

Terry Barnett, 49, Solihull

West Midlands Area Team support – white goods, food vouchers and information/advice

“If it wasn’t for the Royal British Legion, I don’t know where I would be today!”

Terry Barnett, age 49, from Solihull in the West Midlands, previously served in the Army within the Royal Corps of Signals for almost five years, leaving service in 1992. However, after a successful civvy career in telecommunications for 17 years, Terry’s dependence on alcohol began to grow and his addiction began to take over in later years, resulting in Terry becoming trapped mentally and physically by his addiction.

It was in 2019 that he decided it was time to reach out for help and contacted the Royal British Legion, setting him on a path to recovery.

Terry said: “I had served in the Army for almost five years and really enjoyed my time in service. After joining as a junior soldier at the age of 16, I undertook basic training at Catterick which I thoroughly enjoyed and gave me a sense of real belonging and family in that environment.

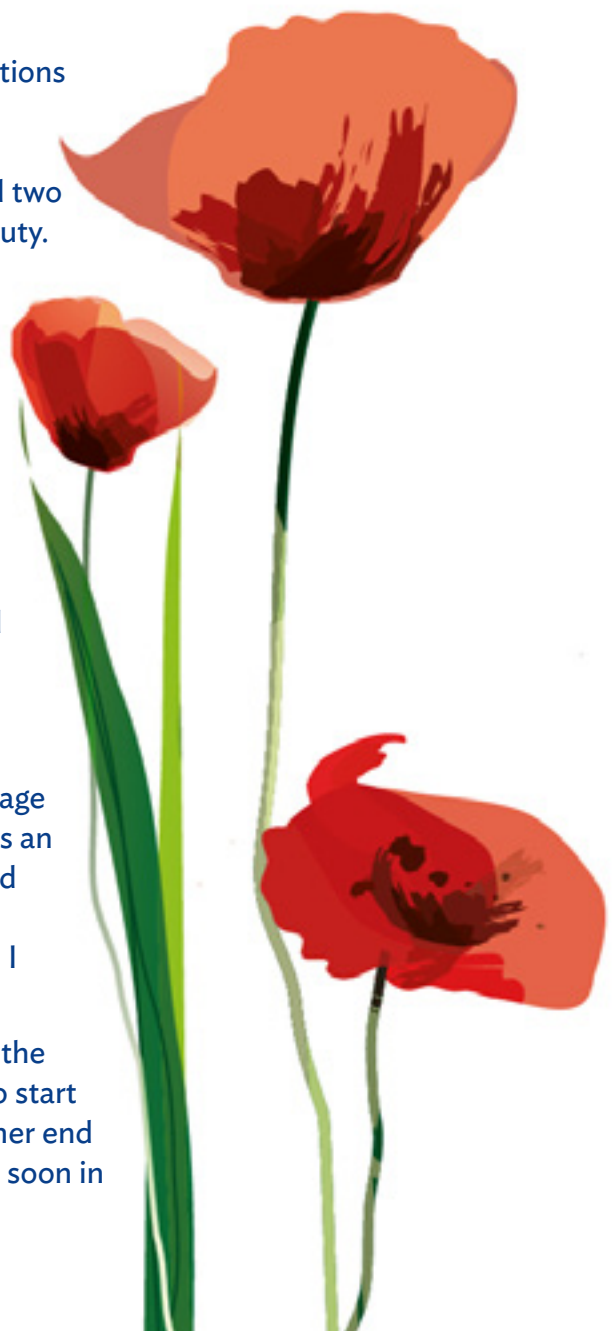
“I eventually specialised in a trade which was telecommunications and became a highly trained communications specialist employed on a task of national importance during Operation Granby. I was also posted in Cyprus, Germany and conducted two tours of Northern Ireland which were classed as emergency duty.

“After leaving service, I went to work in telecommunications for years, but in the background alcohol was a presence and it had always been part of the culture in the military, a way to unwind, and I took that through to civvy life. I soon began to become more and more dependent on alcohol and began to spiral.”

In 2019, Terry was in desperate need of help, having lost his job, his family and falling into debt. He was in a bad place and was completely substance dependent. He finally decided to acknowledge his addiction and reach out and called the Royal British Legion contact centre.

He said: “I was scared to initially pick up the phone to admit I needed help; it took a lot of time for me to build up the courage to make that call. However, one day I got a call back and it was an Information Advisor from the West Midlands Legion team and she told me directly there were a lot of ways the charity could help me but they couldn’t help me unless I helped myself and I needed to be sober to start receiving support.

“It was what I needed to hear and something just clicked! So, the next time she called from the Legion, I was ready and sober to start the process of getting help. Just having that person on the other end of the phone, knowing they cared was a great boost and I was soon in the process of getting things sorted.”



The RBL supported Terry with a supported payment towards a fridge for his home, shopping vouchers and payment of a Debt Relief Order and aided with applying for limited capability benefits which was recommended by the RBL's Benefits, Debt and Money Advisor. Along with regular phone calls to check in, the Legion team also referred Terry to counselling sessions and advised on a local support addiction service, setting him on a path to sobriety. His council tax was also paid, which allowed Terry to remain in his home and the threat of bailiffs was removed.

He said: "All the little things the Legion have supported with have made a big difference. They lifted the pressures and worries I had off my shoulders and this allowed me to begin to address my addiction and seek the help I needed without having to worry about keeping a roof over my head or seeking work.

"The case officer and advisors I spoke with at the RBL were understanding and I was comfortable speaking with them from the outset. They never gave up on me and it was that contact on a regular basis that really kept me going over the past year to stay sober and get on the right path. I couldn't have come this far without the Legion and I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the West Midlands team!"

"I hope my story encourages others to reach out, even in the most desperate of times, and contact the Legion to see how they can help. I really can't thank them enough, I don't think I would be here if it wasn't for the Legion's intervention, and if one person hears about my experience and calls the RBL then I know that I have helped."

Terry will have been sober for three years this October and regularly attends events and engagements on behalf of the RBL where he share his experiences and raises awareness of the help available from the RBL.



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Principal Office: Coventry House, Harry Weston Road, Binley,
Coventry, West Midlands CV3 2TQ.