

# Northern Ireland



**VETERANS  
HANDBOOK**

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## INTRODUCTION

National awareness of the needs of the Service community has been raised in recent times and is now articulated in the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant. There is much practical support available to both serving personnel and their families and veterans and their dependants. However, access to such support is often obscured by lack of detailed information or shrouded by information overload, to the extent that an individual in need may have trouble identifying exactly where to turn for help.

This Handbook is intended to assist the whole Service community by clearly spelling out “who does what for whom” and by identifying local contact details. It is intended to be a reference document and to act as a sign-post to local agencies which, once contacted, can then follow up with support intervention as required. Stakeholders and gate-keepers are urged to use it if a member of the Service community in need comes to their attention.

The Handbook is as comprehensive as possible and identifies the major support organisations available to the Service community in Northern Ireland, and especially to veterans and their dependants. All organisations listed are represented on a NI Veterans’ Support Committee which seeks to promote cooperation of effort, efficiency and effectiveness amongst the support providers, notably the major ex-Service charities.

Any suggestions for addition or amendment to the Handbook will be welcomed by this committee and should be forwarded to the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association Northern Ireland which provides its administration and can be contacted on: 028 9066 5706.

**Who we are** The Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) is part of Veterans UK which, in turn, is part of the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

**What we do** The Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) gives support to veterans, and their dependants. The focus of the service is to provide assistance following a change in situation that may have resulted in a welfare need, such as:

- ✎ Leaving the services.
- ✎ Bereavement
- ✎ Changes in disablement.
- ✎ Changes affecting income or finances.
- ✎ Changes affecting housing.

### Who we can assist

- ✎ Veterans (anyone who has served in HM Armed Forces, regular or reserves including National Servicemen), their families and dependants.
- ✎ Anyone who is eligible, (injured in Service) for or in receipt of, compensation from the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) or the War Pensions Scheme (WPS).
- ✎ Service personnel who are to be Medically Discharged or have a welfare requirement on discharge.
- ✎ Bereaved families of service personnel.

**How we can help** Help and guidance can be given through either telephone contact or a dedicated visiting service through a national network of Welfare Managers.

### Support can include

- ✎ Identifying when someone is eligible to claim or apply for a benefit, compensation or other service.
- ✎ Help with completing application forms.
- ✎ Help when making contact with other organisations.

Initial contact should be made by telephone to the Veterans Welfare Centre. Once contact has been made, a Welfare Manager will be allocated to become the individual's caseworker. The Welfare Manager will either make further contact by telephone or if appropriate a home visit will be arranged. The Welfare Manager will:

- ✎ Ask about the situation and identify any welfare needs.
- ✎ Using this information, identify what type of assistance is needed and available from different sources.
- ✎ Provide advice and practical help towards meeting the needs identified.

## Things we can do include

- ☞ Help with applying for WPS and AFCS.
- ☞ Help with applying for any Armed Forces Pension which there may be entitlement to.
- ☞ Give information and advice about benefits through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and help with applications for them.
- ☞ Make referrals to Social Services, Local Authorities, ex-Service organisations or other voluntary organisations to apply for the services they provide.

**Our Partners** The VWS work alongside in-Service welfare providers and closely with local authorities, voluntary organisations, service charities and Social Security Agency within N.I. This ensures that those leaving the services and existing veterans and their families receive all the information and assistance they need to access the appropriate services and benefits.

**How to contact us** Initial contact should be by telephone and, if appropriate, we can arrange a home visit. NI (and the Republic of Ireland) is covered by a Veterans Welfare Centre in Glasgow.

UK National Helpline: **0808 191 4218**

National Email [veterans-uk@mod.uk](mailto:veterans-uk@mod.uk)

Website: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk)

Local Telephone: **0141 224 2709**

Local Email: [Veterans-uk-vws-scot-ni@mod.uk](mailto:Veterans-uk-vws-scot-ni@mod.uk)

# Veterans Advisory & Pensions Committees (VA&PC)



## VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS COMMITTEE

The Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee exist to serve and support ex-servicemen and women, their widows or widowers and their immediate family members. So whenever or wherever you have served, whether in the Second World War or Afghanistan, we are here to help. We are an independent voice and can act as a bridge to:

- Advise and guide you if you are unsure of your rights or where to turn in the complex world of government pensions and other allowances.
- Listen to complaints when things go wrong and, where we can, help to sort them out.
- Assist you in obtaining help from the appropriate ex-service charity or government department.

If you would like to be put in touch with your local VAPC, please contact

### **Veterans UK**

Email [veterans-uk@mod.uk](mailto:veterans-uk@mod.uk)

Free helpline telephone: UK only 0808 1914 2 18

Free helpline telephone: overseas +44 1253 866 043



cobseo  
**The Confederation  
of Service Charities**

COBSEO is an organisation that exists for the interests of the Armed Forces community in order to:

- Represent and support the needs and opinions of member organisations to all levels of government and other organisations.
- Identify, communicate and act on issues of common interest on behalf of member organisations.
- Exchange and coordinate information between member organisations.
- Act as a single point of contact for external inquiries.

### **How we work**

COBSEO's membership consists of over 180 Service and ex-Service organisations, including regimental associations. It does not have individual members and is not a case-working organisation.



The Legion is there for all members of the UK Armed Forces community, not just serving members of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force, but also ex-Service men and women (veterans), their carers and families. Millions of people in the UK and overseas are eligible to call on the Legion for help and half of those helped by the Legion are below retirement age. We provide practical care, advice and support to the Armed Forces family all year round. Welfare is at the heart of everything we do.

Our Pop-In Advice & Information centre is situated at 51-53 Fountain Street, in Belfast City centre (directions [here](#)). Open from Monday to Friday, 10:00am to 4:00pm, the Pop-In provides a welcoming modern facility where staff and volunteers are available to meet with callers. The Area Office for Ireland (covering NI and the Republic) is at the same address in Belfast. We currently operate an Outreach service in Omagh, Portrush, Limavady and Newtownards. Details of your nearest outreach facility and the operating times of these services is available [here](#). Our secondary office in Dublin is at The Capel Building, Mary's Abbey, Dublin 7.

Our Contact Centre operates seven days a week, from 08:00am to 08:00pm. The UK Freephone number for the Contact Centre is **0808 802 8080**. For callers from the Republic of Ireland, the Freephone number is **1800 992 294**.

For more information, visit our website [www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk). Our website offers a live web chat facility and access to our extensive Knowledge Base. Why not 'pop in' and see us:

**The Royal British Legion**  
**51-53 Fountain Street**  
**Belfast**  
**BT1 5EB**



SSAFA is a national charity operated on a regional basis. All our Branch members are highly trained volunteers, giving their time freely.

SSAFA helps serving and ex-service men or women and their wives, husbands, partners and dependant family members, who need friendship, advice or assistance, from the day their service starts and for the rest of their lives. This help continues for widows and widowers, after divorce, and for people separated from established partnerships and for dependant children. We do not sit in judgement, we simply help people to sort out problems – with their agreement and as fast as possible.

We are available, at the end of the telephone, by email or by letter, to do everything possible to relieve distress or to solve a problem. We will discuss the matter with you and agree the action to be taken. You can come to us with any problem or request – we don't limit the type of problem or the type of help that might be possible. And we will see it through with you to the end – we won't abandon you during the process.

Telephone: **028 9032 7740**  
E-mail: [n.ireland@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:n.ireland@ssafa.org.uk)  
Mail: 21 Talbot Street, Belfast BT1 2LD  
Web: [www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk)



ABF The Soldiers' Charity, giving lifetime support to serving and former soldiers and their families. Includes making grants to individuals and specialist charities that help ex-soldiers and their families.

Support offered includes:

**Financial:** Financial assistance to relieve hardship, grants for living costs, emergency needs, debt relief. Provision of annuities and Educational Bursaries.

**Accommodation:** Care home fees. Home adaptations. Furnishing and equipment.

**Personal:** Mobility assistance. Funding holiday breaks.

ABF The Soldiers Charity  
Mountbarrow House  
6 – 20 Elizabeth Street  
LONDON  
SW1W 9RB

Tel: **+44 (0) 845 241 4820**

[www.soldierscharity.org](http://www.soldierscharity.org)

## The Ulster Defence Regiment and The Royal Irish Regiment (Home Service) Aftercare Service



**Bespoke support to veterans resident in Northern Ireland who formerly served in the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Home Service element of The Royal Irish Regiment during Operation BANNER.**

Based at four centres throughout the Province, it consists of caseworkers and support staff who provide outreach to the veterans' community, advising and sign-posting to other trusted agencies which assist those in need. It offers holistic resolution to each case via:

**Welfare** – via domiciliary visits, ranging from simple befriending to full-blown intervention in issues of bereavement, debt, housing, benefits and pensions and including assistance in application for recompense.

**Medical** - building trusted pathways to the wider National Health Service via a client's General Practitioner and also able to offer immediate referral to psychological therapies and physiotherapy for conditions caused by or made worse by military service.

**Vocational** – sign-posting to Regular Forces Employment Agency (RFEA) provides career and employment advice.

**Benevolence** – assisting in supporting cases of proven financial need. Successful liaison is routinely undertaken with many service charities.

Expansion of the service to assist other veterans resident in Northern Ireland is still being considered.

The Aftercare Service can be contacted initially on **028 9042 0145** or through its website: [www.aftercareservice.org](http://www.aftercareservice.org)



Combat Stress is the UK's leading military charity specialising in the care of veterans' mental health. We look after men and women who are suffering from a psychological condition related to the Service career as a small but significant number of veterans leave the Armed Forces with psychological wounds. This can lead to depression, anxiety, a phobia or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Combat Stress works with veterans of the British Armed Forces and members of the Reserve Forces, through effective treatment and support for mental health problems.

Everything that we do is free of charge to the veteran. Our work is made possible through statutory, non-statutory and voluntary fundraising. We simply couldn't do what we do without the generosity of the Great British public.

**What we provide** At Combat stress we know that serving your country can take its toll. So we've used our expertise of supporting veterans suffering from mental ill-health to provide a range of services to deliver support, advice and treatment wherever you are.

**24-hour Helpline** The Combat Stress 24-hour Helpline is on **0800 138 1619**, text **07537 404719** (standard charges may apply for texts), or email [combatstress@rethink.org](mailto:combatstress@rethink.org) The Helpline is for the whole military community (serving personnel and ex-service men and women) and their families, looking for confidential and safe help and advice about service-related mental health issues.

**Community Outreach Support** The Combat stress Community Outreach Support brings our expertise to you. Many veterans also need help with the day to day stuff – benefits, entitlements, money problems and the like, so we take a “whole person approach” to the care of veterans with mental health problems. So, as well as clinical treatments for mental health problems, our Community Outreach Teams offer welfare support to veterans too.

Each team is made up of a Regional Welfare Officer, a Community Psychiatric Nurse, a Mental Health Practitioner and a Desk Officer. Together they offer both practical and clinical support to veterans and their immediate families, in their own homes and in local communities. A lot of the staff in our Community Outreach Teams are ex-services themselves, so they'll understand you and your needs because they have served too.

**More intensive treatment** We're experts in the treatment of service-related mental health problems and provide specialist clinical treatment at our three short-stay residential Treatment Centres, in Shropshire, Surrey and Ayrshire. We also run a Well-being and Rehabilitation Programme – available to all veterans receiving treatment in our short-stay centres - as part of a structured occupational therapy model. It includes employment mentoring, life skills workshops, social activities in the community and so on.

Tel: 028 9026 9990

[outreachireland@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:outreachireland@combatstress.org.uk)



Blesma provides support to limbless Service and ex-Servicemen and women and their families. It has no permanent office in Northern Ireland but support is delivered by the Support Officer based in NW England who visits Members frequently.

Support offered includes:

**Financial:** Grants for mobility, rehabilitation and adaptations. Advice on compensation allowance claims.

**Activities:** A programme of sporting, social and interest activities in the UK and beyond

**Accommodation:** Nursing, residential and respite care.

**Personal:** Welfare support and visits; assistance in dealings with Limb Service; assistance in finding employment; representation.

Blesma, The Limbless Veterans  
185-187 High Road  
Chadwell Heath  
Romford  
Essex RM6 6NA

Tel: 020 8590 1124  
Fax: 020 8599 2932

General email: [ChadwellHeath@blesma.org](mailto:ChadwellHeath@blesma.org)

[www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)



Formerly known as St Dunstan's since 1915, this charity provides support for blind and visually impaired ex-Servicemen and women. It has no permanent office in Northern Ireland but is covered by a team from England which visits its members here frequently.

Support offered includes:

**Financial:** Assistance in accessing benefits and the provision of financial aid.

**Accommodation:** Nursing and residential care, short and long term.

**Personal:** Nationwide welfare service, together with lifelong rehabilitation, training and support.

Blind Veterans UK  
12 – 14 Harcourt Street  
LONDON  
W1H 4HD

Tel: **Freephone 0800 389 7979**

Email: [membership@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:membership@blindveterans.org.uk)

[www.blindveterans.org.uk/joinus](http://www.blindveterans.org.uk/joinus)

Our mission is to deliver an enduring national network of support for our wounded and their families. We will inspire and enable those who have made sacrifices on our behalf to achieve their full potential.



We can provide Immediate Financial Support via our Quick Reaction Fund which helps by giving swift financial support to those with life-changing injuries, life-changing illnesses and their families.

The Help for Heroes Band of Brothers offers life-long support and opportunities to those suffering from life-changing injury or illness. The Help for Heroes Band of Sisters provides supports, recognition and fellowship to those who care for our heroes.

Help for Heroes strives to achieve the best for the men and women of Great Britain's Armed Forces, both serving and veteran. We are proud to work with other Service charities to make sure that the wounded, injured and sick get the support they deserve.

**You can contact us by:**

Post: write to us at Help for Heroes 14 Parkers Close Downton Business Centre Downton Salisbury Wiltshire SP5 3RB

Tel: 01980 846 459 (opening hours 9am to 5pm)

**Do you need our support?**

For financial support please email us on [grants@helpforheroes.org.uk](mailto:grants@helpforheroes.org.uk)

To join our

Band of Brothers or Band of Sisters please email [bandofbrothers@helpforheroes.org.uk](mailto:bandofbrothers@helpforheroes.org.uk) / [bandofsisters@helpforheroes.org.uk](mailto:bandofsisters@helpforheroes.org.uk)



# Decorum NI

*Remembering the Past – Building the Future*

The main aim of Decorum NI is to promote, advocate and address the needs of former security force personnel (Armed forces, Police, Prison Service) and their families who have suffered as a result of the violence perpetrated over the period of Operation BANNER between 14<sup>th</sup> August 1969 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2007.

Services include:

- ✿ Counselling
- ✿ Befriending
- ✿ Shared heritage trips
- ✿ Welfare Advice/Signposting
- ✿ Social Interaction
- ✿ Safe Harbour/Hub for meeting
- ✿ Advocacy, Emotional and Practical Support, Comradeship and Friendship
- ✿ Education/Training
- ✿ Provision of social activities
- ✿ Commemoration & Remembrance Activities
- ✿ Lobbying
- ✿ Creative Writing
- ✿ Legacy Work
- ✿ Debating Forum
- ✿ Youth Engagement
- ✿ Storytelling
- ✿ Research
- ✿ Exhibition
- ✿ International Study Visits
- ✿ Volunteering Opportunities

Decorum NI  
Ferguson Suite, First Floor  
Regent House  
35 Regent Street  
Newtownards  
BT23 4AD

**Telephone No** 02891815827    **email** [info@decorumni.co.uk](mailto:info@decorumni.co.uk)



# ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION

Established to further the efficiency and well-being of the Service, preserve its traditions and encourage recruiting, the Royal Naval Association provides the following support:

**Financial:** Helps members access all forms of benefits, compensation and pensions. Medium size almonising charity fund serving and ex Naval Forces.

**Personal:** Network of 400 branches and 40 clubs offering comradeship and support; welfare help and those looking for jobs.

## **Nationally the Association can be contacted at**

Royal Naval Association  
Room 209 Semaphore Tower  
PP70 HM Naval Base  
PORTSMOUTH  
PO1 3LT

Tel: +44 (0) 2392 729 747

[www.royal-naval-association.co.uk](http://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk)

## **Locally the Association can be contacted at**

Royal Naval Association  
79-81 Great Victoria Street  
Belfast BT2 7AF  
Northern Ireland

Telephone + 44 (0) 289 032 0487

Web Site [www.rnabelfast.co.uk/](http://www.rnabelfast.co.uk/)



The charity that supports the RAF family

RAFA, The Royal Air Forces Association (or RAF Association), is a membership organisation and registered charity that provides welfare support to the RAF family.

Receiving no government contributions, our work is completely funded by the generosity of our members and through vital donations from our supporters in the general public and from businesses.

We are proud to have helped and to continue to help the whole Royal Air Force family, providing friendship, help and support to current and former members of the Royal Air Force and their dependants.

We help those who have served for at least a day in the RAF from its beginnings through to the present day. The RAF Association currently helps any serving and ex-RAF personnel and their families in times of need. The Association exists in the recognition that RAF personnel and their immediate families dedicate their lives to their country, and to ensure that such a sacrifice does not result in suffering, poverty or loneliness.

Through the assistance of our generous members and volunteers, we are proud to be helping thousands of truly amazing people. As a signposting organisation we also offer financial assistance, respite breaks, short welfare breaks, war pension advice, home and hospital visits.

For further information please contact our Belfast office on **028 9032 5718** or email [nireland@rafa.org.uk](mailto:nireland@rafa.org.uk)



# THE NOT FORGOTTEN ASSOCIATION

A TRI-SERVICE CHARITY FOUNDED IN 1920

The Not Forgotten Association is a national tri-service charity which provides help and support to serving and ex-service men and women who are wounded, injured or sick. We do this through a varied and tailored programme of recreational, leisure and adventure activities. We also provide televisions and TV licences to eligible beneficiaries whether they are living in their own home, a service care home or a personnel recovery centre.

For younger serving and ex-service men and women our adventure activities offer the opportunity to enjoy challenges they may otherwise not have.

We also ensure that our activities remain relevant to veterans of all ages and from all conflicts of the last 70 years.

As a small charity, the NFA does not have the resources for formal fundraising. We are therefore enormously grateful to the charities, trusts, groups, associations and individuals who generously support us through their activities, grants and legacies.

For those who may be feeling vulnerable, isolated or depressed our events and activities can bring a much-needed boost and something to which they can look forward.

The Not Forgotten Association can be contacted through its website:

<http://www.nfassociation.org/>



The RFEA is a military charity which assists men and women of all ranks leaving the Armed Forces to find and remain in employment. The RFEA is the employment arm of the MOD's successful Career Transition Partnership (CTP). CTP support is provided to Service Leavers from two years prior to discharge, and up to two years after. To be eligible for this, individuals must have served a minimum of 4 years. Beyond the two year point after discharge, as a registered charity, the RFEA is then also available to assist Veterans with employment support for the rest of their working lives.

The make-up of the RFEA's employment arm is as follows:

1. **Key Accounts Team.** They engage with national employers and promote the benefits of employing Service Leavers and Veterans.
2. **Regional Employment Consultants.** Through the RFEA's UK wide network of 24 employment consultants (including one based in Northern Ireland), they also provide employment support within the regions where Service Leavers settle.
3. **Central Employment Team.** They provide administrative support and a telephone help desk for Service Leavers and Veterans.

### **The RFEA Early Service Leaver Service of Care Programme**

The RFEA, in their charitable role, also offers a Service of Care programme for Early Service Leavers (ESLs), specially designed to help them find employment (Early Service Leavers are those who have served less than four years and are not entitled to the full resettlement package). This service is delivered by a team of Specialist Employment Consultants based throughout the UK (support is also available in Northern Ireland). It is a needs based service focussed on job finding, career advice and CV writing. The Specialist Employment Consultants can also refer individuals to other charitable organisations depending on their specific needs.

### **Wounded, Injured and Sick Specialist Employment Consultants**

The RFEA employs an 18 strong team of Wounded, Injured and Sick Specialist Employment Consultants throughout the UK (including Northern Ireland), who can provide direct one-on-one employment support to those Service Personnel who, due to the nature of their injuries, face the most significant barriers to employment.

Tel: **028 9445 6220**

Website: [www.rfea.org.uk](http://www.rfea.org.uk)



## **38 (Irish) Brigade**

Headquarters 38 (Irish) Bde is situated in Thiepval Barracks, Lisburn and is responsible for providing the personnel support infrastructure, which we call the 'Firm Base', for all serving Regular and Reserve military personnel and their families living and working in Northern Ireland. Around 8000 members of the Army leave each year and 38 (Irish) Bde has an obligation to ensure that those soldiers and their families, who elect to resettle in Northern Ireland, make the Transition to civilian life as successfully as possible. The aim is to produce a settled veteran, who makes a positive contribution to local society and acts as an advocate for the Army.

An individual can start the transition process up to 2 years before leaving. Some people may previously have known this as 'resettlement' but it is now much more than that. All aspects of that journey are considered, focused on the following 5 pillars: Education, Employment, Housing, Health and Welfare (E2H2W). During the process any areas of potential concern will be highlighted early and can be addressed prior to discharge either with the assistance of the unit welfare and resettlement staff or by signposting to external agencies.

38 (Irish) Bde provides practical assistance to all service leavers and their families, who are wishing to resettle within Northern Ireland via biannual Transition Fairs. The aim is to ensure that the service leaver is given all the relevant information needed, based upon the 5 Pillars of Transition, to make an informed choice allowing for the smooth transition into civilian life.

For further information on Transition or resettlement in general contact the SO2 Transition at 38 (Irish) Bde on:

**Tel 02892 263906**

Or

Email [38X-Pers-Transition-SO2@mod.uk](mailto:38X-Pers-Transition-SO2@mod.uk)



***AA Veterans Support***  
***Together we can make a difference in the lives  
of Veterans and their Families across Northern Ireland***  
**Charity number - NIC100908**

### **About Us**

AA Veterans Support is a Northern Ireland based charity set up to provide help and support for Veterans and their families across Northern Ireland. It is our aim to provide the necessary support services for those Veterans or their family members that may need our help. We believe that our Forces and their families deserve our lifelong support. We aim to provide Practical, Training, Emotional and Financial support to anyone who is serving or has ever served and their families. Whenever they may need us, we'll do whatever we can to help.

### **Who We Help**

Anyone who has ever served in the Army, Royal Navy or RAF

- ☞ The Families / Dependants of the Armed Forces residing or looking to reside in Northern Ireland
- ☞ The Dependants of veterans residing in Northern Ireland
- ☞ Members of the reserve forces and their dependants
- ☞ National Servicemen residing in Northern Ireland

### **What we offer**

- ☞ We offer a range of services to meet client needs including - Counselling • Advice & Guidance • Training • Benefits • Housing • Furnishing & Equipment • Pensions • Respite • and more....

### **Contact Us**

AA Veterans Support  
Unit C3 Edenderry Industrial Estate  
326 Crumlin Rd  
Belfast  
BT14 7EE  
Telephone No 028 9074 7071

Email [info@aavsni.com](mailto:info@aavsni.com)

## NOTES

