

**Michael Hallam** (52) is from Rochester. He served in The Royal Navy from November 1975 to 31 March 1993



Michael suffers from a cognitive memory problem, so he is unable to retain information; which means that he needs to organise himself in the way that suits him best to get through a day. He does this by listing tasks as icons on a computer and with "aide memoirs" which detail his memory problems and how he copes with them. He gives these to people he meets so he doesn't have to try and remember things about himself and his background.

In December 2009, Michael turned to the Legion for support. We were able to provide him with a new laptop (his old one was beyond repair) which is vitally important as it enables him to organise his day. We also supplied clothes vouchers for his new job, where he needed to wear a suit to present a smart appearance.

As he was unable to use the communal washing machine where he lived (the time scale allocated to him was whilst he was at work) The Royal British Legion was also able to provide him with a washing machine to use in his flat. This was of great benefit as he is meticulous about his appearance. We were also able to help Michael by referring him to the Legion's dedicated Benefits and Money Adviser. She was able to advise and discuss options to help with managing his finances. Below is an extract from a letter that Michael sent to the Legion to say thank you. In Michael's words it may have taken him "a while to construct and needed to be revisited many times", but it makes compelling reading and shows how the small things can make a real difference....

"I want to say 'Thank You' and share all my good news with the guys at The Royal British Legion following all the help and ongoing support I have had from them all!

Work is going exceptionally well. My line manager is one in a million, a real peoples person and 'we' are acting as a team, heading up a new project to help people back into the workplace.

I recently commenced my 'Memory Strategy Training' at work. I tend to think 'differently' in order to try to remember things (I use as many of the senses as possible, in particular 'sight' as visualising things helps me enormously... images, patterns, pictures, photos, colours etc help me to 'imprint' and recall things easier).

I recently went visit a very close friend whom I saw everyday whilst at the hostel in London and who moved into alms houses in Chatham before I came to London. He told me of a possible vacancy there. I have contacted the Governor of the Alms houses, and he has since met me and invited me to submit an application. Fingers crossed everyone because if I am successful, it will dramatically reduce my expenditure as the accommodation is considerably cheaper than where I am currently! I am hoping that I will eventually be able to stop working the long hours I need to by giving up my

evening work if I am successful! This is very important to me as my day starts at 04:30 to prepare for my day and I don't get in till 19:30 most evening and it's beginning to tell!

BIG news is that over the last few months my self-confidence and self-esteem have increased exponentially with each little success. So much so that I have felt comfortable with who I am as a human being again. Someone who is good and can help others. Someone who can make a valuable contribution to society again. I simply cannot put a price on that guys and the indebtedness to you and 'individuals' like you who have stuck with me along such an incredible journey. Thank you.

Even bigger news is that good people like yourself that have given me the self-belief and the confidence (not to mention the will to overcome my obstinate pride) that have enabled me to start to establish contact with my family again. Trust me, when you have severe memory problems, that is not an easy thing to do, and it has been far more difficult for my family than it has been to 'an oblivious' madman!

I am happy (no... ecstatic!!!) to report that things have gone amazingly well on this front, so much so that my school sweetheart, a girl and woman that was my life for so long is slowly becoming a part of it again.

I cannot wait for the opportunity to give something back to you guys... to help in any way I can... to shout from the highest rooftops about all the good work you do and how YOU as individuals can transform lives, not just one, but many by your deeds.

The feedback I get from clients who only have a half-hour or so with me tells me that I too can make a difference... be highly influential with my passion and belief in them as individuals.

I would be honoured if I was able to promote what you do.

This letter may have taken me a while to construct. I may have had to look up a hundred and one things. Revisit it many times but I assure you that I will do everything within my power to help you and your good work. This would mean a great deal to me. I won't say that everything is rosy in my life, but few people can say that can they?

What I can say is that little by little, Humpty Dumpty is getting put back together again guys... and that is down to your beliefs... and morals... and kindness... and everything you do on a day-to-day basis, perhaps without even realising it sometimes, changing other people's lives for the better."