

# An Introduction to Branch Community Support



# What is Branch Community Support (BCS)?

Branch Community Support centres around providing one-to-one social support to those who are lonely, isolated and in need of some companionship. A weekly phone call or face-to-face chat can be an amazing way to help someone know that they have a network that cares about them. From reliving old memories to helping someone connect with their community, BCS helps to reach the most isolated people within our Armed Forces Community. Our supporters are the eyes and ears of the RBL, enabling us to identify and reach those who need additional help.



# Why is Branch Community Support important?



Social isolation and loneliness can affect anyone.

Our experience of working with the Armed Forces community tells us that this group is particularly susceptible to loneliness, with the transient lifestyle of the military and an ageing population exacerbating situations.

When people do come to us for help, they may not realise, or want to admit, that they are lonely and isolated. BCS Supporters spend time getting to know each person by offering a listening ear and letting someone know that there is someone who cares.

# In 2023 ...

2428 people received visits from  
a Home or Hospital Supporter



4214 people received calls from a  
Telephone Buddy



## BCS is not...

1) Welfare support such as assistance with food, finances, employment, or housing.

2) Mental health support.

3) Physical support.

Our RBL Welfare Teams are able to provide beneficiaries with this level of support.

# Beneficiary referrals

- Branch encourages or supports the beneficiary to call the Contact Centre.
- Family/friends/external organisation ring the Contact Centre on behalf of the beneficiary. The Contact Centre can ring the beneficiary back to gain consent.
- RBL's internal teams, including Welfare or Admiral Nurses refer a known beneficiary over to BCS.

Contact Centre  
0808 802 8080

# How can BCS benefit branches?

- Membership within branches promotes friendship, kindness and camaraderie to the Armed Forces Community.
- Your opportunity and means to help address social isolation.
- A way to provide community connections to those who reach out to RBL.
- A reason for people to become members and stay with their branch.



# Roles supporting BCS

## **BCS Supporter**

Front line support in the form of telephone buddying, home or hospital visits.

## **County Community Support Coordinator (elected position) :**

County-wide support to bridge the gap between branches, the local Membership Engagement Team and the national BCS Team. Support to promote BCS and to report back to counties on BCS delivery.

## **Branch Community Coordinator (up to 4 per branch) :**

Promotion of BCS, coordination and reporting of Community Activities which sit outside of BCS – Touchpoints, Events and Standard Bearing.



# BCS Supporter – What will I be doing?



Based on your availability and preferences, you will be matched with a beneficiary who has been carefully assessed by RBL's welfare team.

Once matched, we will invite you to reach out to the individual and arrange your first call or visit.

By offering a listening ear and building a relationship, you will provide companionship that helps to reduce isolation.

We will ask you to report on your calls or visits and inform us of any concerns regarding the beneficiary that may need to be addressed by RBL's welfare team. We also welcome any positive news stories to take forward.

# What support will be available to me?

- Advice and support from your local Membership team, the National BCS Team, your regional County Community Support Coordinator, and your branch to assist you in your role.
- Training and opportunities for further development.
- If the person you are supporting has additional welfare needs, you have access to the RBL Contact Centre 8am – 8pm or Veterans Gateway 24/7
- Supporting handbook, guides, key policies and Volunteer Agreement



# Key information

<b>Time commitment:</b>	This will be agreed with your local Membership team and will be based on your availability and the needs of the people you are supporting
<b>Training/ Resources:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One day face-to-face training with our Learning and Development team</li><li>• Mandatory online learning modules to be completed within 3 months of registration in the role: GDPR, Safeguarding, Lone working (Annual renewal for Safeguarding and GDPR)</li></ul>
<b>Expenses:</b>	Out-of-pocket travel costs between home and place of volunteering, in line with our agreed policy, will be reimbursed by your Branch
<b>Extra Information:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The minimum age for this role is 18 years old.</li><li>• Branch Community Support is a volunteering programme within RBL's membership service, so our volunteers are required to be RBL members.</li><li>• A basic criminal record (DBS/Access NI) check is required. (RBL arranges this for you and covers the cost)</li><li>• Once you have signed up you will need to check and sign a Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Declaration (which are sent via Docusign)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You are covered by the RBL public liability insurance for your activities as a volunteer</li></ul></li></ul>

# How to get started

- 1) If your branch is not registered for BCS, but would like to take part, contact your MEO to register.
- 2) If you are a member who would like to be a Supporter, please find the BCS Welcome pack on MAP. Alternatively you can contact your MEA who will support you to enrol.

**Branch  
Community  
Support  
Welcome  
Pack**

