**MOD choose The Royal British Legion to lead help for veterans**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has announced that the Covenant Fund will work with Royal British Legion (RBL) and other charities to set up a one-stop service to better support the UK’s Armed Forces veterans community. The £2 million Veterans Gateway programme will help veterans find and access advice and support on a broad range of issues, including healthcare and housing

The new service will provide a 24/7 phone number, with an empathetic and professional voice at the end of the line, a dedicated website and a mobile app to make it easier for former service personnel to access support on a range of issues including housing, employability and health.

It will give veterans, regardless of age or location, a simple point of contact to turn to for advice and help in accessing an array of public, private and charitable services which are out there

This move responds to calls from veterans’ charities and groups for help in navigating the wide range of services and organisations set up to support those who have served in the Forces.

As part of the Armed Forces Covenant, which the Government enshrined in law to ensure that service personnel are not disadvantaged by their service, £2 million was set aside to set up the service. The £10M a year Covenant Fund is supported by LIBOR fines.

It has now been decided to award a grant to a group of charities led by The Royal British Legion, with support from other charities Combat Stress, SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity, Connect Assist and Poppyscotland, who will provide the service to ensure no veteran is left behind.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

“On leaving the armed forces, the overwhelming majority of our veterans move well to civilian life but the assistance can vary depending on where they live. By setting up and funding this single point of access we’ll make sure that it is easier for former service personnel to get the support they need to buy a house, access medical care or get a job. It’s right that our veterans, to whom we owe so much, get the assistance they need easily and when they need it.”

Director General of The Royal British Legion, Charles Byrne said:.

“We are honoured to have been awarded the grant to establish the new Veterans’ Gateway with our partners at SSAFA, Combat Stress and Poppyscotland. The new service will ensure that all British Armed Forces veterans, wherever they are based, can get help quickly and efficiently from whichever organisation is best placed to provide it. With so many military charities and specialist support organisations working in the sector it is paramount that our veterans can navigate the field in front of them and the Veteran’s Gateway will help them do that.”

In addition to this latest move, under the Armed Forces Covenant, the Government is providing a wide range of practical support including helping thousands of forces families to buy their own home and ensuring that veterans are given the support they need as they make the transition to civilian life.

The service will be formally launched in the first half of next year.

Notes to editors

-        The Armed Forces Covenant sets out the relationship between the nation, the government and the armed forces. It recognises that the whole nation has a moral obligation to current and former members of the armed forces and their families, and it sets out how they should expect to be treated. The Covenant Fund has £10 million each year to support the Armed Forces Covenant by funding projects which address specific priorities.

-        Support will be provided for a range of issues including housing, financial, employability, mental health and family support services.

Q&A

*Will the service replace existing services? Will you be shutting down other charities’ provision?*

-        The service will drive traffic to existing armed forces charities and Government departments. It will not replicate, compete or undermine existing charities or government services as no services other than contact information would be provided. This is to be the primary portal for any veteran who is looking for assistance from the huge range of potential providers.

*How will this actually work – there are already lots of numbers to call and we know that veterans are often bounced from one contact number to another – how will your new service prevent that?*

-        The aim is to provide a single point of contact via one telephone number and website, and the service will provide information which takes into account the needs of all veterans wherever they may be located, and it will ensure that they are passed onto the most suitable veterans service. By providing this single point of contact it will also remove the confusion that currently exists and help veterans receive the most suitable help in a timely manner.

-        More information on the service will be made available at launch next year

*How will this be funded? Is MOD paying or are RBL match/part funding?*

-        As part of the Armed Forces Covenant, which the Government enshrined in law to ensure that service personnel are not disadvantaged by their service, £2 million was set aside to set up the service.

-        The Covenant Fund has £10 million each year to support the Armed Forces Covenant by funding projects which address specific priorities.

About The Royal British Legion:

The Royal British Legion’s work is encapsulated in its motto: Live On – to the memory of the fallen and the future of the living. The Legion is the nation's biggest Armed Forces charity providing care and support to all members of the British Armed Forces past and present and their families. It is the national custodian of Remembrance and safeguards the Military Covenant between the nation and its Armed Forces. It is well known for the annual Poppy Appeal, and its emblem the red poppy. [www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk)

About SSAFA:

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity (formerly known as the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen & Families Association), provides lifelong support to anyone who is currently serving or has ever served in the Royal Navy, British Army or Royal Air Force including reservists, and their families.

Each year, our professional staff and network of more than 7,000 volunteers help 55,000 people, ranging from World War Two veterans to the families of young servicemen and women wounded or killed in Afghanistan.

For more information visit [www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk) and follow us on Twitter: @SSAFA

About Combat Stress

Combat Stress is the UK’s leading mental health charity for veterans. More than 6,000 veterans across the UK are registered with us – more than at any time in our long history. Our youngest veteran is just 18 years old. Demand for our services is rising: we saw a 71% increase in referrals in the last five years.

We treat conditions including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety. To help veterans rebuild their lives, we provide a range of free services including a 24-hour Helpline for veterans and serving personnel, and their families (0800 138 1619). Find out more at combatstress.org.uk or follow us on

Twitter @CombatStress

About Poppyscotland

Poppyscotland provides life-changing support to the Armed Forces community in Scotland.  Money raised from the Scottish Poppy Appeal and Poppyscotland’s year-round fundraising enables them to deliver support to members of the Armed Forces community by providing tailored funding and assistance. The charity also funds services in advice, employment, housing, mental health, mobility and respite. [www.poppyscotland.org.uk](http://www.poppyscotland.org.uk)

About Connect Assist

Connect Assist is a social business located in the South Wales Valleys providing jobs and growth opportunities for people. It delivers helplines and digital technology focused on supporting people in challenging circumstances including debt, mental health, unemployment and more. For more information, go to connectassist.co.uk

For more information contact the MOD News Desk on 0207 218 7907.

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