



ROYAL BRITISH LEGION LAUNCHES NEW PROJECT TO SUPPORT CARERS WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY

- The Royal British Legion has launched 'Network for Carers', a project designed to support carers within the Armed Forces Community who feel isolated or lonely
- The project will launch with the first group event in the West Midlands at the Royal Air Force Museum Cosford
- The announcement follows new research by RBL that shows 70% of carers in the Armed Forces community say caring has negatively affected their mental health, with 50% saying it has affected their physical health
- RBL is inviting members of the Armed Forces with caring responsibilities who would like to attend one of the social groups to register their interest

The Royal British Legion has today announced the launch of Network for Carers, a new project that aims to support carers within the Armed Forces Community who feel isolated or lonely. Funded via a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's Tackling Loneliness programme, the programme offers monthly face-to-face and virtual social groups to provide opportunities for the military community to access support and share knowledge and experiences.

The announcement comes as new research from the RBL reveals that 70% of unpaid carers in the Armed Forces community are experiencing a negative impact on their mental health, and over 50% say their physical health is suffering due to the strain of their caring responsibilities.

For unpaid carers who have a family member currently serving in the Armed Forces, nearly 90% say their own mental health has been negatively affected. The research also identified that unpaid carers within the Armed Forces community are receiving half as much support as carers in the civilian population. Despite carers in the Armed Forces community being at high-risk of loneliness and isolation, 40% of unpaid carers admitted they had received no support at all over the last two years. Over the course of the pandemic, half of carers have seen a reduction in the availability of support and services that they and the person they care for need.

The project will launch with the first face-to-face social group at the Royal Air Force Museum Cosford on Friday 19th November 2021, followed by the next group at the National Memorial Arboretum on Thursday 20th January 2022.

RBL's Social Isolation Lead says: *"The RBL's research has revealed a troubling situation for many carers in the Armed Forces community. The strain of caring has damaged their mental and physical health and very few are able to take a break which is why establishing this Network for Carers is so important. The purpose of this new project is to help Armed Forces carers feel less lonely and isolated because of their caring role. By connecting the military community with their shared memories and experiences, the Network for Carers social groups will support people to develop friendships, interests and engage more with their communities."*

In total, the RBL intends to establish a total of twenty support groups across the UK during the Network for Carers project, all of which will be held in safe environments that are connected to the Armed Forces community.

Carers within the Armed Forces community that are struggling to look after a loved one or feel they would benefit from having a wider support network of those in a similar situation, and would like to access the programme should visit rbl.org.uk/networkforcarers.

- Ends -

Notes to Editors:

* The 2021 Carers Report has been conducted with the support of RBL's Admiral Nurses service, a unique specialist service supporting the unpaid carers of those living with dementia in the Armed Forces community. The qualitative and quantitative online survey was carried out for the RBL between 4 March and 5 April 2021. It was completed by 366 unpaid carers in the Armed Forces community, 358 of whom live in the UK.

Unpaid caring disproportionately affects the UK ex-Service community, but little research has previously been done in this area. The research included veterans who are carers, carers who care for a veteran, carers who have a serving person in the family and carers who currently serve in the British Armed Forces.

** In 2020, the Royal British Legion carried out a consultation exercise with carers in the Armed Forces community that were already being supported by the RBL. The individuals consulted told researchers that A) telephone and face-to-face conversations, in addition to group sessions, would be the most useful ways to get support, B) they would like to meet someone from the RBL outside of their home, C) they would like support to feel less lonely, and to feel more connected and D) that scheduled sessions were preferred, but that they also needed access to support as and when required.

About RBL Network for Carers

The RBL Network for Carers delivers a national network of social groups offering support to carers in the Armed Forces community, addressing loneliness and social isolation. Additionally, carers benefit from other support services provided by RBL to anyone in the Armed Forces community. These include advice, community support, including financial guidance and hardship support, help living at home, recovery services for wounded, injured and sick serving personnel and veterans, the RBL's six care homes, research and campaigning. For more information, [please click here](#).

About Unpaid Carers

Unpaid carers are anyone, including children and adults who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support.

About the Royal British Legion

The Royal British Legion (RBL) is the UK's largest charity dedicated to supporting the needs of the Armed Forces community, past and present and their families. The RBL is the champion of Remembrance and safeguards the Armed Forces Covenant. It is well known for the annual Poppy Appeal and its emblem the red poppy. For further information, visit rbl.org.uk.

Registered Charity Number: 219279

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