



THE SAPPER CHARITY

Royal Engineers Association

REA OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES HELD ONLINE 11AM – 1159AM MONDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2026

1. Attendance

Nick Gunnell (NG)	Secretary
Julian Allerhead (JA)	National Branch Rep
Joshua Brown (JB)	West of England
Roy Lowe (RL)	South Wales
Simon Scott (SS)	Yorkshire
Tim Harnett (TH)	South West
Craig Smith (CS)	Corps SM
Gary Goldenhay (GG)	Midlands
Graeme Palmer (GP)	London
Ian Sidebottom (IS)	Corps Treasurer
Phil Tatterton (PT)	East Anglia
Phil Taylor (PT1)	Airborne
Grahame Doughty (GD)	National
Fiona Louch (FL)	Business Manager
Becky Stewart (BS)	Fund Manager

2. Non Attendance

Ron MacGregor (RM)	Scot & NI
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3. **Welcome, Attendance and Approval of Previous Minutes**

- a. Meeting opened at 1100 hrs. Apologies received from:

Col Claire James
Ken Kirk
Rick Tootle
Andrew Brown
David Waters
Kevin Street
Mike Facchini – Difficult Comms

- b. Minutes of the previous meeting were approved and seconded by:

- (1) Proposed: Simon Scott
(2) Seconded: Graham Doughty

2. **Reports**

a. **Finance Summary and Overview (IS).** The charity remains financially strong, with net assets of approximately £12.5 million, including £11.2 million in investments and £1 million in property investment. Members were informed that an investment review is underway to ensure the charity's assets continue to deliver the best possible returns and income to support future charitable activities.

b. **Board of Trustees Summary (NG).** The Board of Trustees noted strong progress across the Association, with continued membership growth, increasing benevolence activity, a successful launch of the Sapper App, and a robust financial position. Trustees also recognised significant progress in branch fund centralisation while highlighting ongoing challenges around communications, recruitment, succession planning, and the long-term sustainability of some branches. Overall, the Board considered the Association to be performing well and making positive progress against its strategic objectives. Board Minutes to be published in due course.

c. **Benevolence Report (NG).** The Committee noted continued growth in benevolence activity, with around 25% of cases now involving serving personnel. Increased demand was attributed to improved awareness and easier access to support. Members were updated on the introduction of direct branch referrals from October and reminded of the importance of maintaining confidentiality when handling benevolence cases.
The Benevolence Report can be found at **Annex A**.

d. **Operations Report (NG).** The Committee received an update on key operational activities, including the successful launch of the Sapper App, progress with branch fund centralisation, and ongoing work to improve member engagement and support delivery. Challenges relating to branch communications, recruitment, volunteer capacity and succession planning were highlighted, but overall good progress was reported across operational priorities and strategic objectives. The Benevolence Report can be found at **Annex B**.

- e. **Dashboard (NG).** The Committee received an update on the REA Dashboard, noting its role in providing management information and performance data to support operational oversight, trend analysis and informed decision-making across the Association. The Dashboard can be found at **Annex C**.
- f. **Benevolence Case Workers Report (NG).** The Committee noted the Benevolence Caseworker's report, which highlighted continued demand for support services, effective case management, and the positive impact of benevolence activity across the REA community. The Caseworkers Report can be found at **Annex D**.
- g. **Deputy Group Director Reports (NG).** The Committee noted the Group Reports, identifying common themes of communications, membership growth, recruitment, and succession planning. While overall engagement remained positive, challenges persist in maintaining volunteer capacity and ensuring the long-term sustainability of some branches. The Deputy Group Director Reports can be found at **Annex E**.

3. **Update Branch Fund Unification (BS).** 91% of branches have now transferred their funds into the unified banking system, with over £400,000 centralised. Remaining challenges relate primarily to banking access issues, treasurer vacancies and delays in a small number of branches. Members were encouraged to support outstanding branches in completing the process before the end-November deadline.

4. **Corps Memorial Weekend (NG).** The Committee discussed declining attendance at the Corps Memorial Weekend:

JA mentioned comments on social media regarding access arrangements at the camp gate.

RL stated that travel distance, fuel prices, accommodation and associated costs made attendance prohibitively expensive for many members.

MP suggested the weekend felt more like a Corps or Regimental Dinner than an REA event, which may have discouraged attendance by Association members.

GD reported that some members either did not know about the event until late in the process or struggled with booking through Eventbrite.

While recognising the continued importance of the weekend as a key commemorative event, the Committee agreed that its future format and long-term viability should remain under review to ensure it remains relevant, accessible, and sustainable whilst preserving its commemorative significance.

5. **Sapper App (NG).** The Committee received an update on the rollout of the Sapper App and noted that the launch had been successful, with approximately **1,300 members registered**. Members were informed that the app is becoming the Association's primary digital engagement platform, with events now being managed through the system and SapperCom due to be decommissioned by the end of October. The Committee discussed the need for a dedicated Sapper App Workshop to help

branches maximise the platform's functionality, share best practice, and support wider adoption across the Association. Members agreed that additional training and guidance would help improve communications, event management and member engagement, while supporting the continued transition to the new platform. **Action – Sapper App Workshop to be organised (NG).**

6. **Forecast of Events.** Unless stated all events taking place in 2027 will be published and administered through the Sapper App.

- a. 22 Oct - Royal Hospital Chelsea Visit (Eventbrite)
- b. 21 Nov - Royal Hospital Chelsea Visit (Eventbrite)
- c. 23 Jan Burns Sapper – Chetwyn Barracks (Tickets available on the App)
- d. 23 Jan - Standard Bearers Workshop - Chetwyn Barracks (Details tbc)
- e. 16 - 18th Apr - R Mons Painting Event Monmouth Castle (Remaining tickets will be available on the Sapper App)
- f. 9th May - Sapper Sunday - Royal Hospital Chelsea (Details tbc)
- g. 11 - 14th June - Gibraltar Weekend (Details tbc)
- h. 28th Jun - 1st Jul - Sapper Games, Gibraltar Barracks (Details tbc)
- i. 17th July Sapper Gathering – Leeds Royal Armouries (Details tbc)
- j. 18 – 19th Sep - Corps Memorial Weekend (Details tbc)

AOB

7. **Communications.**

- a. **PT** reported mixed experiences during branch visits. He found most northern branches welcoming and supportive, while some branches in East Anglia remained resistant following his appointment as Deputy Group Director. However, he noted that relationships were gradually improving.
- b. **RL** reported improving engagement within his area, supported by stronger involvement from the local RSM and Colonel. He highlighted planned joint events and increased cooperation with branches.
- c. **JA** advised members to make greater use of Armed Forces Champions within NHS hospitals, citing a successful welfare intervention in Plymouth which had supported a vulnerable veteran.
- d. **CS** agreed to assist **MP** with contacting the Communications branch based out of Minley.

8. **Life Member Lapel Badge (FL).** FL confirmed that the new REA membership pin badge in the style of the Corps TRF is now being issued to new members and proposed that all Deputy Group Directors receive one.

9. **Social Branches.** **TH** sought to clarify the status of Social Branches. The Committee discussed the development of Social Branches as a means of engaging members who may not wish

to join or establish a traditional geographically based branch. Members recognised that social branches could provide a more flexible way for individuals with shared interests, backgrounds or affiliations to participate in the Association, helping to improve engagement and support membership growth. However, social branches do not receive the support that traditional branches do due to their lack of committee.

10. **DONM:** Online - 11-1159am 14th December 2026

NR Gunnell
Operations Director
Sapper Charity

Annex A	-	Benevolence Report
Annex B	-	Operations Report
Annex C	-	Dashboard
Annex D	-	Benevolence Case Workers Report
Annex E	-	Summary of Deputy Group Directors Reports



THE SAPPER CHARITY

Royal Engineers Association

**All communications to
be addressed to:**

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(Registered under the Charities Act 1992 and a charity registered in
Scotland)

Board of Trustees Benevolence Report as at 20th Aug 2026

Summary. This report presents a month-by-month comparison of Benevolence Cases for the period January to August 2026 against the equivalent period in 2025. Data is drawn directly from the Benevolence Cases board as at 20 August 2026. August 2026 figures are partial and will increase as the month completes.

1. **Case Volumes.** A total of 342 cases were submitted in the period January–August 2026, compared with 310 in the same period of 2025 — an increase of 32 cases (+10.3%). January 2026 was the highest-volume month (60 cases), while April and May saw a relative dip compared to 2025. On current trajectory, 2026 is on course to exceed the 2025 full-year total of 487 cases.
2. **Expenditure.** Total expenditure for January–August 2026 was £188,861, compared with £179,809 in 2025 — an increase of £9,052 (+5.0%). The average monthly spend in 2026 is £23,607, against £22,476 in 2025. February 2026 recorded the highest single-month expenditure (£35,996), driven by several larger approved out of committee cases amounting to £5,661 and £6,042. Expenditure in April, May, July, and August 2026 fell below the £25,000/month target.
3. **Approval and Decline Rates.** The overall approval rate for 2026 (January–August) is 79.6%, compared with 84.2% in the same period of 2025 — a decline of 4.6%. The decline rate has risen from 15.8% in 2025 to 20.4% in 2026. June and July 2026 show the highest concentration of declined cases (16 and 14 respectively), and the lowest approval rates of the year (70.9% and 58.8%).

4. **Key Metrics — January to August.** Year-to-date summary comparing 2026 against the equivalent period in 2025.

Metric	2026 (Jan–Aug)	2025 (Jan–Aug)	Change	% Change
Total Cases	342	310	+32	+10.3%
Total Expenditure	£188,861	£179,809	+£9,052	+5.0%
Grant Requested	£896,130	£248,014	+£648,116	+261.3%
Cases Approved	262	261	+1	+0.4%
Cases Declined	67	49	+18	+36.7%
Approval Rate	79.6%	84.2%	-4.6pp	—
Decline Rate	20.4%	15.8%	+4.6pp	—
Avg Monthly Spend	£23,607	£22,476	+£1,131	+5.0%

5. **Number of Cases per Month.**

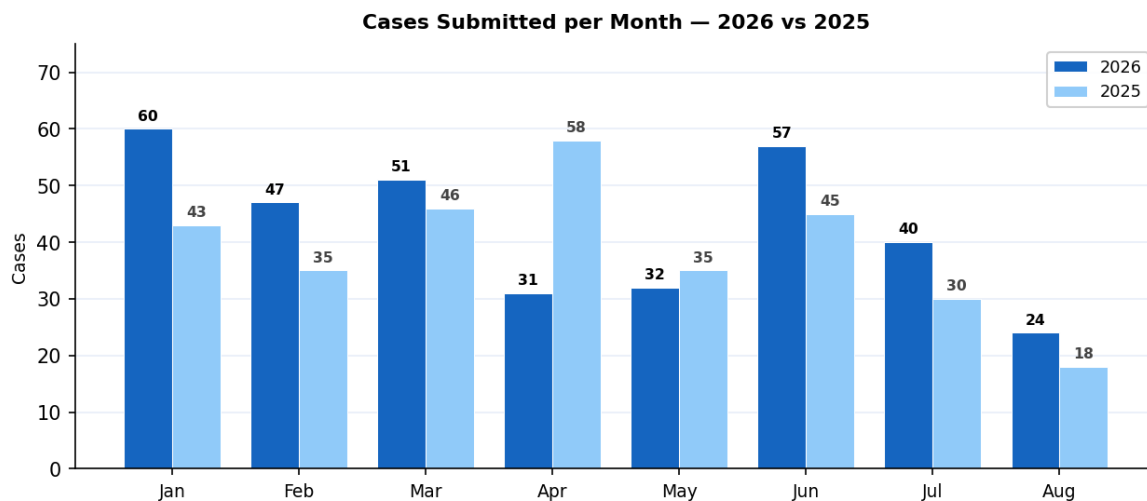
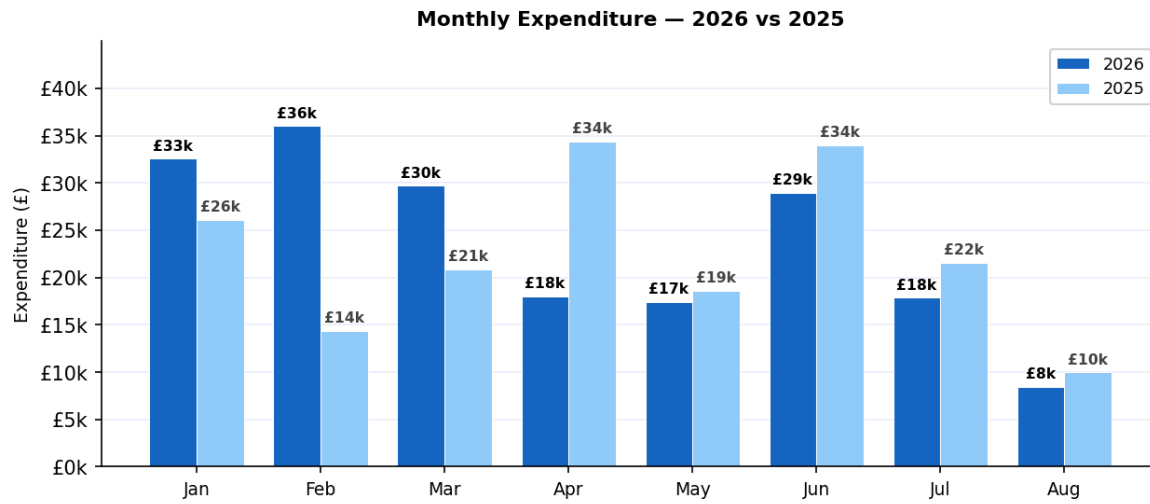


Figure 1: Cases submitted per month — 2026 (dark blue) vs 2025 (light blue)

6. Monthly Expenditure.



4. Figure 2: Monthly expenditure — 2026 vs 2025

7. Cumulative Expenditure vs £25k/month Target

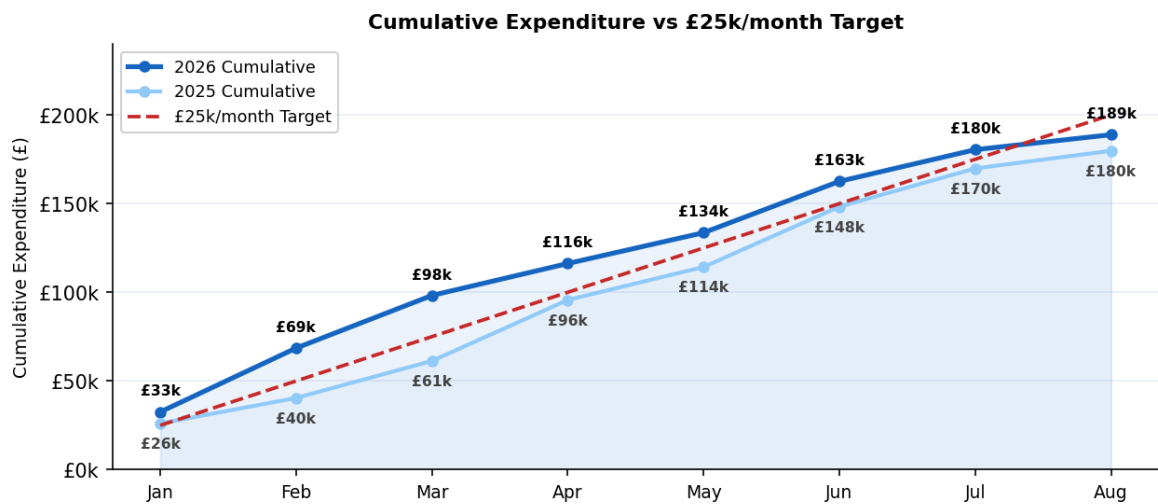


Figure 3: Cumulative expenditure — 2026 vs 2025 vs £25k/month (red dashed)

8. Approval Rate by Month

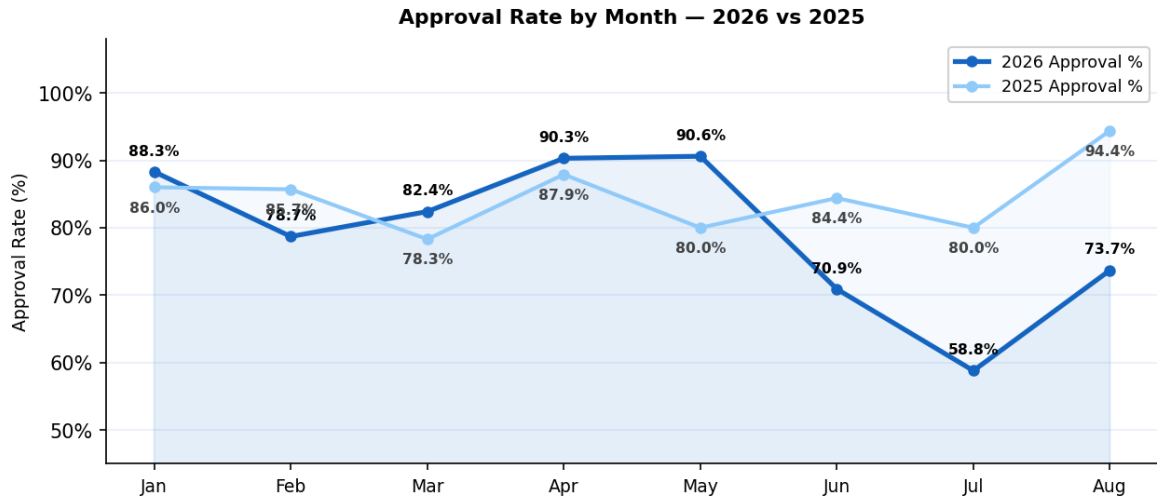


Figure 4: Approval rate by month — 2026 vs 2025

9. Grant Requested per Month

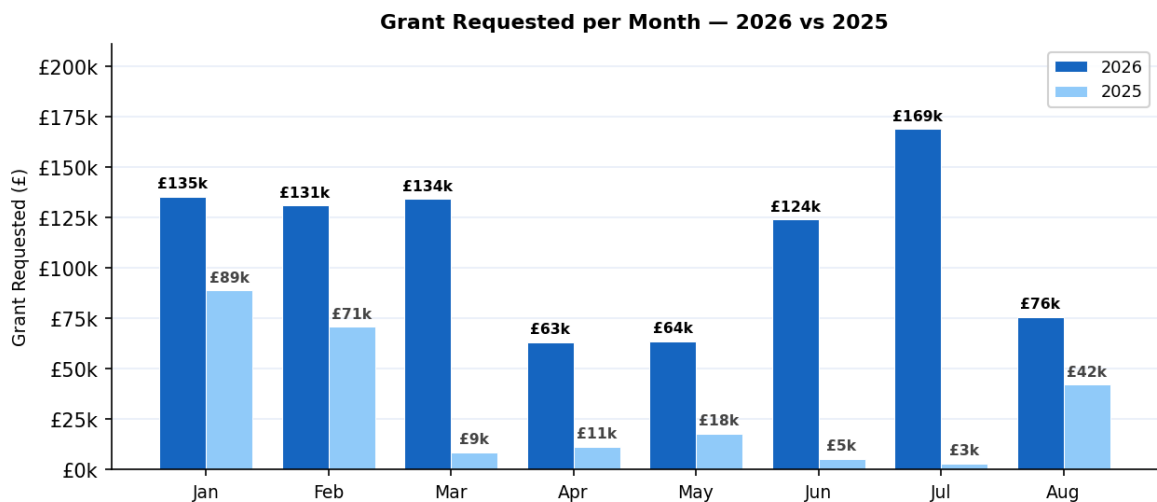


Figure 5: Grant requested per month — 2026 vs 2025

10. **Month-by-Month Comparison.** Detailed breakdown for each month, January to August 2026 vs 2025. * August 2026 is a partial month (data to 20 August).

Cases and Expenditure

Month	Cases 2026	Cases 2025	Cases	Exp 2026	Exp 2025	Exp
Jan	60	43	+17	£32,549	£26,059	+£6,490
Feb	47	35	+12	£35,996	£14,380	+£21,616
Mar	51	46	+5	£29,685	£20,853	+£8,832
Apr	31	58	-27	£18,007	£34,401	£-16,394
May	32	35	-3	£17,375	£18,598	£-1,223
Jun	57	45	+12	£28,948	£34,004	£-5,056
Jul	40	30	+10	£17,862	£21,548	£-3,686
Aug	24	18	+6	£8,439	£9,966	£-1,527
TOTAL	342	310	+32	£188,861	£179,809	+£9,052

11. **Grant Requested and Approval Rates**

Month	Grant 2026	Grant 2025	Approval % 2026	Approval % 2025	Decline % 2026	Decline % 2025
Jan	£135,401	£88,829	88.3%	86.0%	11.7%	14.0%
Feb	£130,946	£70,809	78.7%	85.7%	21.3%	14.3%
Mar	£134,159	£8,580	82.4%	78.3%	17.6%	21.7%
Apr	£63,238	£11,440	90.3%	87.9%	9.7%	12.1%
May	£63,711	£17,968	90.6%	80.0%	9.4%	20.0%
Jun	£124,069	£5,356	70.9%	84.4%	29.1%	15.6%
Jul	£168,883	£2,860	58.8%	80.0%	41.2%	20.0%
Aug	£75,723	£42,172	73.7%	94.4%	26.3%	5.6%
TOTAL	£896,130	£248,014	79.6%	84.2%	20.4%	15.8%

12. **Sapper Family Connection.** Demand from the core serving and veteran community has remained broadly stable, with regular cases increasing modestly from 293 to 305 (+4%). Dependant cases have reduced significantly, falling from 59 to 38 cases (-36%), and this trend should be reviewed further to understand any changes in referral patterns, demand or the recording of data. Cases involving Reservists and the Territorial Army have also increased, rising from 5 to 9 cases (+80%), with TA established as a separate category from March 2026 and therefore an area that merits ongoing monitoring.

Total Cases	Regular	Dependants	Reservists + TA
343 vs 309 in 2025 +34 (+11%)	305 vs 293 in 2025 +12 (+4%)	38 vs 59 in 2025 -21 (-36%)	9 vs 5 in 2025 +4 (+80%)

13. **Demographic Analysis.** Using 2 years worth of data (800+ cases) the following demographic trends have emerged.

14. **Primary Beneficiary Profile.** Male veterans aged 30 to 49 with between two and ten years' service remain the largest beneficiary group, most commonly seeking support for living expenses and debt-related issues.

15. **Gender and Service Status.** Beneficiaries were 75.9% male and 24.1% female, with women appearing proportionally over-represented compared to their wider representation within the Armed Forces community. Veterans accounted for 79.9% of cases, while currently serving personnel represented 19.2% and continue to grow as a proportion of the caseload.

16. **Age Demographics.** The caseload shows a clear bimodal distribution, with a large working-age cohort aged 30 to 49 (46% of cases) alongside a significant elderly population aged over 80 (11%).

17. **Dependant Beneficiaries.** Dependants have an average age of 59.6 years compared with 48.6 years for Regular beneficiaries, reflecting the prevalence of older widows and spouses within this group.

18. **Length of Service.** The median length of service remains six years, indicating that short-service leavers with limited pension entitlement continue to form a substantial proportion of those seeking assistance.

19. **Referral Sources.** TRBL and SSAFA remain the dominant referral partners, accounting for 83% of all benevolence referrals.

20. **Changing Caseload Profile.** The average beneficiary age fell from 52.8 years in 2025 to 48.3 years in 2026, indicating a noticeably younger caseload.
21. **Growth in Serving Personnel.** The proportion of currently serving personnel increased from 15.6% to 23.1%, meaning almost one in four cases now involves a serving soldier.
22. **Commonwealth Personnel.** Commonwealth beneficiaries represent 9.7% of referrals and have emerged as a distinct cohort, often presenting with immigration, visa and international travel-related needs.
23. **Sapper Charity Children's Fund.** No change from previous report.
24. **Gabriel Fund.** No change.

N R Gunnell
Operations Director
The Sapper Charity



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Royal Engineers Association

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OPERATIONS REPORT TO THE REA BOARD OF TRUSTEES 18TH SEP 2026 as at 14th Aug 2026

Executive Summary. The Operations Team continues to expand its reach across the Sapper Family, delivering record levels of engagement through outreach, unit activity and events. From September, Operations Managers will move from geographic to organisational responsibilities, providing single points of contact for Units and Branches. The launch of the Sapper App will further strengthen communication and engagement. Challenges remain notably; outdated governance responsibilities and limited engagement from serving officers. The Leeds Sapper Gathering was a notable success, while Corps Memorial Weekend attendance remains a concern. The priority for 2027 is developing a model that enables events to become sustainable and scalable model with broader numerical and geographic participation that supports growth into 2028 and beyond.

1. **Engagement with Serving Officers.** For whatever reason Serving Officers (Capt and above) do not want to engage with the Sapper Charity. On three occasions where predominantly officers have been briefed in person the uptake on creating a Sapper Charity connection has been less than 50%. At the Corps G1 conference, 4th June 2026, a request to all RCMOs to assist with the resettlement of some of the most vulnerable Soldiers i.e. those who have been discharged through medical or discipline has been met with indifference with no referrals currently received.
2. **Operations Managers.** Currently the Operations Managers responsibility is divided geographically with M4 marking areas of responsibility. From September the areas responsibilities will be change from geographic to organisational. The Ops Manager South will become responsible for Units, and the Ops Manager North will become responsible for REA Branches. It is envisaged that this will provide a single point of contact, maintain consistency in the delivery of services and advice for both branches and units. This change will be announced at Corps Memorial Weekend and the RSMs quarterly Conference.
3. **Northern Ireland Troubles Bill.** A single-issue pressure group called Shoulder to Shoulder has been created to challenge the Northern Ireland the Troubles Bill. The current method that Shoulder to Shoulder is employing is encouraging veterans and the public to lobby their MP by sending a letter which can be either automated or tailored from there website

[SHOULDER TO SHOULDER | Support Veterans Now — Take Action](#). The Sapper Family has been informed of the campaign via the newsletter, direct mail and sapper.com.

4. **Group Director & Secretary Roles.** Unit personnel understand the role of the Sapper Charity and how it adds value to their Unit. However, there is a tension between the value of REA members to a unit and what the Sapper Charity provides a unit. This is legitimised by the [REA Rules](#) which place a burden of responsibility on the Unit COs (Group Directors) and Unit RSMs (Group Secretaries). This has and continues to damage relationships. As is the case at RMons RE (M), 71 Engr Regt and 3 RSME Regt. A review of the Group Director and Group Secretaries responsibilities is being undertaken by the Corps RSM and Ops Director.

5. **Sapper Com and the Sapper App.** The Sapper App will be made public on the 18th September 2026. The introduction of the App will negate the need for SapperCom and Eventbrite. The former is scheduled to be turned off on the 31st October and the latter will cease to be used as from 21st November (The last event of 2026). This will result in the Sapper App and REA website being the primary locations of information and event booking. With the decline of the local Branch structure the App will assist with reaching a dispersed Sapper Family.

ROUTINE

6. **Unit Engagement.** A combination of CUBS grants stipulations, a changeover in personnel and interaction have resulted with 32 Engineer Regiment engaging with their affiliated REA Branches. A notable success has been the co-ordination between units and branches when holding their family's day(s). This has only been possible through the Ops Managers.

7. **Membership.** As of the 20th Aug, there 1,032 new members, 722 of which are Ubique Branch members. The total of new members for 2025 was 554. This has been achieved through a combination of initiatives including membership expansion, briefing career courses at Gibraltar Barracks and the linking of CUBS grants to the membership.

8. **Outreach Activity.** As of the 14th Aug the Ops Team and Benevolence Caseworker have conducted 71 outreach events at 52 distinct locations. A particular success has been Head Office and REA branches attending Unit Family Days (3 RSME Regt, 24 Cdo, 21 Engr Regt, 32 Engr Regt and 1 RSME Regt). The events allow Branch members to attend and the Sapper Charity to reach serving personnel.

9. **Operations Committee.** The minutes from the June meeting of the Operations Committee can be found [here](#). From September the Operations Committee will convene 4 times a year (currently 3) within 7-10 days of Board of Trustees meetings. This will increase decision making speed and the dissemination of information.

EVENTS

10. **Routine Events 2026.** Currently by 31st Dec 5 x RHC visits and 5 x painting events with an average attendance of 9.5 people per event will have been delivered.
11. **Corps Memorial Weekend.** At time of writing Corps Memorial Weekend Ticket sales are down on previous years with 88 sold. If the ticket sales remain below 120 the format of the 2027 Corps Memorial Weekend will be reviewed.
12. **Sapper Games Participation.** The 2026 Sapper Games saw the participation of a mixed serving and veteran team called the Sapper Barbarians. The idea was formulated and executed by Lt Col K Nixon RE with the support of Head Office REA. The Barbarians proved a success competing as a minor unit. The number of veteran's taking part was low however it is hoped momentum and profile from 2026 will encourage more veterans to take part in 2027. As well as participating 1 x Veteran adjudicated the bridge building competition. The 2027 Games will take place at Minley (Date tbc).
13. **Sapper Gathering.** The Sapper Gathering in Leeds proved a success with 386 attending the day's activities and 152 attending the evening function. Due to overwhelming positive feedback, a similar event is planned for next year.
14. **Military Grave Restorer.** In this reporting period the Military Grave Restorer has combined the restoration of non-CWGC RE graves with workshops for the Sapper Family. Despite low attendance 2 x groups of Sappers have been created, taking on responsibility to care for graves at Fort Pitt (Medway) and Hatch Beauchamp (location of Lt Chard VC).
15. **Standard Bearing.** Following feedback from the Standard Bearers survey a Standard Bearers workshop will be held in Chilwell, the same weekend as the Burns Night.
16. **Summary.** The expansion of the operations team and a benevolence case worker has allowed the Sapper Family to be engaged with at an unprecedented rate. The Sapper Gathering in Leeds was the most effective event of the Spring / Summer. The overarching intent for 2027 is to establish sustainability for Sapper Charity activity until 2030 and beyond.

NR Gunnell
Operations Director
The Sapper Charity

Board of Trustees — One-Page Summary

September 2026 | Prepared by Janice

Executive Overview

OVERALL: AMBER / GREEN

CEO Assessment — September 2026

Strategy 2030 Progress

"Meaningful progress and sound strategic direction, with further work required on performance, management information and sustainable funding." The Association is reaching more of the Sapper Family, providing more direct welfare support, improving digital capability, and broadening fundraising. **2027 is recommended as the year to move from building capability to demonstrating impact and delivering at sustainable scale.**

BENEVOLENCE CASES YTD

342

+ 10.3% vs 2025

NEW MEMBERS 2026

1,032

+ 86% vs 554 in 2025

FUNDRAISING FORECAST

£300k

+ Growing YoY

OUTREACH EVENTS YTD

71

+ 52 locations

Strategic Objectives

- **SO1 — Effective Support:** Benevolence cases 110.3%; serving personnel now 23.1% of caseload
- **SO2 — Connectivity:** 1,032 new members; Sapper App launches 18 Sep; Leeds Gathering 386 attendees
- **SO3 — Sustain the Charity:** £300k fundraising forecast; Branch Funds Unification — 70% complete

Board Decisions Required

- Endorse Amber/Green Strategy 2030 assessment
- Confirm principal risks & mitigations
- Support costed proposal for additional benevolence capacity
- Endorse outcome-led projects for corporate/T&F funding
- Approve quarterly Strategy 2030 dashboard from 2027
- Endorse 2027 as year of measurable impact & sustainable delivery

Key Milestones — Remainder 2026

- Sapper App public launch — **18 Sep 2026**
- Tandem Skydive fundraiser — **23 Sep 2026**
- Branch Funds Unification — target year-end
- Boardable → Microsoft 365 migration (saving ~£7,500/yr)
- Reserves & Sustainability Statement — complete
- 2027 budget finalisation — strategic alignment required

Fundraising

TOTAL FORECAST INCOME

£300k

+ YTD + forecast

TRUSTS & FOUNDATIONS

£184.8k

+ Largest stream

DONATIONS

£72.6k

+ YTD + forecast

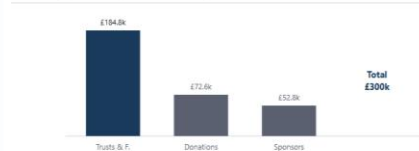
SPONSORS

£52.8k

+ YTD + forecast

Income by Stream (YTD + Forecast)

FY2026



Key Fundraising Highlights

- **Sapper Games 2026:** ~£38,000 corporate sponsorship secured
- **Gillingham Golf Club:** £10,000 raised with minimal costs
- **London Marathon 2027:** 7 runners stewarded; Victory Services Club sponsoring again
- **Tandem Skydive (23 Sep):** 11 participants, ~£400 avg per person
- **Individual challenges (Jun-Sep):** 14 individuals raised £6,000+; 96 more expected to raise ~£18,000
- **LinkedIn:** Approaching 2,000 connections — trustee engagement amplifies reach
- **Infrastructure need:** CRM, paid LinkedIn & tap-to-donate investment required to scale

Post-Event Engagement — Sapper Events (75 events reported)

TOTAL EVENTS

75

TOTAL ATTENDEES (EST.)

3,700+

AVG ATTENDANCE

~50

- Serving soldiers/officers: 1,000+ across reported events
- Events span unit visits, welfare days, branch gatherings, and community activities
- Data supports the case for a consistent post-event reporting framework

Benevolence

CASES YTD (JAN-AUG)

342

+ 10.3% vs 310 in 2025

EXPENDITURE YTD

£188.9k

+ 5.0% vs £179.8k

APPROVAL RATE

79.6%

- 4.6pp vs 84.2% in 2025

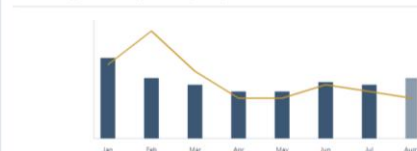
GRANT VALUE REQUESTED

£896k

- 261% ↑ vs £248k 2025

Cases & Expenditure by Month (2026)

■ CASES ■ SPEND (£K)



Caseload Profile & Trends

Metric	2025	2026	Change
Avg beneficiary age	52.8 yrs	48.3 yrs	↓ YOUNGER
Serving personnel %	15.6%	23.1%	↑ GROWING
Dependant cases	59	38	↓ 36%
Reservist/TA cases	5	9	↑ 80%
Cases approved	261	262	↑ STABLE
Cases declined	49	67	↑ 36.7%
Total expenditure	£179,809	£188,861	↑ 5.0%

- TRBL & SSAFE account for 83% of referrals
- Commonwealth personnel: 9.7% of cases — immigration/visa needs require specific strategy
- Decline rate in Jun (70.9% approval) and Jul (58.8%) warrants attention

Operations

NEW MEMBERS 2026

1,032

+ 86% vs 554 in 2025

UBIQUE BRANCH MEMBERS

722

+ of 1,032 new members

LEEDS GATHERING

386

+ day; 152 evening

CORPS MEMORIAL TICKETS

88

- Target 120 — review if not met

Key Operational Updates

- **Sapper App:** Public launch 18 Sep 2026 — replaces SapperCom & Eventbrite; phased migration planned
- **Ops restructure:** From Sep, Ops Manager South → Units; Ops Manager North → REA Branches
- **Ops Committee:** Increasing from 3 to 4 meetings/year, timed within 7–10 days of Board meetings
- **Sapper Barbarians:** Mixed serving/veteran team competed in 2026 Sapper Games
- **Military Grave Restorer:** Two groups of Sappers created for ongoing grave care
- **Routine events:** 5 × RHC visits + 5 × painting events; avg 9.5 attendees per event

Operational Risks & Issues

- **Serving officer engagement:** <50% uptake at briefings; no RCMO referrals received despite requests
- **Corps Memorial Weekend:** 88 tickets sold vs 120 target — 2027 format under review if not met
- **Governance rules:** REA Rules placing CO/RSM burdens damaging relationships at 3 units — review underway
- **Northern Ireland Troubles Bill:** "Shoulder to Shoulder" campaign active — Sapper Family informed
- **2027 intent:** Sustainable, scalable events model with broader geographic reach



SAPPER CHARITY BENEVOLENCE CASE WORKER REPORT TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES DATED 14 AUG 2026

1. **Introduction.** This document provides an overview of the first 12 months of the Sapper Charity Case Worker role including the impact, challenges, outcomes, and intended evolution of the role.

2. **Background.** Prior to September 2025 benevolence support to the Sapper Family was provided through Unit Welfare officers and charity case workers (provided by SSAFA and the RBL). The introduction of a dedicated Sapper Charity Case Worker has enabled the Sapper Charity to provide direct and collaborative support to the Sapper Family. The impact of this has been threefold:

- a. an increase in the number of individuals being assisted.
- b. A reduction in the time for assistances being distributed
- c. The relevance of the Sapper Charity being demonstrated to the Serving Corps.

3. **Summary of Role.** The Sapper Charity Case worker is responsible for delivering benevolence to the Serving Sapper Family and when required veterans, the role also includes managing family's in receipt of the Sapper Charity Children's Fund. In all cases circumstances and needs are assessed in order to identify genuine requirements and provide appropriate support. Once assessed liaison with families, welfare teams, the chain of command and external agencies (local authorities and charities) is often required. Once support has been delivered ongoing reviews and an ethos of "a hand up, not a handout" results in trust with the individual being created.

IMPACT

4. **Number of Cases Assessed.** The following number of cases has been assessed since September 2025:

- a. **Sep – Dec 2025:** 27 cases
- b. **Jan – Aug 2026:** 57 cases (52 serving personnel)
- c. **Sapper Charity Children's Fund:** 19 (8 of which are new cases)

5. **What is effective.**

- a. **Outreach.** A physical presence and attendance at Unit events provides an opportunity to speak and provide information directly to families and serving soldiers.
- b. **Unit Welfare Department Relationships.** Establishing a relationship and proving worth to unit welfare teams results in more effective and timely delivery of support (See Annex A).
- c. **External Agencies Relationship.** Having proven effectiveness and openness to collaboration service charities (notably the RBL) have started routinely consulting and collaborating with the Sapper Charity. For example; an RBL case officer requested that the Sapper Charity take the lead for a case due to a 6 week wait time. In a similar case an individual contacted multiple charities with the same request. Duplication of effort was avoided as each organization independently directed their questions to the Sapper Charity whom they had previously worked with.

6. **What does not work.**

- a. **Handling of Complex cases.** Complex cases such as house adaptations can be lengthy and require in person assessment. When this occurs, the Sapper Charity intentionally becomes a third-party allowing charities (such as the RBL) who have the geographical coverage and expertise to deliver.
- b. **Third Party Referrals.** Third party referrals within the Veteran Community, whilst well intentioned, often do not work. Information can be inaccurate often resulting in confusion. Where Third Party's do have a role is within the Serving Sapper Family. The chain of command provides a point of contact and buffer in cases involving bereavement and emergency situations.
- c. **Timing and Indifferent Units.** Despite personal visits and the engagement from the Ops Managers, several Unit Welfare Teams either do not engage or when a case is beyond their means, preventing timely assistance. A table detailing the number of cases per unit and an assessment of the relationship can be found at Annex A.

Annex D

Benevolence Case Worker Report

7. Ongoing Challenges

- a. **Cold Cases.** On occasion initial enquiries made by an individual describes an issue requiring immediate attention. On following up the enquiry this is often not the case with the individual being nonresponsive to requests for information.
- b. **Deployed Units.** A number of incidents have occurred whereby deployed personnel (Estonia and Cyprus) have been unable to receive benevolence support due a discontent between the Welfare Team (in the UK) and the individual. This is a possible cultural issue; whereby deployed personnel are viewed as the responsibility of JCCC by the Unit Welfare Team.
- c. **Seeking Help Too Late.** Many individuals contact Welfare Teams only after their circumstances have significantly deteriorated. For example, one recent client sought support only when mounting debt had become overwhelming for him and his young family.
- d. **Personnel Who Are Unexpectedly Discharged.** The majority of service personnel leave the Corps satisfactorily with a 12-month resettlement period, however those who are discharged for medical or discipline reasons have a much shorter timeline (sometimes 7 days). The key personality in a Soldiers departure from the Army is the RCMO. However, since appealing to the Corps RCMOs conference in Jun 2026 there have been no referrals.

FUTURE INTENTIONS

8. **Delivering Benevolence via the Branch Network.** Many branches have a "Welfare Officer" who, when required, ensure branch members are looked after, i.e. hospital visits or linking up with SSAFA or the RBL. It is envisaged that the Sapper Charity Case worker will be delivering benevolence to branch members from October 2026.
9. **Engagement with Families not in Service Families Accommodation.** The number of service families living in private housing away from barracks and garrisons is increasing year on year. This relatively new phenomenon makes it more traditional engagement routes less effective. The ability to request support using the Sapper App. will contribute to addressing this issue.
10. **Summary.** The Case Worker role has highlighted a continuing need to improve awareness of the Charity and the support available across the wider Sapper family. Ensuring serving personnel, veterans and their families understand our services is essential, so those facing hardship can access timely assistance. The data collected demonstrates a positive impact on alleviating uncertainty and hardship. 2026 has been a successful and good year but there is stil much to do. With continued engagement with unit COs, RSMS, welfare

officers, branches, and support networks awareness and support to the Sapper Family will increase.

R Faulks
Benevolence Case Worker
The Sapper Charity

Annex A - Unit Cases and Relationship Assessment
Annex B - Case Studies

Annex D Benevolence Case Worker Report

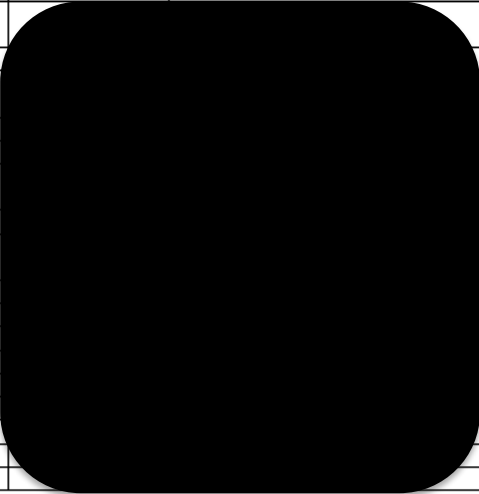
Annex A to
Benev Case Worker Report
Dated 14 Aug 2026

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Annex A - Unit Cases and Relationship Assessment
Annex B - Case Studies

Number of Serving Corps Cases Assessed per Unit by the Sapper Charity Case Worker from Sept 2025 to present.

Serial	Unit	Number of Cases	Assessment
1	1 RSME Regt Training Establishment		
2	PEW		
3	3 RSME Regt Training Establishment		
4	REWW		
5	21 Engr Regt		
6	22 Engr Regt		
7	23 Para Engr Regt		
8	24 Cdo		
9	26 Engr Regt		
10	28 C-CBRN Engr Regt		
11	32 Engr Regt		
12	33 EOD&S Engr Regt		
13	35 Engr Regt		
14	36 Engr Regt		
15	39 Engr Regt		
16	42 Engr Regt Geo		
17	Chilwell Station		

Assessment Definitions:

Poor = Limited / no communication

Fair = Approaches the Sapper Charity when other avenues have been exhausted

Engaged Welfare Team = Welfare reaches out and are approachable



- Case Study 1:

Mr A, a veteran, was referred to the Charity by current serving personnel while experiencing homelessness, PTSD, disability, substance misuse, and strained personal relationships.

Although he initially sought help with car repairs, which fell outside the Charity's remit, it became clear that he needed urgent wider support.

The Charity worked with Mr A to stabilise his situation, supporting him to with accommodation and work programme options through RBVE (RBLI). However, outstanding bail conditions meant he was not eligible for the programme at that time. Immediate support was provided with emergency accommodation, child engagement, and essential living items. Mr A is now self-sufficient, awaiting permanent accommodation, and remains motivated to re-engage with RBVE when eligible. The Charity will continue to monitor his progress and support his longer-term goal of becoming a lived experience worker.



- Case Study 2:

Mr B was referred to the Charity through Unit Welfare. Following an overview from Unit Welfare and discussions with Mr B, it became clear that he was experiencing financial pressure after taking guardianship of his younger sibling, who had been identified by the local authority as being subject to safeguarding concerns.

Mr B, his wife, and their newborn child have taken on responsibility for supporting his sibling emotionally and educationally, following her withdrawal from formal education by the maternal family.

Before referral, Mr B had considered taking on additional work to help manage the fees he had incurred. Since being referred, he has received general needs grant support, and assistance for the children has been approved through the Sapper Charity Children's Fund. This support has helped reduce immediate financial pressure and enabled Mr B to continue focusing on his family and guardianship responsibilities.



• Case Study 3:

Mr C was referred to the charity with complex needs, including no fixed abode, legal requirements, safeguarding restrictions, and family-related risks. Immediate support was needed with accommodation, food, family supplies, and coordinated professional oversight.

The charity helped stabilise Mr C's situation through emergency accommodation and practical support. The Fijian community provided fundraising for food and supplies and later helped identify longer-term accommodation options.

The case worker liaised with the Fijian community, Royal British Legion, probation, and other support networks.

When the case was revisited, other professionals confirmed that Mr C had been detained in relation to the original offence and was serving a sentence of 12 to 18 months. Established communication links will enable this case to be revisited should it be required in the future.

REA OPERATIONS COMMITTEE REPORTS SUMMARY PAPER (Produced using AI)

Subject: Key Themes, Trends and Priority Issues from Group Reporting

Prepared for: REA Operations Committee

Purpose: Discussion and Decision

Date: September 2026

1. Executive Summary

Reports received from Group Directors and Deputy Group Directors indicate that the Association remains active, respected and valued by members. Branches continue to deliver successful social activities, remembrance support, welfare engagement and strong links with serving Royal Engineers units. The reports identify three strategic issues requiring committee attention: membership growth, confidence in financial processes and branch sustainability.

2. Background

This paper consolidates recurring themes identified across Group returns and associated reports submitted during September 2026.

3. What is Working Well

- a. Strong branch activity and well-attended social events.
- b. Continued commitment of volunteers and branch committees.
- c. Strong support to members, families and remembrance activities.
- d. Positive engagement with serving units, RHQ, COs and RSMs.
- e. Strong sense of identity and community across the Association.

4. Emerging Risks and Challenges

- a. Recruitment of younger members and recently transitioned personnel.
- b. Reliance on a small number of volunteers in many branches.
- c. Concerns regarding centralised banking arrangements and associated processes.
- d. Uneven communication across branches.
- e. Some branches showing signs of reduced activity, limited committee capacity or virtual-only engagement.

5. Top Three Priorities for Committee Consideration

5.1 Priority One: Membership Growth and Younger Member Recruitment

- a. Develop an Association-wide membership growth strategy.
- b. Increase engagement with serving personnel approaching discharge.
- c. Promote branch activities that appeal to younger demographics and families.
- d. Review barriers created by traditional meeting venues and formats.

5.2 Priority Two: Financial Confidence and Administrative Processes

- a. Review recurring concerns relating to Soldo and centralised banking.
- b. Improve communication and guidance to branch officers.
- c. Reduce delays in administrative and claims processes where possible.

5.3 Priority Three: Branch Sustainability and Succession Planning

- a. Identify branches requiring intervention or additional support.
- b. Develop succession plans for key branch and group appointments.
- c. Capture and share best practice from high-performing branches.

6. Decisions Requested

- 1. Note the findings of this report.
- 2. Agree the three priority areas for further work.
- 3. Task Head Office with developing proposals for presentation at the next Operations Committee meeting.

7. Conclusion

The Association is currently in a healthy operational position, however future sustainability will depend upon attracting new members, maintaining confidence in administrative arrangements and strengthening branch resilience. Early action in these areas will help safeguard long-term growth and effectiveness.