

Changes to Women's Section

Background

The Women's Section of The Royal British Legion was formed in 1921 to safeguard the interests of wives, widows, and children of men who served in the First World War. The Women's Section operates semi-autonomously with its own dedicated staff, incurs its own running costs and delivers its own support to the Legion's beneficiary community.

The Women's Section is a membership and welfare organisation for women with around 773 branches and 32,326 members. It provides care and support for the ex-Service community by means of various schemes such as financial help to ex-Service women, wives, widows and widowers of ex-Service personnel and their children. Their total charitable expenditure in 2014 amounted to around £1.2million. The funds of the Women's Section are administered separately from other Legion funds.

On Thursday 10 December the Board of Trustees decided that changes are required to the governance of The Women's Section in order to modernise arrangements and reflect current charitable requirements and statutory responsibilities. The changes were introduced following reports from the Chair of the Women's Section and the National Vice Chairman.

Trustees place great emphasis on the importance of The Women's Section and value the work undertaken by its members in support of our beneficiary community. They consider it to be vital that this enthusiasm and expertise are maintained in the future structure of the Legion.

In this spirit, while ensuring that The Women's Section is fully integrated within Legion structures, Trustees have concluded that the status of the Women's Section should be that of a District within The Royal British Legion with effect from 01 October 2016.

This will allow for more efficient and rationalised administration of the charity, while the membership of The Women's Section can continue its important work in much the same way as it currently does.

Key Messages

- Women's Section changing to District status
- Rationalising our approach to welfare provision (extension to modernisation of the way the charity works)
- Welfare support still available to Armed Forces community (of which family members are a part)
- Discussions with employees will begin in January
- Recognition of Women's Section's contribution to Legion's legacy and support for Armed Forces Community

FAQs:

- **What difference will this make to people in need of Legion support?**
The Women's Section and The Royal British Legion both provide support to the same beneficiary communities. Service personnel, veterans and their families are all members of the Armed Forces Community and as such automatically qualify for Legion support.
- **Why are you doing this?**
As a charity, the Royal British Legion has a duty to all of its supporters and beneficiaries to maximise what it can do with the charitable funds it receives, which means it must be run as efficiently as possible. At present, the Women's Section is administered as a separate entity with its own set of operating overheads. By moving the provision of welfare services to the main body of the charity, we are able to rationalise administration and provide better value for money.
- **Why are you making this change now?**
The changes will become effective as of 1 October 2016. The Legion's welfare services have been improved and modernised in recent years and this is a logical extension of that work which will help us to reach even more people with the charitable resources at our disposal.
- **If this change is necessary, why has it not happened before now?**
The Legion seeks to preserve the best elements of its long and rich heritage while ensuring that it remains relevant and fit for purpose in today's society. Reviewing how we do things on a regular basis ensures that we continue to provide the best service to the people we are here to help, while enjoying the support of an active and committed membership.
- **When will we understand the full detail of the changes?**
- In order to achieve the objective of integration, the Board of Trustees has established a committee with delegated authority to act on its behalf, to discuss and determine the detailed arrangements. The Committee will comprise of Terry Whittles as National Vice-Chairman, Marilyn Humphrey as Chairman of the Women's Section and David Whimpenny as Chairman of the Membership Council. It is expected that an informal consultation process with staff will begin in January 2016. Details of agreed implementation will then be understood.

Other Useful Background Information:

From 2014 Annual Report:

The Legion's accounts (charity) include the financial results for The Royal British Legion Women's Section. The Women's Section, which is constituted under The Royal Charter, is a membership organisation for women with around 773 branches and 32,326 members.

The Women's Section contributed £1,017k (2013: £1,018k) towards the Legion's incoming resources. It provides care and support for the ex-Service community by means of various welfare work schemes such as financial help to ex-Service women, wives, widows and

widowers of ex-Service personnel and their children. Their total charitable expenditure amounted to £1,193k (2013: £1,120k). The section currently holds net assets of £5,225k (2013: £5,364k). Whilst the funds of the Women's Section are unrestricted in nature, they are administered separately from other Legion funds.

For over 90 years, our distinct and specifically tailored welfare schemes have helped thousands of men, women, and children in the Armed Forces community who are in financial hardship, and in need of extra support.

Formed in 1921 to safeguard the interests of wives, widows, and children of men who served in the Great War.

Our support services are available to the entire Armed Forces community, from Service personnel and veterans to military spouses and children.

Our members play a key role in our organisation by fundraising throughout the year in their local branches and counties to finance the bulk of our welfare schemes. So it is only with their ongoing support and generosity that we can continue to deliver our support services to those in need.

We also support the Royal British Legion's annual Poppy Appeal from mid-October to mid-November, with all fundraising going directly to the Poppy Appeal rather than the Women's Section welfare schemes.