

# Celebrating the Leg Club experience

This month, I am stepping down as Chair of the Lindsay Leg Club Foundation®, a post I have held for 3 years. I shall miss the opportunity to serve this wonderful charity, as well as the interaction with fellow trustees and supporters. But what I will miss the most, will be the company of members, volunteers and nurses from the individual Leg Clubs.

As many of you know, the Lindsay Leg Club Foundation supports the Leg Club model and the network of over 30 Leg Clubs that exist in the UK (along with one in Germany and ten in Australia), which provide treatment and social care for people suffering from leg ulceration and associated conditions. The Leg Club network has more than 10,500 registered members in the UK alone. It was serendipity that I got to know some Leg Clubs more than others and my only regret is that I didn't get to visit more of them during my time as Chair.

## MID WALES TO SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA

New trustees of the Foundation are given specific Leg Clubs as a contact point, and when I joined as a trustee 6 years ago, I was given two clubs in Mid Wales. One is in a well-known and elegant spa town and the other is hidden in a very green dip within a beautiful valley. The atmosphere in both is exceptional, and in the more rural club, everyone seems to be laughing most of the time. In fact, when we filmed the day when the club signed its 300th member, we had problems cutting the footage because all of the interviews we conducted were so fluent and friendly. I was lucky enough to see that both clubs won awards at our national conference, and both have prospered.

Having recently married an Australian citizen, I now spend 3 months of the year in Victoria, not too far from Melbourne. Daylesford is a popular, rural resort town, only 30 minutes from home, and it happens to be the location for one of our Australian Leg Clubs. When I first visited 2 years ago, it had only been in operation for 6 months and had 11 members, but that did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of its leaders and volunteers. On my next visit, 6 months later, the club had grown

exponentially, not just in numbers but in the respect with which it was held by the local health authority. Its CEO even visited several Leg Clubs in the UK to better understand the model. So, it was with enormous delight that we heard that three volunteers from Daylesford had won the Leg Club's annual volunteer award, which I presented at their volunteers' Christmas lunch in Australia.

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD LEG CLUB?

All Leg Clubs have something unique and special about them, but there are three things that are essential. First, you need an enthusiastic and visionary lead (an individual or team) who can set up an equally committed Leg Club committee. Second, you need a cohesive, respectful and proactive relationship between the volunteers and the Leg Club nursing teams and, third, you need continued support and commitment from management (the organisations, authorities or trusts where Leg Clubs operate). The majority of Leg Clubs have all three in abundance, which is why the model has grown so effectively in recent years. Here are a few facts about Leg Clubs that we should be aware of:

- ▶ The recurrence rates of leg ulcers in Leg Clubs are significantly below the national (UK) average
- ▶ The healing time for ulcers in Leg Club members is faster than the national average
- ▶ If the Leg Club model were adopted nationwide, the savings to the NHS would be in the region of £150 million. Savings in district nursing time alone in Powys, Mid Wales, were shown to be almost £1 million in 2013
- ▶ Member satisfaction levels with Leg Clubs and the treatment received there are at over 90%
- ▶ Leg Clubs have been demonstrated to improve the wellbeing of their members.

There are gaps in the network of Leg Clubs that we have around the UK. We need more in inner cities, more in the North of England and more initiated by commissioning groups (where we have had exceptional results). There is more to be done — but it has been a privilege to witness what can be achieved when volunteers, nurses, members and health authorities work together. **WUK**



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