

DECEMBER 2021

Veterans' Newsletter

From the Northern Ireland
Veterans' Support Office



Dear friends and colleagues,

Welcome to Edition 1 of our NIVSO Newsletter, which is also our means of conveying our thanks and good wishes to you all as we approach Christmas and the end of 2021.

It has been a busy and active year during which we have welcomed new members of the NIVSO team, worked ever closer with partner charities and service providers both local and national and met so many fantastic staff, volunteers and veterans themselves working quietly and constantly for veterans and their families within local communities.

It has been a tough year for everyone in all sorts of ways, but this work hasn't halted or faltered; in fact tough times have strengthened the resolve of those delivering and we have highlighted some of this work within this Newsletter and much more on our Facebook and website pages over the course of the year. We will do so regularly in these pages from now on and will shine a light the work carried out by veteran supporting organisations whether large or small across NI and by volunteers, many of whom are veterans themselves. But for now, may we thank you all for your support to our work in ensuring that services and support to veterans are developed and delivered across NI and we look forward to achieving even more together in 2022, with a brief look forward to some new initiatives at the end of this edition.

However, for now, have a happy, healthy and restful Christmas and our best wishes to you all for 2022.


Head of the Northern Ireland
Veterans' Support Office



**The Northern Ireland Veterans'
Support Office core team:**

Deputy Head of the NIVSO, Fiona Sinclair;
Chief Executive RFCA NI, Johnny Rollins;
Head of the NIVSO, Liz Brown;
Communications & Support Officer, Janette Loughlin

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Service charities making a difference to the veteran community

The Royal British Legion

The Royal British Legion offers lifelong support to veterans in the community.

This year marked 100 years since the formation of the Royal British Legion.

From its inception, the RBL has helped members of the Armed Forces family by providing financial, social and emotional care and support when needed most.

In Northern Ireland over 75 RBL Clubs and Branches provide support to veterans at community level.

During the Routes of Remembrance wreath tour around Northern Ireland, Royal British Legions here played an active role in hosting the moving memorial events. The Northern Ireland Motorcycle Branch of The Royal British Legion

(pictured below) helped transport the wreath between locations around Londonderry and the North Coast. We had involvement from a host of RBLs, including Cregagh, Wandsworth & Ormeau, Oldpark & Cavehill, Carrickfergus, Tandragee, Londonderry Waterside, Limavady, Coleraine, Bessbrook, Castlederg, Omagh, Newtown Stewart and Fintona.



Vice Chairman of the RBL in Northern Ireland, Sam Hudson, joined us for a Routes of Remembrance memorial at Belfast City Hall, alongside representatives from Oldpark & Cavehill RBL, Carrickfergus RBL, members of the Royal Naval Association, the RAF Association and Chairman of the Regimental Association of the R IRISH, 14 October 2021



Members of the Northern Ireland Motorcycle Branch of The Royal British Legion outside the Guildhall, Londonderry, 18 October 2021

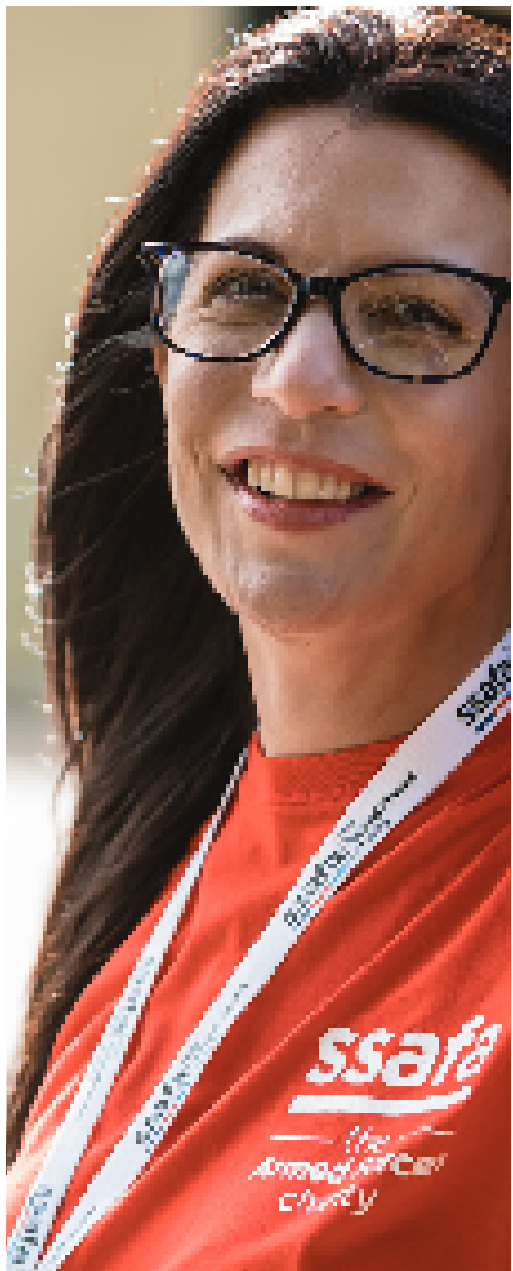
If you would like to find out more about Royal British Legions in your area, visit their online Branch Finder or call 0808 802 8080 for more information

94 year old RAF Veteran, Tommy, was dressed to impress at the Lisburn Branch Royal British Legion Breakfast Club held on 3rd December 2021



Service charities making a difference to the veteran community

SSAFA - The Armed Forces Charity



"My father passed away in 2020 and my elderly mother was left with a funeral bill which she and the family couldn't afford to pay. As my father had service with the Royal Engineers, we were advised to contact SSAFA NI for help. A caseworker contacted us, took us through the application process and secured the funds for the funeral. This lifted a huge burden off our shoulders and on top of this, as my mother is on a low income, the caseworker also managed to get her a small monthly pension from the Royal Engineers Association. This has made a big difference to her circumstances and we are most grateful for the support we received and indeed, continue to receive, from SSAFA NI today." - **David**

SSAFA, the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen Families Association aims to provide support to veterans and serving members of the Armed Forces.

SSAFA NI has a network of trained volunteer caseworkers who travel throughout the Province visiting veterans and their families with welfare needs.

Through an application process in which SSAFA NI works closely with the client, Regimental Funds and Service Charities, they attempt to secure financial assistance to relieve need, suffering and distress in the veteran community.

Did you know?
Established in 1885,
SSAFA is the UK's oldest
Armed Forces Charity

They also offer a service for veterans in the Criminal Justice System. Two dedicated caseworkers interact with prisoners, prison officers and prison governors to ensure the welfare of veterans serving prison time, and liaise with them and their families on their release to address any further welfare needs.

The SSAFA NI Branch can secure funding for things such as household goods, rent deposits/rent, mobility aids, funerals, children's needs, household bills and much more. They signpost clients to mental health organisations, benefit and debt advice facilities and other veteran organisations which can offer assistance and advice.

SSAFA volunteers come from all different backgrounds. Many have a service history or connection, and bring their own special skills and knowledge to the job.

All volunteers have a desire to help and improve the lives of Service veterans living in local communities.

SSAFA NI
21 Talbot Street
Belfast
BT1 2LD

Office hours: Tuesday -
Thursday 9am – 4pm

nireland.branch@ssafa.org.uk
028 9032 7740

ssafa | the
Armed Forces
charity





On Friday the 10th of December we took part in Walking With The Wounded's Walking Home For Christmas Challenge.



Walking Home for Christmas

This nationwide walking challenge takes place every year in the lead up to Christmas. The event brings people together and empowers them through connection with each other and the outdoors.

Those taking part in the walk had the chance to form new friendships and share stories from their service days.

You can read more about the challenge here:

www.walkinghomeforchristmas.com





Rob's Walk of Hope

Co Down veteran and founder of Let's Do Veterans Support, Rob Maxwell has walked hundreds of miles across the UK to raise money for The Royal Irish Regiment Benevolent Fund and increase the profile of his charity.

Rob, who served with the Royal Irish for 11 years, was badly injured and lost one of his legs in a motorbike accident in 2004, making the walk even more challenging, but not impossible for this determined veteran.

The Walk of Hope started at St Paul's Cathedral in London on the 28th of November, and took Rob through Milton Keynes, Birmingham, Clive Barrack in Tern Hill and then the Isle of Man before ending at St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast on the 6th of December.

Rob said: "In doing the walk, it's a matter of veterans seeing that and knowing there is hope beyond where they are."

The Spire of Hope at St Anne's Cathedral also inspired the name of the walk. "Hope is a word that has given comfort and also makes people look outward, so that was the idea, to reach out beyond the situation we all find ourselves in," Rob said.



In the military you are always thinking of your buddy next to you or in front of you or behind you, never yourself, you're always thinking of others, and outside of the army now I still apply that. I'm always trying to look after someone and reaching out.



Let's Do helps veterans overcome their disability, either hidden or visible, and inspire them to help others and give back to society by taking part in events and support activities.

For more information -

Phone: 07902121859

Email: letsdovsc@gmail.com

You can donate to Rob's Walk of Hope by clicking [here](#).



A Strong Voice For Veterans - Ireland's Military Story Project

In November we met the team behind Ireland's Military Story, who were visiting the province as part of a documentary project, **A Strong Voice For Veterans**, with the Veterans Commissioner for Northern Ireland, Danny Kinahan.

The crew visited three outreach organisations as part of a one-day whistle-stop tour: Decorum NI, The Frontier Pipes and Drums and Horses For People. The aim of the documentary project is to help signpost veterans across the island of Ireland to support activities such as these. You can read more about Ireland's Military Story by visiting their [website](#), and watch the film by clicking on the video link below.



Photos by John O'Byrne taken at Mind the Pipes and Drums rehearsal, Decorum NI & Horses for People

Operation Family Circle



A group of Northern Ireland veterans have been busy this festive season, delivering biscuits and Christmas cards to isolated veterans throughout the province.

From Cookstown to Comber, the small team of dedicated veterans have distributed over 70 boxes of biscuits to veterans who may be struggling with isolation at this time of year.

Veterans Tony, Richard and Eddie, also dropped by the Somme Nursing Home in Belfast to give some biscuits to the staff & residents.

This generous gesture captures the spirit of Christmas – spreading kindness, joy – and biscuits! – to those who may need it most.



Staff at the Somme Nursing Home were on hand to greet some of the veterans behind Operation Family Circle, 16 December 2021



A Soldier's Poem, from Irish Guards veteran Graham Fergus



Connect with us in 2022

We are delighted to be able to announce two new veteran support programmes which will be delivered throughout Northern Ireland in 2022.

Both are strategic programmes funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust which are being rolled out across the UK but have been designed or adapted to meet the specific needs of veterans here in NI.



*Merry Christmas from our Defence Gardens Scheme
Regional Coordinator, Charlie Marno!*

One is an initiative, designed specifically to support veterans in acute need, whether that be in hospital or in the community. The funding will be used to implement an out-of-hours helpline and emergency respite facilities which will connect to emergency statutory services across health, housing and social care as well as by the veteran support network and will be delivered in partnership with the Somme Nursing Home.

We are also delighted to announce that we have been successful in being appointed to deliver the new £800k Veterans Places, Pathways and People programme in 2022 in partnership with charitable partners Tanvalley and Anaghlonge Project and a range of charitable delivery partners. The programme will deliver increased complex mental health support, sustain existing successful initiatives and expand our Navigator guided pathways, as well as delivering training to volunteers within a whole range of veteran supporting organisations.

More details will follow on both these new initiatives in the New Year and we very much hope that many of you will get involved in and benefit from them. Again, thank you for your support throughout 2021 and have a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year.



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