

# Marie Goldman

MP for Chelmsford



## Weaving tapestry of kindness that strengthens the fabric of society

**S**OMETIMES the smallest acts in everyday life open unexpected doors. Walking the dog, or looking after young children, can seem like routine tasks, but they have a knack for drawing us into the heart of our communities and helping us make connections.

Last week, these themes came together for me in two ways: first, through a chance encounter in the woods with a dog fosterer, and second, with a visit to Blesma's headquarters in New London Road, Chelmsford, where I saw the remarkable work being done to support Armed Forces veterans.

Walking a dog really isn't so different from caring for young children. Both require a watchful eye and a sense of responsibility. Whether you're wrangling a lively spaniel or guiding little ones to the playground, you become part of a wider network - other dog owners, parents, neighbours and passers-by - each sharing snippets of daily life. These moments, as fleeting as they are, often spark conversations that grow into friendships or at least brighten the day with a bit of camaraderie.

It's funny how both scenarios act as gateways to the community. When you're out and about, people are drawn to children and dogs alike - smiles, nods and questions come easily. There's a natural warmth to these interactions. They remind us that, beneath the surface, we are all looking for connection, whether it's a shared laugh over a mischievous puppy or commiserating about sleepless nights with a toddler.

Last weekend, as I took advantage of the sunshine and the opportunity to admire the carpet of bluebells through the woods in Danbury with my dog, I met someone who was fostering a young spaniel. Our conversation started with the dog's curiosity for the ball I was throwing for my black labrador, but quickly turned to his experience as a fosterer. He told me about the joy of giving dogs a temporary home, and the bittersweet feeling of letting them go to their forever families.

What really struck me was his selflessness. Sometimes, it's just a small



Marie Goldman MP during her visit to Blesma in Chelmsford

Marie Goldman MP with Brigadier Vivienne Buck CBE, the CEO of Blesma  
PHOTOS: MARIE GOLDMAN MP

Together, we can make a difference - one walk, one visit, one act of generosity at a time.

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act that makes all the difference - although in his case, it's hours upon hours, day after day, teaching a small animal how to live its best life. His volunteering is changing the world for someone else, even if that someone is four-legged. The woods echoed with the sound of two dogs playing and I couldn't help but feel grateful for people like the man in front of me, especially in a world where people seem more inward-looking and more insular, possibly as a coping mechanism for shutting out the dangers that the world at large threatens.

But volunteering, whether for animals, children or the wider community, is a thread that binds us together. It takes generosity, and a willingness to give time without expecting anything back. Volunteers are often the

unsung heroes, quietly shaping lives and nurturing hope where it's needed most. Their selflessness, as I saw in the woods, inspires others to step forward and make a difference. There are so many ways to volunteer. From fostering dogs, helping at local schools, supporting food banks, assisting at charity shops or befriending the elderly, there's a place for everyone. Sometimes, all it takes is a single conversation or a little empathy to spark something lasting. Volunteering isn't about grand gestures; it's about showing up, doing what you can, and believing that every effort matters.

Dogs bring so much joy into our lives. Their unwavering loyalty, infectious enthusiasm, and ability to sense our moods make them wonderful companions. They teach us patience, encourage us to slow down and be present and remind us how important play is. For many, dogs aren't just pets, they're family, confidants and a source of everyday happiness.

Through volunteering and fostering, these positive traits only grow. Dogs, with their gentle natures, have the power to heal, comfort and connect people. Whether it's a wagging tail that greets you after a long day, or a therapy dog supporting someone in need, their impact is real. In my experience, dogs often bring out the best in us, nudging us towards kindness and compassion.

Kindness and compassion is also what I saw in abundance last week as I had the privilege of visiting Blesma, the military charity for limbless veterans, at its headquarters in New London Road. The atmosphere was positive and welcoming, filled with wonderful people dedicated to supporting veterans who've lost limbs or suffered serious injuries in service. The HQ was busy, with meetings about upcoming events and reflections on the support and advice offered to members. Blesma's mission is straightforward: to provide practical assistance, emotional support and a sense of

community to veterans facing life-changing challenges. I was struck by the passion and professionalism of everyone I met, from the receptionists to the coordinators. Their work is holistic, focusing not only on physical rehabilitation but also on mental wellbeing, social inclusion and advocacy for veterans' rights.

The importance of Blesma's work can't be overstated. Veterans often face hurdles that go beyond their injuries: loneliness, anxiety and the struggle to find purpose after service. Blesma provides a lifeline, offering programmes, peer support, and opportunities for meaningful engagement. Their work helps veterans rebuild their lives, fostering resilience and hope.

What resonated with me most was the sense of belonging that Blesma creates. Members aren't just recipients of care; they are active participants in a community that values their experiences and contributions. The support goes beyond the physical, helping veterans rediscover confidence and forge new paths.

Looking back on these experiences, I'm reminded that community is built through small acts, whether that's walking the dog, caring for children, volunteering, supporting veterans or a myriad other things. Every gesture, every conversation, has the potential to create lasting connections.

Volunteering isn't only about giving; it's also about receiving the warmth and gratitude of others, and finding purpose in those shared moments.

Whether you're fostering a dog, lending a hand at a charity, or reaching out to a neighbour, you're weaving a tapestry of kindness that strengthens the fabric of society. Blesma and the volunteers in countless other charities I've met show what it means to care, to support, and to believe in the power of community. Together, we can make a difference - one walk, one visit, one act of generosity at a time.

Marie