

Extra UK Government funding for service charities supporting people across Wales

Nearly £6 million of new funding is being confirmed to military charities across the UK including the Bluebirds Veterans Project and the Ceredigion Armed Forces Veterans Hub.

The UK Government is also confirming today that a consultation will be launched in July on tax relief for businesses which employ veterans.

Today the Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA) and the Ministry of Defence can confirm that 40 armed forces charities supporting serving personnel, veterans and their families across Wales will benefit from extra funding. This is part of a package of support announced by the Chancellor in April to ensure charities can continue their vital work during the pandemic.

A total of 100 charities in Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland are benefitting from almost £6 million of UK Government funding, ranging from smaller local charities such as The VC Gallery based in Pembrokeshire to larger organisations such as Help for Heroes.

The charities provide support to veterans and serving personnel in a range of different areas, including employment, mental health and wellbeing, physical health and recovery, and support for service families.

The UK Government is also confirming that next month a consultation will be launched on employers paying no National Insurance contributions on the salary of any veteran they take on during their first year of civilian employment. This delivers on the UK Government's manifesto commitment to encourage businesses to further utilise the skills and experience that veterans can bring to businesses.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Johnny Mercer said:

Today we mark and give thanks to our veterans for the outstanding service which they have given to this country. To show our appreciation we're advancing veterans issues across government, through the Office for Veterans Affairs. I'm delighted as well to confirm extra funding for service charities to help them through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

Thousands of veterans across Wales have provided incredible service in our Armed Forces. Along with our current serving personnel and

their families they deserve the best possible support.

Now more than ever, it is crucial that service charities have the right funding and resources to carry out their vital work with members of our Armed Forces past and present.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

If it wasn't for the brave servicemen and women who serve and protect our country, we would not have a Great Britain to call our home.

That's why we must continue to do everything we can to support our veterans through these challenging times.

General Sir John McColl, Chairman of the Confederation of Service Charities, said:

This emergency funding is a very welcome step towards sustaining life-saving support for those in need across the Armed Forces Community. The Service Charity Sector has once again demonstrated great imagination and determination in adapting its delivery methods during this crisis, and we look forward to continuing to work with the MOD and the OVA to sustain these vital services in the coming months as the true impact of the pandemic is fully felt by charities throughout the Sector.

Under the plans announced in this year's Budget, an employer taking on a veteran earning £25k will save around £2,000 in National Insurance Contributions as a result.

Employers currently pay Employers' National Insurance contributions of 13.8% of the employee's salary. Under this measure, they will be able to save this cost on an employee's salary up to the Upper Earnings Limit (£50,000).

Recently the OVA announced the launch of a study to look at whether COVID-19 has had any specific impact on the veteran community in the UK. This in turn will allow policy makers in government to understand potential issues affecting veterans and respond accordingly based on expert advice and evidence.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA), which was created last year, is ensuring that the whole of government is delivering better outcomes for veterans, particularly in areas such as mental health, employment and housing. It is working in partnership with UK Government departments, the Devolved Administrations and charities to coordinate activity across the United Kingdom.

The role of the OVA includes:

- Pulling together all functions of government, and better coordinating charity sector provision, in order to ensure this nation's life-long duty to those who have served
- Ensuring that every single veteran and their family knows where to turn to access support when required
- Helping to generate a 'single view of the veteran' by making better use of data to understand veterans' needs and where gaps in provision exist
- Improving the perception of veterans

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