

Chris Lewis fund reaches target in 36 hours

Contributed by John Walsh
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A target figure of half a million pounds was reached in less than 36 hours after a fund opened to help a mountain rescuer, severely injured during a call-out.

The JustGiving page was established by the Lake District Search and Mountain Rescue Association after a member of Patterdale Mountain Rescue Team suffered life-changing injuries during a call-out.

Chris Lewis fell 500 feet on Red Screes earlier this month and the Patterdale MRT said the public response has been incredibly impressive.

Almost 25,000 people had contributed a total of more than £542,000 when the original target amount was surpassed on Wednesday.

Mike Rippon, the Patterdale MRT team leader said: "On behalf of Chris and his family, Patterdale Mountain Rescue Team is immensely grateful for the public's exceptional generosity and the speed with which the initial target of £500k for the Chris Lewis Support Fund has been reached.

"It is a real indication of people's understanding of Chris's truly life-changing situation and the long-term clinical and care implications of his injuries.

"To see the support fund, set up through our regional mountain rescue organisation LDSAMRA pass the £500,000 mark after less than 36 hours is incredibly impressive, and we thank everyone who has made a donation, be it large or small.

"We are going to continue to accept donations for the foreseeable future as a very substantial sum needs to be raised to meet the exceptional costs of Chris's future support. It is not currently possible to put a figure on our eventual fundraising target but we know that the support fund will be essential for the rest of Chris's life.

"Like everyone else, we send Chris and his family all best wishes."

An experienced rescuer, Chris suffered spinal injuries and facial fractures when he fell on steep ground on the mountain above Kirkstone Pass in the early hours of 6 February. The Patterdale team had responded to a call for help from two men wild camping, one of whom was experiencing chest pains.

Mr Rippon said: "The background to this tragic accident reinforces the absolute necessity for people to strictly observe the current 'stay local' and 'stay low' guidance. And it reminds us all of the risks mountain rescue volunteers and emergency service personnel take every day, and sadly the grave sacrifices they sometimes make."

Donations to the support fund can be made via the JustGiving website.