**Winter 2017 – Legion key messages**

**Looking back:**

* This year saw us launching our Five Year Strategy, which sets out four clear priorities to help us deliver on our purpose of supporting those we serve and ensuring that the responsibility of Remembrance is understood and embraced across the nation and continues into the future. Those four key priorities are what we as an organisation are all working towards:
  + **Those We Serve**
  + **Championing Remembrance**
  + **Strengthening Membership and Volunteering**
  + **Operational Excellence**
* We know that the best way we can support those we serve is though well considered and well delivered collaboration. We have defined our position as being at the heart of national network that supports our Armed Force Community through thick and thin.
* Last year, we were able to answer **more than a million requests** for help from the Armed Forces community, across our Pop-In Centres, website and our contact centre, which has been a huge team effort of which we can all be very proud.
* Earlier this year, we were proud to establish, with our partners, the Veterans’ Gateway, which connects veterans and their families to organisations which can help on a range of issues including housing, finance, mental health and employment. It is a great example of how we can work in partnership with like minded organisations.
* We can also be really proud of the work done by our Care Homes. Galanos House in Warwickshire is one of The Royal British Legion’s six Care Homes, with a specialist Dementia care wing. It turned 50 this year and it has just been classified Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission. Dunkirk Memorial House is also rated as Outstanding and has been formally recognised for its high level of Dementia care.
* This year also saw us supporting Invictus Games competitors and their friends and families through a twelve month programme, culminating in taking **264 people** to watch their loved ones compete in Canada.
* In campaigning, we continued our work to be a powerful voice for the Armed Forces Community. *Our Count Them In* campaign called for a question in the next census about the Armed Forces community and we have made good progress. The Office for National Statistics will be formally recommending a question for inclusion and we are optimistic that the Government will accept that recommendation. This is in no small part thanks to the work done locally by you.
* We’ve seen a lot of activity within our new Remembrance Team, which includes the NMA, who have been working closely together to ensure our Remembrance activities are as strong as possible. Our national campaign once again asked the nation to ‘Rethink Remembrance’ and it culminated in our Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall, which is **now in its 90th year**. This year’s festival commemorated the centenary of the Woman’s Auxiliary Corps and also marked the formation of the Royal Air Force Regiment 75 years ago and the centenary of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
* The festival was watched by a TV audience of nearly **six million viewers** with the service and parade at the Cenotaph watched by nearly **four million viewers**. For the first time, over **100,000** people also took the opportunity to join in the Two-Minute Silence online by visiting our website and our Facebook page.
* We saw the opening of our fantastic new Remembrance Centre at the NMA, where visitors of all ages can now enjoy a wide variety of high quality, interactive activities and an immersive film experience, projected onto multiple screens inside. The Centre has deservedly won a number of awards and is well worth a visit.
* The work we did around ‘Women at War 100’ underlined our ambition to be innovative in our Remembrance activity and to attract new audiences. We held a huge scale event at the NMA, which many of you attended and which received really positive acclaim. We also highlighted the centenary of Passchendaele with a series of immersive digital films, gaining national publicity which you may have seen. **(Please do visit the website and take a look).**
* October saw the first Anniversary of the Branch Community Support (BCS) scheme. It was developed out of a recognition that our Members are best placed to identify the local needs and challenges in their own areas, and that you can play a vital role in supporting local beneficiaries facing those challenges. We now have over **640** Branches registered to deliver services – ranging from Legion awareness events to hospital visits and bereavement support. Our *Branch Network* collaboration between staff and Membership has now assisted almost **5,000** beneficiaries.
* We’ve also started to make positive steps in Membership renewals. Over the past twenty years, our Membership has seen a decline of 8% per year in renewals. We’ve worked hard to change our renewals process and as a result, this dropped to 4% last year and we will continue to try and improve that. We currently have **237,000** Members.
* This year also saw a restructure of the Executive Board, strengthening key areas with new Directors appointed in our Membership & Volunteering and our Information Management and Technology functions. We’re putting a huge investment of time, effort and expertise into significant and much-needed improvements in our IT equipment and systems. We are also working hard to fix the basics and aiming to have provision of a stable network.
* The last financial year was the most successful in our history, raising a total of **£104 million**. Last year’s Poppy Appeal (November 2016) raised our highest ever amount, raising **£46.6 million** and the early indications are that this years’ has also been a great success thanks to all the hard work that took place across all our branches.

**Looking forward:**

**It’s been a positive year for the Legion. We’ve achieved a lot and with your help we can achieve even more.**

* 2018 is another big year for Remembrance, which is one of our core charitable aims. Next year will see us undertake The Great Pilgrimage 90, where the Legion will re-enact the Great Pilgrimage of 90 years ago in France and Belgium. The programme will be a powerful act of Remembrance at Ypres’ Menin Gate on August 8th, as our branches and communities comes together bearing their standards as previously directed by our founder, Field Marshal Haig, on the centenary of the start of the Last 100 Days offensive. It promises to be the Legion’s largest membership event ever with over 1,000 Legion Standards on parade. Please do encourage your branch to take part in the Great Pilgrimage 90 and sign up soon, to make sure your standard is there and your community is represented.
* Another key focus for next year will be on the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. We will be running a campaign called ‘Thank You’- marking that anniversary and giving the public and the Legion community the chance to thank the generation who made that sacrifice and contributed to so much of what we have today. From January, you will start to hear a lot more about this and how you can get involved.
* In Membership Services, we know there are still huge challenges ahead, which is why Membership is one of the main Legion priorities and a key part of our Corporate Strategy. As a direct result of what you’ve told us, we are focussing on the following areas in 2018:
* We will continue to support all our members. We know that *Legion* magazine is an important communication tool but we also need to look to the future at our online and digital presence, to develop ways to engage more effectively.
* We will be simplifying our processes and structure, to make it easier for Members to be Members and Branches to be Branches.
* We will be reviewing what it means to be a Legion Member and what we can offer as an organisation to make sure we retain our Members but also that we attract and recruit new Members to the fold.
* Our National Chairman outlined his key priorities at National Conference to ensure that we are as fit-for-purpose as we possibly can be. Part of that is ensuring that our governing document, *The Royal Charter*, is relevant and up-to-date to fulfil our purpose effectively. The National Chairman would like to review the charter with our Members, with a view to updating it at Annual Conference 2019.

- We will ensure that you, our Members, are the driving force behind this review. Our ambition is to ensure that this process is as robust as possible and that Members from every county can have their say. With that in mind, you will be hearing from our Membership Team in the New Year about how you can get involved in this review. They will also be coming out to the counties to hear from you directly.

We will use all of your input to make a proposal to Membership at the 2019 Conference.

* As we approach the end of that 100th anniversary, it’s more important than ever that we remain relevant and that people outside the Legion understand the work we do. As a result, we have undertaken a review of how we present ourselves to the outside world, to understand how we can improve that and be as clear as possible about our work and our purpose. Our Members have played a really valuable part in this, taking part in a number of workshops and also through a very useful session at the County Chairmen’s conference in September. We will keep you updated as we move this forward in the New Year.