

Funding boost to LGBT charities supporting veterans

- Businesses and other employers across the UK have joined a new group to support the government on helping veterans get into employment
- First meeting of the Veteran Employers Group was chaired today (20 October) by the Minister for Armed Forces and Veterans.
- Small businesses praise the government's cost saving measures for employers who hire veterans.

LGBT charities who support military veterans are to receive a £45,000 cash boost from the government.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs is providing the money to charities who support individuals providing testimony to an independent review that is looking into the impact the pre-2000 ban on homosexuality in the military has had on veterans.

Funding has been provided to Fighting with Pride, the LGBT Foundation and Forward Assist to ensure veterans are able to comfortably share their experiences serving in the armed forces.

The funds will also provide direct support to veterans and their families who are giving a submission to the LGBT Veterans Independent Review, including signposting to mental health and wellbeing support for those who may struggle before, during and after providing testimony.

Minister for Armed Forces and Veterans James Heapey said:

We want to ensure that those giving evidence to the LGBT Veterans Independent Review are able to do so in a safe space. These grants will ensure that veterans who may require support when providing their testimony will be aided throughout the process.

We want the voices of veterans to be heard so we can adapt our services to help all those who have served. I encourage those who have yet to submit testimony to the review to share their stories.

Veterans providing their testimony will be supported while providing their submissions to the review, for example through transcription of verbal testimony and offering one-to-one emotional support during the process.

Chief Executive of Fighting with Pride Caroline Paige said:

Fighting With Pride is delighted to have been awarded grant funding from the Office for Veterans Affairs to deliver critical work in connecting LGBT Veterans to the LGBT Veterans Independent Review's

Call for Evidence.

This welcome support will enable FWP to further raise awareness of the importance of this once in a lifetime opportunity for LGBT veterans, and those dismissed because they were perceived to be LGBT, helping them to say what happened to them in the past, what the impact has been upon their whole lives and to create a better future for those who live with the consequences of the ban.

Hiren Patel, Operation Equality Project Coordinator for LGBT Foundation, said:

Through Operation Equality, we know LGBTQ+ veterans are still dealing with the fallout of the ban. It forced people to come out to family and friends and resulted in a loss of livelihood.

Thanks to funding from the LGBT Veterans review, we can create a people, LGBTQ+ centric service that helps veterans access in-person story-sharing and support from our team, ensuring the experiences of a diverse range of LGBTQ+ veterans inform the research.

We look forward to supporting the review and understanding the full extent of the distress caused by that ban.

To date, over 500 individuals have submitted their testimony to the independent review.

From these testimonies, the review team will be able to make evidence-based recommendations as to how the government can meet its commitment in the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan and ensure the service and experience of every LGBT veteran is understood and valued.

Notes to editors

Veterans interested in providing testimony to the review can find out more [here](#).