

## Civil Service trans group gets cut off

FUNDING has been pulled for a group that supports trans and intersex civil servants, after it ran up costs of £82,000 in the 2022-23 year.

The agender staff network aims to “embed a culture of inclusion for trans and intersex people in the Civil Service”.

The funding – pulled last Monday – covered running costs of the community, which boasts that in 2022 it increased membership to “over 1,700 members and allies”.

Full members are people who identify as trans or intersex, while allies are supporters of their cause.

The group has backed the adding of pronouns to emails and the installation of unisex toilets.

Cabinet Office minister Esther McVey said: “The Government has made it clear it is committed to stopping unnecessary politically correct staff networks. Here is a prime example of that in action.”

Elliot Keck, of the TaxPayers’ Alliance, said: “While public services are on their knees, these pen-pushers are using precious resources for pointless navel-gazing.”

## Self-harm cases soar in children

BRITAIN’S young people are in the grip of a “mental health crisis” after the number of children needing hospital treatment due to self-harm shot up.

Hospitals recorded more than 20,000 admissions in a year, a rise of more than a third compared to 2012, Labour party data shows.

And separate NHS figures reveal more than 36,000 very urgent and urgent referrals of children to mental health teams were made between April 2023 and January this year – around 830 every week.

Abeno Oppong-Asare, Labour’s Shadow Mental Health Minister, said: “The failure to support people out of lockdown, in particular young people who have felt the effects worse than most, has stored up huge problems.”

Labour would increase NHS mental health staff and provide support in schools, she said.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesman said: “We are increasing mental health support teams in schools to reach at least 50 per cent of pupils in England by March 2025.”

# UNITED WITH THE PEOPLE OF UKRAINE

After visiting an incredible medical centre in the United States which is transforming the lives of injured Ukrainian service personnel for free, LORD ASHCROFT says the world must do all it can to help the war-torn country in its hour of need

IT IS A 10,000-mile return journey that has given him hope after despair. Andriy Klymchuk was at an all-time low after being horrifically wounded by an artillery shell while serving on the front line in Ukraine’s brutal war with Russia.

His injuries saw him have his right arm amputated above the elbow and lose his right eye.

With hospitals in his home country at breaking point, he received only basic medical care and no prosthetic limb to enable him to carry out simple day-to-day tasks.

Now, six months after his life-changing injuries, he has been flown to a medical centre on the outskirts of Washington DC, the US capital, which is successfully treating dozens of the worst injured amputee Ukrainian servicemen from the war.

Andriy, 33, a career soldier who has served in the Ukrainian army since Russia illegally annexed Crimea in 2014, was injured last September during some of the heaviest fighting of the war in Bakhmut. He was evacuated from the battlefield and later underwent surgery. For two weeks he was on a ventilator and in a coma.

There is still a sadness in his face, revealing the trauma he has been through as he comes to terms with his injuries. Yet the results of Andriy’s short stay in the US are remarkable.

I witnessed the transformation when I visited the Medical Center Orthotics and Prosthetics – a world leader in treating combat injuries – just days before Andriy was due to return home after five weeks of high-level care.

He said: “My life has changed for the better as a result of my visit here. I am now more inde-



FUTURE: Pavlo Ponomarenko at the medical centre after surgery; and above, in full battle gear

# Help for the heroes who lost limbs defending homeland



INVESTIGATION: Lord Ashcroft at the centre

pendent and can do a lot of basic things. Using my prosthetic I can take care of myself. I can dress myself, use a knife to cut, and I can cook.”

The lance sergeant is married with one daughter and another baby on the way. I asked him what the future holds after leaving the centre.

He said: “First of all, I am looking forward to becoming a father for the second time. Then I will buy a new apartment and continue to serve in the army, training new soldiers.”

Like most soldiers who come to the centre after losing an arm, he has a prosthetic with two different hands – one to look good aesthetically, the other with a grip for day-to-day tasks.

Service personnel are assessed on arrival at the medical centre in the suburbs of Silver Spring. An impression is taken of what remains of their amputated arm or leg and, within 48 hours, a purpose-built prosthetic is made and fitted.

Patients then spend the next five weeks in rehabilitation and training. Those with prosthetic arms are taught routine tasks like how to dress, how to hold cutlery and how to hold a cup. Those with prosthetic legs are taught how to walk again.

The bionic prosthetics use sensors to detect electrical signals from the residual muscles.

The treatment and care the servicemen receive is entirely free. All costs for flights, lodgings, components for their artificial limbs and other expenses are paid for by three main charities: Future for Ukraine, based in Kyiv; the Brother’s Brother Foundation and United Health Ukraine, both based in the US. The medical centre, which

is a commercial business, provides its expertise, therapy and training for free – amounting to more than £3million-worth of “pro bono” care to date.

During my visit to the centre, I also met Pavlo Ponomarenko, 27. He had worked as a construction worker until the invasion by Russia.

Then he was mobilised as a stormtrooper, train-

## ‘They can get jobs...they can go back into society’

ing as a machine-gunner. He was badly injured by an artillery shell during fighting in the Zaporizhzhia region last October.

Surgery was carried out to amputate his left arm close to his shoulder.

Like Andriy, Pavlo received only basic care in Ukraine and was not given an artificial arm.

He was identified for special care and later

helped by charities to travel to the US. “The treatment here at the centre has helped me greatly,” he said. “Every day I learn how to use the prosthetic better and better. It will help me to be absolutely independent.”

Mike Corcoran, a former Olympic athlete who represented Ireland, co-founded the medical centre 22 years ago. He initially made prosthetics for civilians, from car crash victims to diabetes sufferers, and later began helping US servicemen injured in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

He told me his work is hugely satisfying because amputees leave the centre with new skills and new hope for the future.

“I see these guys arrive here on crutches or in wheelchairs and then they walk home,” he said.

“They return to their country and are functional. They can get jobs, they can go back into society. If you can’t function, then every day is a reminder of what you lost.”

“It’s a constant memory of what Russia has done to you. These people now have their lives in

FRESH HOPE: Injured soldier Andriy Klymchuk gets to grips with his new limb; right, on the front line



Pictures: LORD ASHCROFT



months in the besieged city of Mariupol in 2022 had to have his wounded arm amputated by a comrade with a hacksaw in order to survive.

Later, after the wound festered, he had to have a second amputation higher up.

Eventually the soldier was released as part of a prisoner exchange scheme and later brought to the Washington DC medical centre for treatment, including receiving a new artificial limb.

Mike has visited Ukraine twice during the war. On his most recent visit, he was told that tens of thousands of wounded Ukrainian servicemen have suffered amputations as a result of the war.

The main purpose of his recent visit was to identify a site for a £2.4million medical centre for their work in Kyiv.

He said: “We can only see as many patients as can come over here, but we can be more effective in Ukraine. So we found a building in Kyiv where we want to build a centre and treat a lot more people. We can have a larger impact on these wounded soldiers if we are based in the country.”

“Our goal is to train Ukrainians to take care of Ukrainians. Our goal is to process 20 amputees a week at the new centre.”

Originally from Dublin, Mike, 58, who is married with twin daughters, remains confident



INSPIRATION: Lord Ashcroft talking to Mike Corcoran, who co-founded the centre

Ukraine will win its war.

He said: “I feel Ukraine will prevail, it will enter into the European Union and eventually be self-sufficient. I had the pleasure of meeting President Zelensky and my message to him was, “The numbers of amputees are staggering, but Ukraine has the opportunity to become the world leader in amputee care.”

I left the centre full of admiration for the inspirational work of Mike and his team – as well as the courage of those they are treating.

It was deeply moving to learn about the huge progress Andriy, Pavlo, and dozens before them, have made in little over a month at the centre.

The efforts of the US-based team to improve the lives of wounded servicemen come at a time when the war against a bigger, stronger aggressor is not going well for Ukraine, mainly due to a lack of weapons and ammunition.

So my plea is that we all – nations, politicians, aid groups and even individuals – do our bit to help Ukraine and its people in their hour of need.

● Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC is an international businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster.

● For more information on his work, visit lordashcroft.com.

● Follow him on X/Facebook @LordAshcroft

● Anyone wanting to donate towards helping badly-injured Ukrainian servicemen receive prosthetics at the Medical Center Orthotics and Prosthetics should visit: brothersbrother.org

## Torso found was ‘man in middle age’

A TORSO discovered wrapped in plastic in a nature reserve is likely to be the remains of a man aged over 40, killed in the last few days, police said.

Yesterday, officers continued to search for any other human remains in the Kersal Wetlands in Salford, after the grisly finding on Thursday night.

A Greater Manchester Police spokesman said:

“Forensic examinations determined that the victim is a man over 40 who has only been deceased for a matter of days.

“Further enquiries – including DNA tests – are ongoing to help try to identify him. Specialists from our forensics units, search teams and dog unit have been working diligently at the scene.

“So far, nothing other than the human remains have been found.”

Chief Superintendent Tony Creely, district commander for Salford, said: “This is a tragic case which is moving at pace.

“At the heart of our investigation is this man and his family. We are using all forensic techniques available to identify him as soon as we can.”

MPs hit by honeytrap for months

POLITICIANS were the target of “cyber-flashing” scammers for months before the police were alerted, it has emerged.

A minimum of 13 people working in Westminster are said to have been sent messages, including MPs, journalists and researchers.

Tory William Wragg has revealed he sent intimate pictures of himself to a man he met on gay dating app Grindr and was then “manipulated” into handing over colleagues’ personal phone numbers.

At least two more unnamed MPs are thought to have sent compromising images to strangers, raising concerns they could be vulnerable to blackmail.

Now it has become clear the “honeytrap” campaign went on for months.

Bosworth MP Dr Luke Evans has revealed he alerted police last month, after receiving unsolicited images of a naked woman.

He said: “As soon as I got these, the next day I reported it to the police, the authorities and the chief whip.”

A Metropolitan Police probe is under way.

## ‘You could see in his eyes he had suffered trauma’

hazard way before making fun of him. He later had to watch his comrades being tortured.

After his eventual release he suffered from PTSD on top of his physical injuries.

Mike said: “You could see from his eyes that he had suffered real trauma. It is unbelievable what one human being is capable of doing to another.”

Another soldier who was trapped for two

front of them.” The centre took its first badly injured patient in August 2022.

The first injured soldier had been a choreographer before the war and wanted to go back to his job after recovering from his injuries, even though he had to have one of his legs amputated.

Mike said: “We fitted him with a prosthesis, he recovered well and now works as a choreographer. His dance business in Kyiv is up and running again.”

Since that first patient a further 54 amputees have been given specialist treatment, including two female military personnel. The age of those treated ranges from 18 to 58.

Mike said hospitals in Ukraine are overwhelmed with wounded servicemen and cannot cope without expert help from abroad.

Badly applied tourniquets and infection are adding to the problems faced by servicemen and those treating them.

“The hospitals are doing their best to look after their wounded warriors, but they simply don’t