Like all charities, Woundcare4Heroes has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our health professionals, delivering contracted support to veterans, have bravely returned to NHS frontline roles to help in the battle against the novel coronavirus. Unfortunately, this means all new referrals to Woundcare4Heroes have reluctantly had to be suspended during this time.

Claire Stephens, chief executive of Woundcare4Heroes, said: ‘Every effort has been made to ensure our current veteran caseload is able to maintain contact and access to a Woundcare4Heroes clinician, or has a pathway and key contact in place to access NHS services, during this time.’

‘Woundcare4Heroes, like many health-related charities and services throughout the UK, has had to re-evaluate and adapt its services, so we can operate safely now and in the future.’

Due to the seriousness of the coronavirus pandemic and Government advice to socially isolate, all our fund-raising events have had to be cancelled, including one of the largest, Bands at the Broom. However, the ex-servicemen and women we support still need our help. We hope that by postponing the event, it will still prove to be an opportunity for more people to attend and for new initiatives to be adopted to raise more funds for those who served and suffered.

**Fund-raising heroes**

The inspirational Captain Tom Moore, soon-to-be Sir Moore, has shown what is possible even in lockdown. The Army veteran captured the hearts of the nation by walking lengths of his garden for charity with the aid of his walking frame. His initial target of raising £1,000 by lapping his garden 100 times before his 100th birthday was soon smashed, with the final total reaching a staggering £38.9 million with Gift Aid added.

Captain Moore, who was given the honorary title of Colonel, said he set about raising the money for NHS Charities Together ‘for the sake of the nurses and the NHS we have, because they are doing such a magnificent job.’

Woundcare4Heroes, like all charitable organisations, is dependent on fund-raising to continue offering and developing its services. We would like to say a huge thank you to all those individuals who have run marathons, knitted poppies, cycled hundreds of miles, jumped out of planes and endured military-style marches to pull in the pounds for our veterans.

Woundcare4Heroes can access restricted funding for individual specialist care packages for veterans from regiments and charitable foundations. However, all our general funds—for education, advice, equipment and materials—depend on general fund-raising. During tough times like these, we need your creativity, help and support now more than ever to survive.

**RIP our hero Bob Barrett**

It is with an extremely heavy heart that we say goodbye to Robert ‘Bob’ Barrett, a veteran supported by Woundcare4Heroes for the past 8 years. Sadly, Barrett died in March, aged 69 years. The former Household Cavalry Trooper had twice beaten cancer before being diagnosed with cauda equina syndrome, which destroyed the nerves at the base of his spine and left him paralysed below the waist.

Barrett was hugely grateful for our help and support, saying it had ‘improved his quality of life no end’ and describing himself as ‘a very lucky man’. Those of you who attended our conference at Huddersfield University had the opportunity to meet Barrett and hear his life story.

Funny, tough and optimistic, Barrett joined the Life Guards, the most senior regiment in the British Armed Forces, in 1967, as a 16 year old. After leaving the Army, he held a variety of jobs, including night club manager. In 2004, he found himself homeless. The ex-soldier became a resident of the Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation, which provides accommodation for vulnerable ex-servicemen and women, overlooking Chelsea Football Club’s Stamford Bridge.

Barrett, who always wanted to give back, set up The Beef Kitchen charity, serving football fans gourmet baps, with all the profits going to the Stoll Foundation. Field Marshall Lord Guthrie opened the cafe, which continues to provide training and employment for ex-service personnel.

In 2010, Barrett was recognised for his contribution to charity, winning the British Legion Friends of the Forces Award. Claire Stephens paid tribute, saying:

‘Bob was a larger-than-life character, hugely complex and fiercely independent despite his many challenges. He kept me and all Woundcare4Heroes clinicians on our toes and is sorely missed.’

Justine Whitaker, lymphatic nurse specialist for Woundcare4Heroes, added:

‘No matter how many years you nurse, it is always a privilege to work in the profession, especially when your patient is Bob Barrett. His incredibly complex needs and health status never deterred the
veteran’s determination to fight on and accept the care I was able to offer him.’

‘Once a solider always a solider, and his spirit certainly carried him through some of his darker days. I will miss him immensely and always remember his spirit with fondness.’

Confined to a wheelchair, the ex-soldier first got in touch with Woundcare4Heroes for help with pressure ulcers. One of our nurse specialists supported his GP and district nursing team, advising on better dressing options, and the charity provided a new pressure-relieving mattress, cushion and reclining chair.

Woundcare4Heroes also arranged for a rapid referral and assessment of Barrett’s hugely swollen legs. It had been 5 years since the former soldier had received any NHS treatment for the build-up of fluid in his legs. Treatment is scarce, as there is no national lymphoedema service in England—unlike Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Since 2016, Barrett had been treated three times a week by a specialist therapist, a service that Woundcare4Heroes organised and funded. This treatment included negative-pressure manual lymphatic drainage, Kinesio taping, bandaging and skin care.

Veterans in England, Scotland and Wales are eligible for priority access to NHS care for service-related conditions, subject to the clinical needs of all patients, including hospital, primary and community care.

Veterans are actively encouraged to inform their GP and other NHS providers if they have served in the armed forces.

For more information about Woundcare4Heroes, please visit www.woundcareforheroes.org.uk. CWC

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