away from that work. Over several weeks, we explored the possibility of returning to the profession in some capacity, something he is particularly excited about."

"I always aim to make a beneficiary laugh, reminisce about a positive event in their life or find something to look forward to – preferably all three!"

What challenges have you experienced, and how have you addressed them?

"When challenges are mounting in a beneficiary's life, they can understandably feel down on themselves and find it hard to break out of it. I've found it important to empathise with them but also encourage them to find things to look forward to. I always aim to make a beneficiary laugh, reminisce about a positive event in their life or find something to look forward to – preferably all three!"

What advice would you give to someone new to the scheme?

"Stick with it! Getting beneficiaries to open up and say how they feel is a soft skill – the more you practise, the better you will become at it. A huge difference can be made to the lives of these beneficiaries, and when they tell you that, it is a hugely rewarding feeling."

Safeguarding – Keeping People Safe

It is our responsibility to keep both the supporter and the beneficiary safe.

As a Branch Community Supporter, you may work with people who are vulnerable due to age, health, isolation or personal circumstances.

Your role is not to investigate concerns, but to recognise, respond, and report them appropriately.

Your responsibilities

- Be alert to signs of abuse, harm or neglect.
- Listen and take concerns seriously.
- Report concerns promptly.
- Respect the individual's views and wishes where possible.

You do not need to:

- Investigate concerns.
- Prove abuse has occurred.
- Resolve the situation yourself.

Safeguarding is Everyone's Responsibility

Recognise

Look out for signs such as unexplained injuries, changes in behaviour, financial concerns, poor living conditions, fear, anxiety or isolation.

Respond

If someone shares a concern:

- Stay calm and listen.
- Reassure them they have done the right thing.
- Do not promise confidentiality.
- Avoid asking leading questions.

Report

- Inform your Membership Engagement Officer (MEO) within 24 hours, copying in the safeguarding team (safeguarding@britishlegion.org.uk). If your MEO is on leave, please contact the Safeguarding Team directly.
- Concerns will be escalated to the Safeguarding Team where necessary.
- If the beneficiary lives in a care home, report concerns to the care team immediately and then advise your MEO.

Immediate Risk

If someone is in immediate danger or at serious risk of harm:

- Call 999 immediately.
- Then inform your MEO or the BCS Team once the situation has been diffused.

Types of Abuse

Abuse can take many forms, including:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Financial abuse
- Neglect or self-neglect
- Domestic abuse
- Discriminatory abuse

During Calls and Visits

Stay observant for changes in mood, behaviour, or circumstances. If something doesn't feel right, record your concerns and report them without delay.

It is important to respect confidentiality—but safeguarding overrides confidentiality where there is risk of harm.

- Share only relevant information.
- Share with the appropriate RBL contact.
- Do not discuss concerns with others outside the organisation.

If you are concerned that confidentiality has been inappropriately broken, please contact the BCS Team.

Lost Contact Process

There may be occasions when you are unable to contact a beneficiary you are supporting. If a beneficiary does not respond to a scheduled home visit or repeated telephone calls, you should follow the BCS Lost Contact Process.

Home visits

Before reporting a loss of contact, you should make reasonable efforts to establish contact by:

- Ringing the doorbell more than once and knocking loudly.
- Trying an alternative entrance, where appropriate.
- Looking for signs that the beneficiary may be at home, such as lights being on.
- Calling the beneficiary and allowing the telephone to ring for an extended period.
- Checking for indicators of concern, such as uncollected post or deliveries.
- Speaking with neighbours, where appropriate, to establish whether they have recently seen the beneficiary.

If you have immediate concerns for the beneficiary's safety or wellbeing, contact the emergency services on 999 and inform your MEO or the BCS Team as soon as possible.

Telephone support

If a beneficiary does not answer your calls, you should attempt contact on at least three separate occasions before initiating the Lost Contact Process. Telephone buddies should not attempt to visit their beneficiary in person.

Reporting a loss of contact

If you are unable to establish contact following the above steps:

1. Complete the Lost Contact Form.

2. The BCS Team will investigate and take any necessary action to establish the beneficiary's wellbeing and ongoing support needs.

Remember: Never place yourself at risk or attempt to gain entry to a beneficiary's property. Your role is to observe, report concerns, and follow the Lost Contact Process where required.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

As a Branch Community Supporter, you may be given access to personal information about beneficiaries. It is important that this information is treated with care, respect and confidentiality at all times.

Protecting personal information

Personal information includes details such as names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, health information, and other information that could identify an individual.

You should:

- Only use your rbl.community email address to discuss your beneficiary cases.
- Keep beneficiary information secure and confidential.
- Report any concerns about data security to your MEO or the BCS Team immediately.

Emergency information

To help ensure beneficiary safety, Branch Community Supporters, including Telephone Buddies, are provided with a beneficiary's address for emergency purposes.

This information should only be used if emergency services need to be contacted and directed to the beneficiary's location.

A beneficiary's address must not be used for any other purpose, shared with others, or retained outside of approved RBL systems and processes.

It is important to remember that a Telephone Buddy role does not include home visiting. A Telephone Buddy must never attend a beneficiary's home, even if contact has been lost or there are concerns about their wellbeing. If you are unable to contact a beneficiary, you should follow the Lost Contact Process and seek guidance from the BCS Team or your Membership Engagement Officer (MEO).

Home visits should only take place where they have been formally arranged, agreed, and form part of the Supporter's designated role.

Confidentiality

Information shared by a beneficiary should not be discussed with family, friends, other volunteers, or anyone outside the appropriate RBL teams.

The only exception is where there is a safeguarding concern, risk of harm, or another legitimate reason to share information. In these circumstances, information should be shared promptly with your MEO or the appropriate RBL team.

Storing and sharing information

When handling personal information:

- Only use your rbl.community email address to discuss beneficiary cases.
- Do not store beneficiary information on personal devices.
- Do not share personal information through unsecured channels.

Consent and respect

Always respect a beneficiary's privacy and preferences. Where possible, obtain their consent before sharing information and explain why it may need to be shared.

If you are unsure

If you are unsure whether information should be shared, stored, or recorded, seek advice from your MEO or the BCS Team before taking action.

Remember: Personal information belongs to the beneficiary. Your responsibility is to protect it, use it appropriately, and only share it when necessary to support the beneficiary, safeguard their wellbeing, or respond to an emergency.

Professional Boundaries

Maintaining clear boundaries helps protect both you and the beneficiary.

You should:

- Maintain a professional relationship.
- Be friendly but avoid becoming overly involved.
- Keep contact within agreed times and channels.
- Raise any concerns about safety or wellbeing.

You should not:

- Keep safety-related concerns secret.
- Provide personal care, transport, or financial support.
- Handle money.
- Share personal contact details or social media accounts.
- Continue contact outside your volunteer role.

Setting expectations

At the start of the relationship, explain what your role involves, what support you can provide, and any limitations. Clear expectations help prevent misunderstandings.

Raising concerns

If you have concerns about a beneficiary, volunteer, staff member, family member, or carer, report them to your MEO. If you're unsure, it's always better to raise the concern and seek advice.

Looking after yourself

Some situations can be challenging. If you are affected by a concern or unsure how to respond, speak to your MEO or the BCS Team for guidance and support. You are never expected to manage safeguarding concerns alone.

Lone Working

Before a visit or call

Your safety is just as important as the safety of the people you support. Before a call or visit, plan ahead by confirming arrangements, ensuring your phone is charged, reviewing any known risks, and letting someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.

During visits

Stay aware of your surroundings and trust your instincts. Position yourself near an exit where possible and be alert to any changes in the environment or the beneficiary's behaviour. If a situation makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe, leave immediately and inform your MEO.

Lone working and personal safety

As a lone-working volunteer, you should always follow lone-working guidance, share your plans and expected timings with someone, and check in when your visit is complete. To reduce risk, travel safely, keep your phone accessible, avoid displaying valuables, and avoid isolated or potentially unsafe locations whenever possible.

Difficult situations and emergencies

Occasionally, you may encounter challenging situations or behaviour. Remain calm, communicate respectfully, avoid confrontation, and give yourself space if needed. If something doesn't feel right, remove yourself from the situation and report your concerns.

In an emergency, call 999 and move to a safe location.

Once the situation has been resolved and any emergency support provided, inform your MEO so that appropriate support can be put in place for you.

Support and wellbeing

If you ever have concerns about your safety, boundaries, or a difficult interaction, speak to your MEO or contact the BCS Team. Your safety and wellbeing are a priority.

Reporting Your Activity

Reporting your activity is an important part of your role. It helps us understand the difference you are making, ensures beneficiaries are supported effectively, and enables us to identify any concerns early.

Why reporting matters

By reporting your activity, you help us monitor beneficiary wellbeing, identify emerging concerns, demonstrate the impact of Branch Community Support, and inform the continued development of the programme.

All visits, calls and other support activities recorded by BCS Supporters contribute to the BCS Dashboard, which is accessible on the Membership Administration Portal to Branch Chairs and Secretaries, County Community Support Coordinators, and Branch Community Coordinators. The dashboard provides valuable insight into the support being delivered across the network and enables branches and counties to recognise, celebrate and share the positive difference being made to beneficiaries through Branch Community Support.

Accurate and timely reporting ensures that the contribution of BCS Supporters is visible, valued and reflected in the impact being achieved across the Royal British Legion community.

You will always be supported — reporting should feel simple, not stressful.

What you need to do

As a volunteer, you are expected to:

- Submit a monthly report to record the number and type of contacts (calls or visits).
- Highlight any concerns or changes in wellbeing.

How to submit reports

- Reports are completed via the BCS online reporting form using this link. You can also find a QR on the back of your ID card, which links to our reporting form.
- You will need your BCS ID number to submit your return.
- It can be completed on a phone, tablet, or computer.

BCS Monthly Reporting Form

Reporting concerns

Reporting isn't just about recording activity—it helps us monitor beneficiary wellbeing and identify any changes, concerns, or issues that may require support. If something doesn't feel right, report it.

Support with reporting

If you are unsure how to complete your report or need assistance, reach out to the BCS Team.

Complaints and Concerns

While most Branch Community Support relationships are positive, concerns or complaints can occasionally arise. If a beneficiary, family member or carer, raises a complaint, it is important that it is handled promptly and appropriately.

If someone wishes to make a complaint

If a beneficiary, BCS Supporter or another individual raises a complaint:

- Remain calm, professional, and respectful.
- Listen carefully and acknowledge their concerns.
- Do not argue, become defensive, or attempt to resolve the complaint yourself.
- Do not make promises about the outcome.
- Record key details, including what was raised and when.
- Report the complaint to your Membership Engagement Officer (MEO) or the BCS Team as soon as possible.

What happens next?

1. Received
Complaint received by volunteer, branch, or RBL representative.
2. Communicated
Details are passed to the MEO or BCS Team without delay.
3. Reviewed
The complaint is reviewed and escalated through the appropriate RBL process.
4. Investigated
Any necessary investigation or follow-up is carried out by the relevant team.
5. Actioned
Feedback and support are provided where appropriate.

If a BCS Supporter wishes to raise a complaint

BCS Supporters are encouraged to raise any concerns or complaints regarding their volunteering experience, support arrangements, or interactions with beneficiaries, volunteers, branches, or RBL staff.

Complaints should be reported to the MEO or BCS Team, who will ensure they are managed through the appropriate process. Supporters should not feel that they need to manage concerns alone, and appropriate guidance and support will be provided throughout the process.

Complaints about Volunteers

If a complaint is made about your conduct or actions:

- Be open and cooperative.
- Provide any information requested.
- Continue to maintain confidentiality.
- Seek guidance and support from your MEO if needed.

Concerns about service quality

Not all concerns are formal complaints. If you identify issues affecting a beneficiary's experience, such as difficulties with communication, missed contact, or service improvements, raise these with your MEO or the BCS Team so they can be addressed appropriately.

Remember: Never try to handle a complaint alone. Your role is to listen, record, and report. The MEO and relevant RBL teams will manage the complaint through the appropriate process.

Promoting Branch Community Support in the Community

Raising Awareness of Branch Community Support

As a Branch Community Supporter, you play an important role in raising awareness of BCS and helping more people access companionship and support.

Working with your branch

BCS works best when it is closely connected to your local branch. You can support this by talking about the service at branch meetings and events, sharing information with members, and working alongside your Branch Community Coordinator or Membership Team where appropriate.

Using RBL events and activities

Many people who could benefit from BCS can be reached through existing RBL activities, such as branch events, social gatherings, remembrance activities, and veteran community groups. These touchpoints provide valuable opportunities to start conversations, identify potential beneficiaries, and promote the support available through BCS.

Encouraging referrals

If you meet someone who may benefit from BCS, encourage them to contact the RBL Contact Centre, or support them to do so. Family members, friends, and other organisations can also refer someone on their behalf. All referrals must go through the official RBL process.

Promoting BCS responsibly

When promoting BCS, always signpost individuals to the Contact Centre and avoid making promises about the support available. It is important that support is only arranged following assessment and referral through the appropriate channels.

Working together

Promoting BCS is a shared effort across volunteers, branches, Membership Teams, and the wider RBL network. By working together, we can reach more people, reduce loneliness, and strengthen support for the Armed Forces community.

Communications and Celebrating BCS

Keeping our BCS Supporters informed, connected and recognised is an important part of the Branch Community Support programme.

The BCS Team communicates with all Supporters through their BCS email accounts, ensuring they receive the latest information, guidance and opportunities.

National updates are also shared through County Community Support Coordinators (CCSCs), who work closely with the BCS Team to cascade key information within their counties.

Communications may include updates on training, systems and processes, programme developments, impact reporting, and opportunities to share good practice. Through these regular updates, we aim to ensure Supporters feel informed, supported and connected to the wider BCS network.

To celebrate the impact of our volunteers, the BCS Team also produces a quarterly BCS Newsletter. The newsletter highlights positive stories from across the network, showcases the difference Supporters are making to beneficiaries, shares programme developments, and recognises the valuable contribution of BCS volunteers.

We encourage Supporters to share their successes, experiences and examples of good practice so that achievements can be celebrated and learned from across the BCS community.

Volunteer Support

Throughout your volunteering journey, you will be supported by:

Your Membership Engagement Officer (MEO) and the National BCS Team **bcs@britishlegion.org.uk**

Email the National BCS Team

You will also have access to:

Guidance and resources

Ongoing training

Check-ins

You will never be expected to manage situations alone—we are here to support you.

Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR

Registered charity number in England and Wales 219279 and Scotland SC054446.

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

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