



**Veterans & Families – Listening Project**

**email: [veteransnfamilies@yahoo.com](mailto:veteransnfamilies@yahoo.com)**

**[www.vflp.org.uk](http://www.vflp.org.uk)**



# Welcome to our December Newsletter

WOW... It's December already, and what an exciting year it has been too!!! You've put more ketch-up on your bacon rolls, more spring on your sprung, and you've only just begun...

This month at V&F-LP, there's nowhere to hide as it's time to come and show-off your Christmas jumper at our Festive Fusion of Delight.... As you may face not two, not three, not four - but more challengers in this year's festive fusion showground of Christmas Jumpers Extraordinaire!!! How shimmery & sparkly will you be....



# SPECIAL GUESTS



Sparkling their way to the V&F-LP's drop-in on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> December is the Mayor of Surrey Heath, Cllr. Sarah-Jane Crocker.

## *Rodney Dell*

... And next on the mic is Hampshire based baritone with a very nice tone... Rodney Dell will be creating a buzzing ambience with magical melodies for V&F-LP's Festive Fusion of Delight...



# Wellbeing Check



With Ali



"Whoever said 'it's the journey, not the destination,' clearly never ended up with the squirrel in their mouth."

Writer and Artist: Teresa Burns Parkhurst

**MAD**  
madmagazine.com



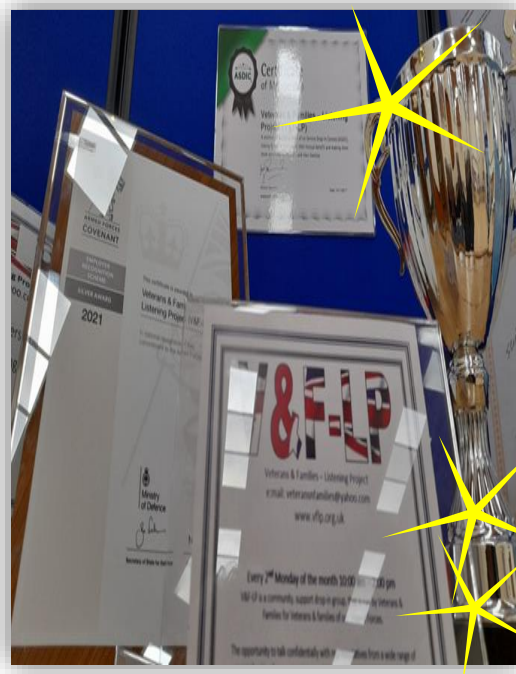
# Hot Topics

## Starting with HIGHLIGHTS of 2021

Highlights of 2021 apart from the obvious.... Well, let's get cracking cos what a year of exciting delight we've had.

Re-opened our actual monthly drop-in in May, that was really good. V&F-LP have also continued on ZOOM throughout the year with Ali, staying connected with you each week meeting-up for the Veterans & Families Well-Being group.

Delivered Easter Eggs, tea & coffee baskets, as well as delivering hampers full of delightful surprises to Veterans & Families.



V&F-LP were awarded THE Armed Forces Covenant **SILVER** award twelve month after receiving the bronze award, how amazing is that???

We also celebrated the Freedom of Surrey Heath Borough too. What a fantastic year V&F-LP have had, and we couldn't have done this without all your continual support.

*Thank you so much*





As part of V&F-LP's Festive  
Fusion of Delight....  
We would like to say  
'A really big THANK YOU'  
to the generosity & support of  
Surrey County Council  
Cllr. Alison Griffiths  
For literally delivering  
a Delightful Feast of Fusion  
as well as a memorable  
Christmas treat  
for Veterans & Families of our  
Armed Forces





## Follow us today on:



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[www.facebook.com/VeteransnFamiliesListeningProject](http://www.facebook.com/VeteransnFamiliesListeningProject)



@VnF\_LP



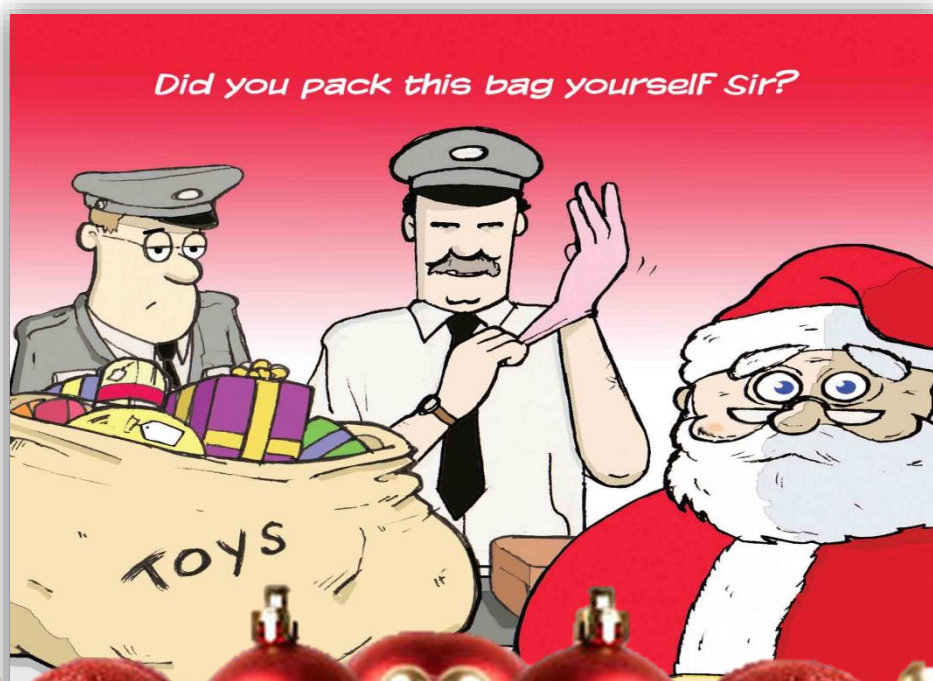
Veterans & Families – Listening Project  
email: [veteransnfamilies@yahoo.com](mailto:veteransnfamilies@yahoo.com)  
[www.vflp.org.uk](http://www.vflp.org.uk)

V&F-LP is an independent member of ASDIC.  
The association of Ex-Service Drop-in Centres,  
Linking Veterans' Drop-ins together across the  
United Kingdom.





**Is your Christmas jumper  
READY???**





We would like to draw your attention to this interesting & **exciting** piece of information concerning parking...

**Knoll Road, Multi Storey car park, Camberley  
GU15 3SY**

Category of Charge	Charge
Up to 1 Hour	FREE
Up to 2 Hours	FREE
Up to 3 Hours	£2.00
Up to 4 Hours	£3.00
Up to 6 Hours	£4.00
Up to 10 Hours	£4.00







**...Note...**

**Monday 10<sup>th</sup>  
January 2022**

**10:00 am – 2:00pm**

**We look forward  
to seeing you  
next year...**



We could not have done the above without you. With you we are a great team, and together we have some really brilliant ideas as well; and when we all come together, we know that we can achieve our aims.





# HAVE YOU SERVED?

## ➤ MESSAGE TO ALL VETERANS



**Are you a veteran or do you know of any friends or family who have served in the Armed Forces (including national service and reservists/territorial army) and would like to make new friends?**

We are developing some local mixed friendship groups for veterans in the Epsom and Ewell, Surrey Heath and Guildford areas and would love to hear from you if you would like to be involved. These groups are free to join, and we will be arranging some voluntary activities for you to take part in to create new friendships with people with shared experiences.

In recognition of their service, veterans will be offered the opportunity to record their life stories which will be transcribed into booklet for them and their loved ones and if agreed this can also be archived for future generations to access.

Please get in touch to find out more:

**Epsom and Ewell**

[tracey.morris@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:tracey.morris@surreycc.gov.uk) Tel: 07790 585352

**Surrey Heath**

[mike.rowlands@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:mike.rowlands@surreycc.gov.uk) Tel: 07971 604497

**Guildford**

[marne.stiles@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:marne.stiles@surreycc.gov.uk) Tel: 07815 410205

 THE ARMED FORCES  
COVENANT FUND TRUST





# DAMBUSTERS RIDE TO RETURN TO LINCOLNSHIRE IN 2022

In summer 2021, the RAF Benevolent Fund launched the Dambusters Ride, a cycle challenge celebrating the centenary of George 'Johnny' Johnson DFM, the last surviving original member of Operation Chastise, also known as the Dambusters raid of 1943. In May 2022, the Dambusters Ride will return for a second year to honour the bravery of those who risked their lives in the raid.

The Dambusters were members of the RAF's 617 Squadron who were specially assembled in March 1943 to bomb three dams in Germany's Ruhr Valley. The raid, on the night of May 16/17, involved 133 aircrew flying 19 specially adapted Lancaster bombers.

## Take part in Lincolnshire

The Dambusters Ride is due to take place on the weekend of the anniversary of the raid. Participants can either take part physically in Lincolnshire on Saturday 14 May, with two routes starting and finishing at the Petwood Hotel in Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire – a 50-mile course and a 100-mile course.

## ...or virtually

Riders can also participate virtually by completing their miles anywhere in the world over the weekend of the 14-15 May.

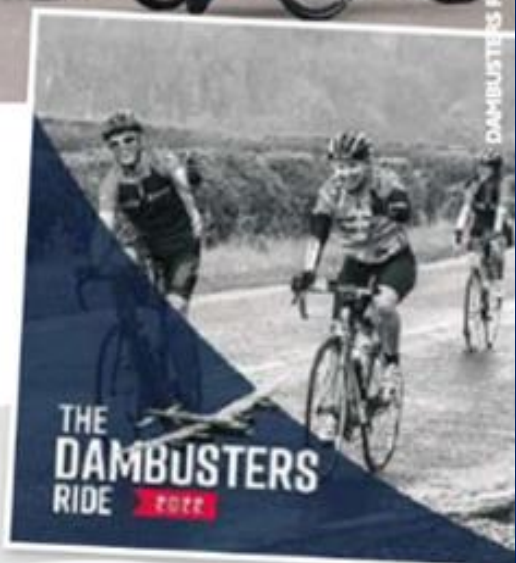


Johnny Johnson said: "The RAF Benevolent Fund does incredible work supporting RAF veterans and Serving personnel and I would like to thank anyone who signs up for this cycle ride. I am grateful to have never needed the support of the Fund but nonetheless I have always known they are there for those less fortunate than I."

"Not only will this event raise vital funds to support RAF personnel, past and present, it will also pay tribute to the brave men of Bomber Command who made the ultimate sacrifice on the Dambusters raid and throughout the Second World War. Their loss must never be forgotten and it is my hope through this event, a new generation will learn about the cost of the freedom they enjoy today."

The RAF Benevolent Fund provides financial, emotional, and practical assistance to serving and retired RAF personnel and their families. This includes grants to help with financial difficulty, free memberships for Headspace, Airplay youth clubs, and more.

For more information and to sign up for the ride, please visit [www.rafbf.org/event/dambusters-ride](http://www.rafbf.org/event/dambusters-ride).



HEALTH AND WELLBEING  
DAMBUSTERS RIDE TO RETURN TO LINCOLNSHIRE IN 2022 55



Royal Air Force  
Benevolent Fund

Johnny Johnson DFM

WINTER  
[rafbf.org.uk](http://rafbf.org.uk)

ENVOY



# Pets are part of the military family too!

By | Lucy

MILITARY LIFESTYLE AFFECTS US ALL; IMMEDIATE FAMILY, AUNTS, UNCLES, COUSINS, FRIENDS - WE CAN'T HOWEVER FORGET THE ANIMALS.

A military pet does so much more than we give them credit for; they are a solid foundation in an ever changing environment. They adapt and overcome, they don't question our choices, they may not understand where we are, why we are there, or how long for. They just know that they are with us - and they love us for it.

We are a family of Six... Myself, my husband, our two daughters, Soco the cat, and Ember our dog. Soco first came to live with us in 2013, four days after we got back from our honeymoon, and three days after we got the keys to our new house. Whilst on honeymoon, my husband asked what I first wanted to do with our house - he was thinking about painting or curtains. I was thinking about a cat. I saw Soco on the RSPCA website and instantly knew he had to be ours.

The following April, Ember was born, (April 21st, same day as the Queen!). We went to visit her and her siblings when they were just four weeks old, and it had to be her; she was black with a little white dash on her chest - just like the cat! Meant to be, I thought.

In 2017, Ember and Soco had to adjust to a new arrival in the house, Maggie, our first daughter. Not knowing what to make of her, Soco just carried on life as normal, but Ember knew that this little being is something to protect.

In early 2018, my husband deployed for seven months, Maggie was nearly six months old. It's so hard when they go away; it's a very lonely time, you miss adult company, you miss the helping hand and the evenings are the worst.

Once I (eventually) got Maggie down to sleep, Ember would get her turn. She was so patient, she knew she had taken a back step, and she understood why.

## A NEW POSTING OVERSEAS

In spring of 2018, whilst I was still on maternity leave, and my husband still deployed, we learnt of our overseas posting to the US. We'd always had discussions about overseas postings and what we'd do, for us there was no question - the pets were coming too. If you've ever taken a pet overseas then you know what a headache it is; on top of the normal vaccines and rigorous pet crate limitations, we also had Brexit to contend with, but they were coming with us. No question.

Three weeks after we landed in the US, Soco and Ember safely arrived. They had smelt better, I won't lie, but they were unharmed and just glad to get out of their crates. Arriving there in winter was best for them, as they had time to adjust to the weather conditions and heat differences. Soco also had to adapt from chasing mice to chasing lizards!

A little under a year later, Delilah our second daughter was born, and like the four legged troopers they are, they adapted perfectly. They never barked or hissed at her even when she would accidentally fall on them or tip over their food - they knew.

## LOCKDOWN HIT

The long walks had to stop and the pets definitely noticed we were indoors a lot more, but they were loving the extra attention. In late 2020, when restrictions started to relax in the US, we booked some family time away.

We would pack up the car, Ember included, and have a couple nights away somewhere new.

The last of these American adventures included a road trip to Yellowstone National Park.

We knew our time in America was coming to an end; a nearly three-year tour and a baby later. I'd started the process of organising early, selling off unwanted items, donations of outgrown clothes and planning the pets return trip. Thanks to COVID this was going to be an absolute nightmare, as there were very few flights, with no direct options, and the costs had shot up.

## NEWS FOR EMBER

Late in March 2021 my husband and I sat in the kitchen about to have lunch. Ember tried the usual puppy eyes trick of "Please can I have some?" and jumped up towards me, so I cupped my hands around her jaw line and wobbled her cheeks calling her cheeky. Then I felt a discrete and very unwelcome lump.

The next day, we were at the vets; they weren't too concerned, because of where it was. They thought it was probably a cyst caused by an infection in her teeth. I waited for the results of the cystoscopy the next morning. But I knew - everyone around me said she'd be fine - but I bloody knew. Cancer, my beautiful Ember, my best friend, she wasn't even seven years old. As days went on the bad news kept coming. Chemo might give her up to 12 months, but she would be unwell for a lot of it and she couldn't live with us, as the toxins in her saliva could be harmful to the kids. Without chemo, two-three months at most.

We decided not to go ahead with chemo; it couldn't save her, so we would stay together as a family until the time came. She was happy, she wasn't in pain, she wasn't unwell, and there was nowhere that she was happier than with her family.

But now she was starting to show signs of pain. We took her to the vets on the Monday morning. It was there the vet agreed with us, it was Embers time. She'd toughed out her battle and fought well, but before the cancer got her we let her go surrounded by love in our arms.

And like that she was gone, over the rainbow bridge, to the endless beach of bird chasing and tail wagging. No pain, no tiredness, no cancer.



It's the things that at one time were annoying that I now long for; her whimpers meaning "can I come with you today?" when my husband puts on his work boots, the bark when the postman knocks, how she would get under my feet when unpacking the car. I'd give anything to have that, even if it meant another smashed jar of Bolognese sauce.

**SO GIVE YOUR PET AN EXTRA BIT OF FUSS TONIGHT.**





Mon, 12 Sept

## Veterans Banger Rally 2022

The Veterans Banger Rally 2022, is as the name suggests, an organised event, bringing together Veterans from all areas of the Armed Forces, that share a common goal of driving a clapped-out banger via 1500+ mile route to Gibraltar, in a bid to raise funds for charity.

For further information please visit

**Veteran Bangers Rally**



Defence  
Business  
Services

Veterans UK | Armed Forces Pension Scheme | November 2021

# AFPS Quarterly Digest

## McCloud legislation introduced

Legislation for McCloud pension remedy is underway following the introduction of the Public Services Pension and Judicial Offices Bill in the House of Lords on 19 July 2021. The legislation applies to all public service pension schemes including the Armed Forces. The Bill sets out in law how the government will remove the discrimination identified by the courts in the way that the 2015 pension reforms were introduced for some members. This is the primary legislation to close

final salary legacy schemes for accrual post 31 March 2022 and moves all remaining members into AFPS 15, while ensuring that existing transitional protections, such as the final salary link, are retained. The legislation also provides the framework for scheme specific secondary legislation to be implemented.

To help service personnel understand the financial implications of the McCloud remedy, the existing AFPS Pension Calculator is



being updated to enable a comparison of pension benefits. The calculator updates are dependent on some complex policy issues being finalised, but it is anticipated that the revised calculator will be rolled out early in 2022.

To implement the prospective remedy for McCloud, MOD are undertaking a public consultation to highlight the changes that will be made to

the Armed Forces Pension Scheme regulations and the effect on members. The consultation period is expected to run for 8 weeks, between mid-November 2021 to mid-January 2022 and views are encouraged from serving personnel and veterans. Instruction on how to respond will be included in the consultation document and an email address will be provided.

More information regarding the Bill can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-service-pensions-and-judicial-offices-bill>

## Don't forget Veterans UK are here for you

As well as the administration of the Armed Forces Pension Schemes remember Defence Business Services (DBS) Veterans UK also provides free support for serving personnel, veterans and their families, including a helpline, Veterans Welfare Service (VWS),

Defence Transition Services (DTS) and injury/bereavement compensation scheme payments.


VWS and DTS use a caseworker approach that offers personal help and guidance to provide assistance

following a change in situation which has resulted in a welfare need including: leaving the services, bereavement, changes in physical or mental health, changes affecting income or finances, and changes affecting housing.

Serving personnel and veterans needing support can call the DBS Veterans UK helpline on 0808 1914 218 or visit:



<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/help-and-welfare-for-veterans-and-those-leaving-the-armed-forces>

 **Veterans  
UK**





## THROUGH LIFE COMMITTEE APPROVE OVER £1.3M IN 2021

### GRANTS

26 NOVEMBER 2021

Last week the RNRMC's Through Life Committee met for the final time in 2021. The RNRMC Through Life Pathway tackles the unique set of pressures faced by those who serve and their families and preventing these from escalating by providing a safety net in the form of relationship support, mental health services, help in transitioning from the Service, and support which provides dignity and care for veterans in old age.

In the latest meeting, the Committee agreed to fund five applications with bids totaling £146,803 in value. In addition, three funding programme bids were viewed, committing a further £155,000 to supporting the Royal Navy community.

Over the course of the year, the RNRMC and its funding partner, Greenwich Hospital, have spent a total of £1,375,427, forming partnerships with new organisations and strengthening existing ones. Among those who have received funding via the TLC in 2021 are, Veterans Aid, Scotty's Little Soldiers, Walking with the Wounded and Ripple Pond

Chair of the Committee, Kate Phipps-Wiltshire, said:

“

**THE ORGANISATIONS FUNDED THROUGH THIS COMMITTEE PROVIDE CRUCIAL SUPPORT FOR OUR SERVING PERSONNEL, THEIR FAMILIES AND VETERANS. THANKS TO EVERYONE, THOSE WHO ASSESS AND CONSIDER EVERY GRANT APPLICATION, OUR FUNDING PARTNER, GREENWICH HOSPITAL, AND THE ORGANISATIONS WE FUND, FOR ALL THEY HAVE DONE THIS YEAR TO SUPPORT OUR NAVAL COMMUNITY.**

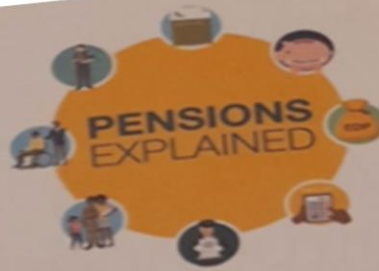
KATE PHIPPS-WILTSHIRE

REF: [www.rnrmc.org.uk/news/through-life-committee-approve-over-ps13m-2021](http://www.rnrmc.org.uk/news/through-life-committee-approve-over-ps13m-2021)



**FIZZIN' WITH FLAVOUR**

# AFPS15 Scheme Explained Videos



Need help understanding your pension? We appreciate that pensions can be complicated, and we're doing what we can to make understanding your entitlements as simple as possible. Remember we have

a series of short videos called "AFPS15 Explained" focused on everything from claiming your pension, to accrual, to dependant benefits, all available to view on the MOD YouTube channel.

## £5 million boost for Armed Forces charities

In September the Prime Minister announced that Armed Forces charities will receive £5 million in additional funding to support those who have served, including those who may be struggling following recent events in Afghanistan. The additional funding will be allocated to a range of projects that will increase capacity in mental health charities, improve veterans' understanding of the support available and deliver enhanced social support. The Office for Veterans' Affairs will allocate the funding over the coming months.



<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/armed-forces-charities-to-receive-5-million-boost>

Does it appear that our Prime Minister has overlooked the Northern Ireland Veterans, again...

REF: Veterans UK | Armed Forces Pension Scheme | November 2021







If you have a question about your  
Armed Forces Pension  
please call the JPAC  
Enquiry Centre on  
**0800 085 3600** or **0044 141 224 3600**  
if calling from abroad.

Open Monday to Friday 7 am to 6 pm,  
please ensure you have your  
service and National Insurance Numbers  
ready.

You can find useful information on all the  
Schemes by visiting:

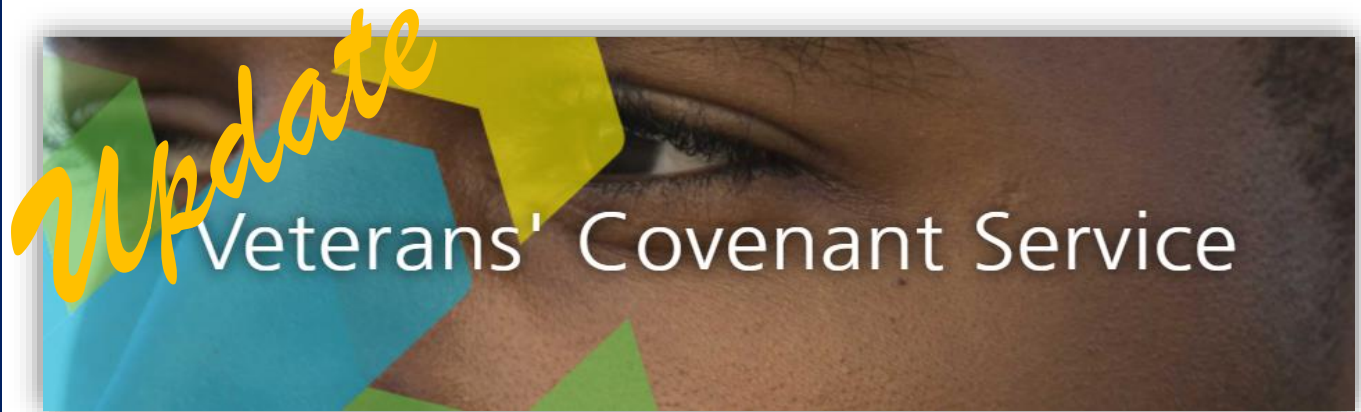
[www.gov.uk/guidance/pensions-and-compensation-for-veterans](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/pensions-and-compensation-for-veterans)

REF: Veterans UK | Armed Forces Pension Scheme | November 2021





**Surrey and Borders Partnership**  
NHS Foundation Trust



The Veteran Covenant Services within SABP are pleased to welcome onboard Tasha Jacques who is our new Veteran Peer Support Worker.

Tasha has previously served within the Armed Forces and will be a great asset to the team, having a great understanding of life within the military and transitioning back into Civilian Life.

Currently Tasha is attending Veteran Hubs to introduce herself around SABP catchment area and liaising with the Armed Forces Community in the local area. Ref: Personal email 30.11.21

## Follow us today on:



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@VnF\_LP



V&F-LP is an independent member of ASDIC.  
The association of Ex-Service Drop-in Centres,  
Linking Veterans' Drop-ins together across the  
United Kingdom.





The following clips of information are from the National Gulf Veterans & Families Association (NGV&FA), newsletter: November 2021.

### **Severe Mental Impairment council tax relief**

This is not a new discount on council tax and has been around for a long time but, if you have severe mental health problems and are not getting a discount on your council tax, you need to look at your local council website and see what they are offering and what you need to do. Usually its just a form for your GP to fill in. If you are unsure and would like to have a chat with us about this please contact the office.

### **Op COURAGE - Veterans Mental Health Services in the NHS**

Some of you may already have heard of this but Op COURAGE is the overarching name for the following NHS Services for veterans mental health which have been in operation for a few years

- the Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS)
- the Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS)
- the Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service (HIS)

To get a referral you do not need to go through a GP but a GP can make a referral, you can do this yourself or a family member, or through a Charity. If you would like to read more information on Op COURAGE this is the link to the website

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-community/mental-health/veterans-reservists/>

Benefit reviews that have been put on hold - don't be complacent the DWP can bring them forward and review at any time. Make sure you've got up to date medical evidence. Have a chat with us to make sure you are ready or if there is anything you can do for when it comes through.

It is also worth bearing in mind that with some of the health problems that our veterans have they are long term conditions, permanent and not curable. They can be managed to a degree with medication. So if you are filling in your own review/claim forms make sure that you note that these are long term conditions.



### **Veteran suicide figures to be recorded for the first time**

**Taken from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/veteran-suicide-figures-to-be-recorded-for-the-first-time>**

A new method for recording veteran suicides in England and Wales has been announced by the government alongside a 10 year look back to examine veteran deaths through suicide. For the first time, numbers of ex-service personnel who take their lives will be recorded officially by the government, following an agreement between the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA), the MOD and the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

This data will be used to further understand where there is a need for dedicated services in England and Wales. The data will allow the government to ensure that these targeted services are signposted to veterans, where they are needed most.

The new reporting method will use data collected from the recent veterans' question in the 2021 Census and match it with ONS-held data on suicides. This will allow the government to produce a statistic, known as a national measure, of the total number of veterans who die by suicide each year. This is the first time such a figure will be produced. It is expected that the first annual statistics will be published in 2023.

### **Universal Credit - claiming as a couple**

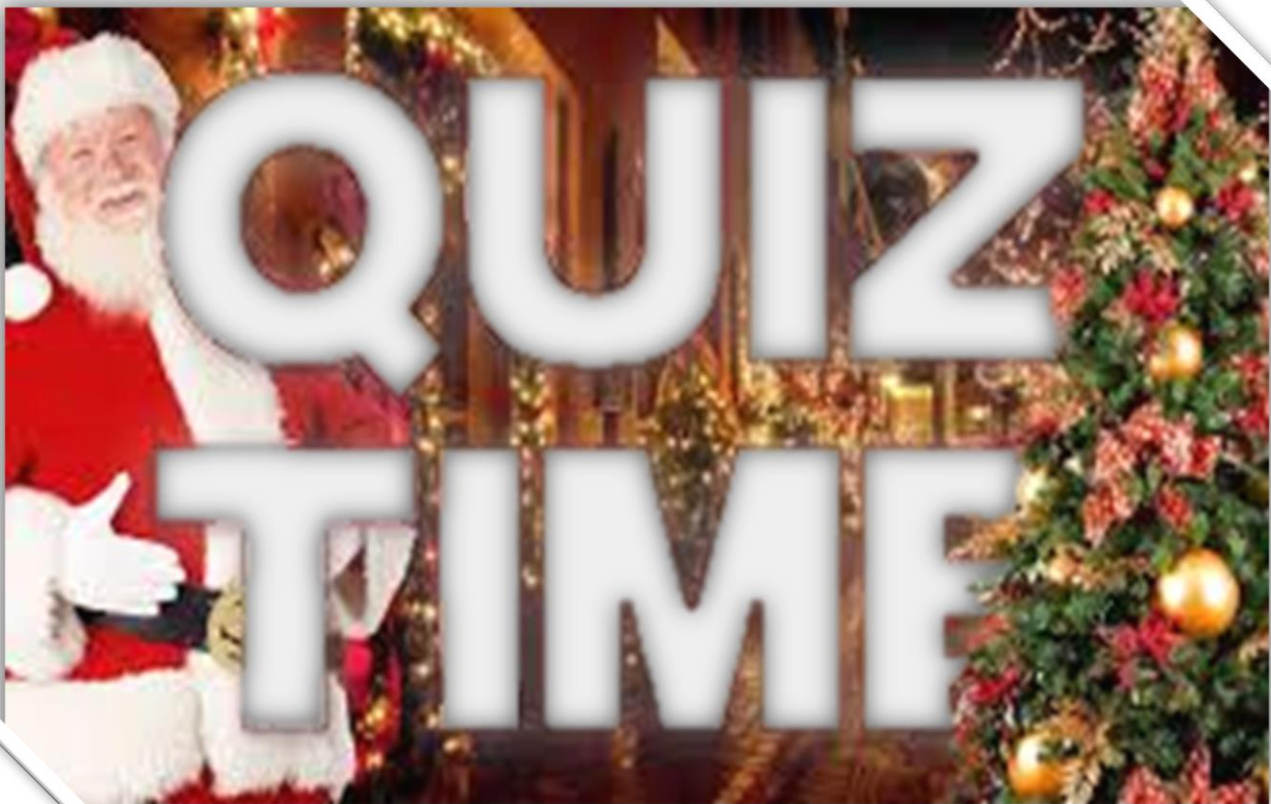
If you are a veteran who has not worked for a number of years and are in receipt of war pensions unemployability supplement (UNSUPP) you will not have had to prove or have assessments about going back to work. If you are in a relationship and your circumstances change and your partner has to claim Universal Credit it is then considered as a couple claim. You will find that the DWP will then also look at you, the veteran and your ability to work and yes possibly have to have an assessment for this. Do not ignore this if it happens, there will be forms to complete and this may not result in you having to have a medical assessment due to the evidence that is produced, but it may possibly mean you are entitled to more money.

Confused!! My understanding was always that if you were in receipt of UNSUPP on war pension then you cannot claim other benefits but it seems this is not the case with Universal Credit. If you are classed as still being too ill to work then there is additional money under the couple's claim. This advice is not telling you to go out and make a claim for UC but if you find yourself in this situation then make sure you do everything right and if you need help or advice then please ring us as we can help.

For further information about NGVFA visit their website:

[www.ngvfa.org.uk](http://www.ngvfa.org.uk)





It's that time of year again... Do you think that you can crack our quiz, we have made it more of a chocolate bar challenge for you this year. The ..... to this year's Christmas quiz is chocolate or sweets (see what we did there!!! you have to fill in the blank .... Space with a known (to everyone) popular chocolate bar or sweet. How easy-peasy, cracker-pulling is that???

T & Cs – no cash prizes or bounty, no chocolate, no alternative prizes, please do not use Google, the answers will be in January's newsletter, no bribes – just a few minutes of enjoyment.




# Are you sitting comfortably? Are you ready? Let's get crackin' .....

Hi...

I hope this will make you .....!!! I didn't know what to get you for Christmas??? A ride on a ..... or a trip on a .....plane. A holiday to New ..... Oh no – we can't. A Space adventure around the ..... , visiting ..... .  
Actually at the moment, I'd like to go to another ..... far, far away with you.

But – I looked in our piggy-bank and all I could see was .....!!! So instead I made this ..... special card for my one in a ..... Love.

Next year I'd like to go on a ..... holiday, or we could go for a ..... , play ..... put on some music and ..... around together. I am not gonna ..... but I am going to say loudly (and put on my Instagram & FaceBook page) I  you.

So let's ..... out, and ..... enjoy eating the chocs.  
Love you lots like ..... Cos I've got my ..... and that's you.

We hope that there are some ..... pants out there that can fill in the blank space. Good luck.





**For everyone's comfort & an  
enjoyable Festive Fusion of Delight...**

**Please can you  
★ wear your face-mark ★**




**Merry Christmas  
and a happy  
New Year  
from  
Team V&F-LP**





We look forward to  
seeing you in the  
New Year  
Monday 10<sup>th</sup>  
January  
2022



Take care  
From the team V&F-LP

All information is correct at the time of going to press & PDF  
Veterans & Families-Listening Project (V&F-LP)  
**does not** endorse any products or service(s) advertised



*Veterans*  
*Honouring all who served*

