

GETTING BETTER

If you are a TBF beneficiary you may feel you need a break following illness or serious problems. This leaflet explains how we may be able to help.

Convalescence

Purpose

Convalescence helps you make an earlier recovery than would otherwise be the case. Usually this means recovery from a serious illness or operation, but it can also help after a traumatic event (perhaps the death of your partner, a serious accident or assault or witnessing serious injury to another).

While we are naturally sympathetic if you are affected by long-term ongoing illness, unfortunately convalescence does not normally lead to a sustained improvement in health and we cannot, therefore, generally provide it in such cases.

Please note that we are also unable to provide convalescence where what is needed is a holiday.

Convalescence following illness

- ✚ We will generally provide this if you have been in hospital for a complex operation or because of a serious bout of ill-health. It cannot normally be provided, however, if your hospitalization was for investigation, a regular course of treatment, control of symptoms or where the period spent in hospital was very short or the surgery relatively minor or non-invasive.
- ✚ You should normally apply for convalescence within four weeks of being discharged from hospital, but this is not a hard and fast rule. For instance you may have to undertake a course of out-patient treatment after you have left hospital which does not allow you to be away for a fortnight; if so, you should apply for convalescence as soon as you are able. We are sorry that we cannot consider applications which have been delayed without sound medical reason.
- ✚ As explained earlier, convalescence is not normally granted in cases of long-term ongoing illness but this is not an absolute bar. If you have undergone an operation or painful treatment for your illness or there has been a significant change in your condition, you and your carer may be suffering from exhaustion or stress. We shall be pleased to consider applications made for these reasons on their merits.

Convalescence for other reasons

- ✚ You may apply for a spell of convalescence within a year of the death of your partner or your child.
- ✚ Sometimes circumstances arise where you (and possibly your partner and dependent children) would benefit from convalescence although you do not meet the normal criteria. This might be because you have suffered a period of excessive stress, an accident or assault, witnessed serious injury to another or through other problems. We are happy to consider applications for these reasons, although a shorter spell of recuperation may be more appropriate.

Other points

- ✚ You (or someone acting on your behalf) will need to complete an application form and provide all the necessary information. Your medical adviser will normally need to sign the form and we are sorry that we cannot meet any charge made by the doctor for this.
- ✚ We normally grant two weeks' convalescence, because it is not usually possible to recover from a condition which has led us to grant convalescence in less time. We cannot, however, grant more than two weeks. It may be, though, that you need to return to work quickly or do not wish to stay away for two weeks. In such cases arrangements will be made for a shorter period. If you simply cannot face going on your own (but are medically able to) we may be able to provide one week for both you and your partner.
- ✚ You cannot normally be accepted direct from hospital. We will arrange suitable dates for your convalescence with our service partners, and aim that you will begin your stay within four weeks of our agreeing your application. Please understand, though, that we may not meet this target at very busy times or if you have particular needs. We make special efforts to ensure that working beneficiaries are able to convalesce at a time which does not extend their period of absence from work, and they always receive priority. Please ensure you tell us when you can (or cannot) convalesce and why.
- ✚ Unlike some other organizations we do not automatically refuse to grant a second spell of convalescence within a year of the first, but we need to consider the application carefully and it should not normally be for a related condition. Do not be afraid to re-apply provided the condition is not a long-term one.
- ✚ We are generally able to pay only for the patient to convalesce. Sometimes, though, it is not possible for them to go away on their own. They may be unable to meet their own basic needs without help, or a partner or dependent child may be at risk if left alone at home. In such cases we can usually pay for

them too, and we aim to allow partners of working members to accompany them because of the impact of illness on working families.

- ✚ Convalescence is normally provided at the RCH Centre (Dawlish in Devon). See 'Convalescence and recuperation' pages. We will make every effort to accommodate you at this Centre, but this cannot be guaranteed. A high standard of accommodation and care is provided, but this does not include medical or nursing care. If you meet our criteria for convalescence but need medical or nursing care you will be accommodated elsewhere.

There are other circumstances in which the RCH Centre would not be appropriate. These include those who need to take children (who are not accepted by the RCH), those who cannot travel long distances, room availability, physical constraints or other needs. In such cases we will make other arrangements, including the use of other convalescent facilities or (if suitable) hotels or holiday camps. We will make every effort to arrange accommodation at a facility accepted by provident organizations providing convalescent cash benefits where you request this, but the final decision as to what accommodation is provided must rest with us.

In exceptional cases we may be able to provide cash help towards a break you organize yourself, but we need to be sure this would be appropriate and need to see confirmation of arrangements made before we can make money available.

- ✚ It is important you tell us all your needs - including diet and physical restrictions.
- ✚ We and our service partners must reserve the right to decline (or to end) convalescence for anyone who behaves improperly towards any other patient, guest or staff, causes any damage, harms our good name or interferes with the right of other patients to enjoy their stay.
- ✚ It is not normally possible to provide convalescence between the middle of December and the middle of January, but we will endeavour to make suitable arrangements for those who need to return to work in the new year.
- ✚ We shall make a contribution towards the cost of your travel and incidental costs, but this is not intended necessarily to cover the full costs. If you cannot travel alone (but do not need to be accompanied once you reach the convalescence facility) we may make additional payments to help meet the cost of a carer travelling with you.

Recuperation

Recuperation provides a break if you are not eligible for convalescence but are suffering from:

- ✚ an extended period of stress; or
- ✚ an acute condition requiring surgery (not necessarily in hospital); or
- ✚ a long-term ongoing illness in which there has been a significant development of some kind; or
- ✚ other circumstances which make it desirable that we grant a spell of recuperation.

It is granted for up to a week and the points made under 'Convalescence' generally also apply to recuperation.