

# Acceptance, adjustment, achievement:

Working in partnership to deliver  
the Armed Forces Community  
Covenant for blind ex-Service  
men and women



Life beyond sight loss  
St Dunstan's since 1915





## Further information

To arrange a meeting to discuss how we can help blind ex-Service men and women in your area, please contact:

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## Inspiring achievement since 1915

Founded in 1915 and previously known as St Dunstan's, Blind Veterans UK has helped over 35,000 ex-Service men and women lead full and independent lives after sight loss.

### Over 100 years of lifelong support for veterans with sight loss

We provide free practical and emotional support at every stage of a veteran's journey: from rehabilitation, equipment and home adaptations to social, recreational, training and employment support. Our national network provides ongoing personal support to veterans and their families, while our residential centres in Brighton, Llandudno and Sheffield provide targeted rehabilitation, respite care and social engagement opportunities. Every blind and severely vision impaired veteran is eligible for our support – irrespective of what caused their sight loss.

### Life beyond sight loss

Blind Veterans UK provides world-class rehabilitation through our tried and tested 3 A's model: acceptance, adjustment and achievement. This means that the thousands of veterans we help every year don't just learn to survive: they come to terms with their disability and go on to do great things, once again playing an active part in society.

### No one who has served our country should have to battle blindness alone

We are currently supporting over 4,000 veterans with severe sight loss and their families but we know that there are many more out there who are needlessly missing out. New research has revealed that there are around 59,000 ex-Service men and women who are eligible for our support<sup>1</sup>, but many are simply not aware of us, or do not realise that they are eligible for our help. As we enter our second century of service, we want to reach out to more blind veterans than ever before, and are asking other agencies to partner with us and signpost all vision impaired ex-Service men and women to our free services.



Blind Veterans UK  
currently supports over  
**4,000**  
blind veterans

1. Blind Veterans UK's Survey of the vision impaired ex-Service population, 2015– 40

## Help us reach out to more veterans battling severe sight loss

Sadly, many veterans don't realise they can access our free support and struggle to cope alone with their sight loss. In a recent survey of our veterans and their carers, we found that almost a quarter of them (24%) unnecessarily missed out for six years or more before accessing our help<sup>2</sup>. By working together, we want to ensure that every blind veteran gets the life-changing support they need as quickly as possible after diagnosis.

Local authorities are one of the most effective agencies for ensuring a quick referral to us. They have a statutory responsibility to contact everyone who is registered severely sight impaired within their locality, and could potentially be identifying people who have served and immediately signposting them on to Blind Veterans UK for support.

Many local authorities already have good referral processes in place, and work with us to ensure the best outcomes for veterans in their area, but this needs to happen everywhere. By working with Blind Veterans UK and signposting veterans to our support, local authorities can also uphold their commitments to:

- The Armed Forces Community Covenant** which states that signatories must “make it easier for Service personnel, families and veterans to access the help and support available from the charitable and voluntary sector”
- The Care Act 2014** which states that local authorities are responsible for “promoting wellbeing, increasing preventative services and providing information about available care and support”
- The Local Government Association’s Combating Loneliness guide**, which encourages local authorities to work with other partners to address the impact of loneliness and isolation

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**87% of our veterans are over 75.**  
**Nearly ¼ of veterans went 6 years or more before accessing our vital support and services after diagnosis<sup>2</sup>**

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## Give every blind veteran the chance to accept, adjust and achieve

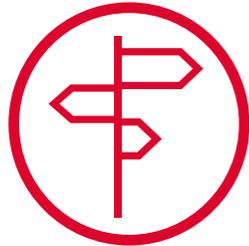
We want to give every blind veteran the support they need to realise their full potential. We have over 100 years' of experience in helping veterans not just overcome the challenges of blindness, but to once again become active participants and role models in their communities. We know that our 3 A's model – acceptance, adjustment, achievement – works and truly changes lives. We want to see this best practice adopted more widely.



2. January 2015 survey of Blind Veterans UK beneficiaries and carers conducted by Clariant Research

## Local authorities

What does 'best practice' look like?



1

Ask vision impaired service users at every opportunity if they have ever served in the Armed Forces or done National Service, and if so, signpost them to Blind Veterans UK.



2

Ensure these questions are asked as part of the formal assessment process for new clients. Blind Veterans UK staff can work with you to develop this, and can provide you with training, information and resources.



3

Train team members about Blind Veterans UK and how we can help. This can include arranging for representatives from the charity to come to team meetings, or a visit to one of our three rehabilitation and training centres in Brighton, Sheffield and Llandudno.



1

Speak to local authorities in your constituency and make sure they are aware of the support offered by Blind Veterans UK. We can provide you with tailored letters and resources.



2

Encourage local authorities to honour the Covenant and adopt best practice by identifying and signposting vision impaired veterans to the charity for support.



3

Write to the Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government to ask for his support in encouraging all local authorities to live up to their Covenant obligations.



4

Work in partnership with Blind Veterans UK across a range of services including occupational therapy, social work, housing and education etc. to identify where the charity is best placed to add value, and achieve the best outcomes for blind ex-Service men and women in your community.



5

Establish a specific point of contact within your organisation to enable better communication and working relationships with Blind Veterans UK staff.



6

Cascade information about our support via your authority's communication channels. We can provide you with tailored information and resources. Email [noonealone@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:noonealone@blindveterans.org.uk) to receive a free information pack.



## Take action

### A step in the right direction

Eye health professionals are also a key point of referral to Blind Veterans UK and we want them to signpost blind and vision impaired veterans, as well as local authorities.

Following our last parliamentary event in September 2014 we met with key representatives at the Department of Health. We're pleased to report that we're now working with partners across the sight loss sector to produce an information pack for people at the point of their diagnosis.

## The 3 A's – our approach

Everything we do is aimed at supporting blind veterans to achieve fulfilment and independence, not just to cope with their sight loss, but to enjoy life, achieve their potential and contribute to society. The 3 A's of acceptance, adjustment and achievement are interrelated and, while they don't represent a step-by-step process, we support people to progress at each point.



### Acceptance

The impact of sight loss can be devastating. Our veterans experience feelings of grief; mourning the loss of sight and ability, but also their sense of identity. We provide emotional and peer support to help veterans accept what has happened so that they can move on with their lives and start to imagine a future beyond sight loss.

### Adjustment

Being blind means everyday things like cooking, getting around and working need to be done in a different way, sometimes requiring adaptations and equipment such as magnifiers or specialist software. Our rehabilitation and training services, covering everyday living, IT, sports and creative activities, provide specialist training, encouragement and equipment to maximise a veteran's independence and enable them to get on with their lives.

### Achievement

Core to our philosophy is the principle that achievement leads to increased self-esteem, confidence and independence. Many of our veterans develop a 'can do' approach to life, achieving things they never thought they were capable of. We work individually and in groups with veterans to encourage them to take on challenges, big and small. For some it will be walking to the shops on their own, for others it will be getting a job they enjoy or representing their country at a Paralympic event. All achievements, big or small, are celebrated.



### Top three services accessed by our veterans<sup>2</sup>

 **74%**  
equipment

 **72%**  
centre visits

 **47%**  
social events



## Signposting veterans – good practice in local authorities

Many local authorities are already doing everything they can to signpost veterans with severe sight loss and we'd like to see this adopted everywhere. You can find out more about how many blind veterans are being supported in your area by emailing [noonealone@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:noonealone@blindveterans.org.uk). We can also update you on how many more blind ex-Service men and women are out there who may be going needlessly unsupported. With your help, we can work together to ensure no one who has served our country has to battle blindness alone.

**Hertfordshire County Council**  
Cabinet Member for Adult Care and Health, Colette Wyatt-Lowe, stated: "Hertfordshire County Council offers an excellent range of services to people with a sensory need through its collaborative working with partners including Blind Veterans UK. We look forward to building on this relationship over the coming years."

Jackie Kidd, is a Deafblind Worker for Sensory Services at Hertfordshire County Council. Her role is to carry out assessments of needs and provide information, advice and support to people who have a dual sensory loss. "Whenever we receive a new referral including a Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI) for a person who has a sight loss. We contact the person by phone and if appropriate, we will offer to complete an initial assessment in

person. As part of that assessment, all my team are encouraged to ask if the service user has completed military service, and if they have, explain to them that it would be possible to refer them on to Blind Veterans UK. We know what intensive support the charity offers, and all the benefits they can offer our service users. I have signposted at least six veterans in the last two years. I have also given a presentation to my team to ensure everyone knows what Blind Veterans UK can offer, so they are able to inform our service users."

**Hampshire Country Council**  
North and East Hants Sensory Team stated: "At Hampshire County Council, we are proud to be upholding our commitment to the Armed Forces Community Covenant. We are keen to ensure all vision impaired veterans have access to appropriate support. We have

signposted numerous vision impaired ex-Service men and women to Blind Veterans UK over the years because they offer free, lifelong services and support to all veterans, no matter when they served and how they lost their sight."

 **93%**

**of our veterans were either happy or very happy with the support provided by Blind Veterans UK.<sup>2</sup>**



### 92-year-old fitness enthusiast Douglas is enriching the lives of others

“The support has been truly amazing”  
92-year-old Douglas Goodyear joined the RAF in 1943 and went on to play a role in the Normandy landings. Five years ago he lost his sight to age-related macular degeneration and glaucoma. Douglas has always loved keeping fit and one of the things he missed the most when he lost his sight was going to the gym regularly. We gave him the opportunity to get back on the treadmill when he visited our Brighton centre, and to start exercising again.

Douglas has since gone on to enrich the lives of other residents at his sheltered housing complex by setting up an indoor bowls club which uses an illuminated jack and bowling chute to enable partially sighted and wheelchair users to participate in the game. He says: “The support that I’ve received from Blind Veterans UK has been truly amazing. They helped me to feel that having a disability doesn’t have to be a barrier when participating in activities.”



### Marathon-running Maria loves excelling in her job

“I no longer want my life to end”

At just 18 Maria Pikulski joined the Women’s Royal Army Corps and served for 13 years; driving vehicles adapted for arctic conditions as well as cooking and doing clerical work before leaving the forces to become a nurse. Thirteen years ago Maria was diagnosed with Leber’s optic neuropathy and lost her sight. She says: “My world fell apart around me and there were times when I didn’t even want to carry on living. Blind Veterans UK saved me. The more time I spent training at the Brighton centre, the more I realised that, with their help, I could turn my life around.”

Maria went on one of our specialist IT courses which helped her to land a job as an eye clinic liaison officer with Action for Blind People, at St Helens Hospital. With our support, Maria has also taken part in a number of sports and outdoor activities, including running the London Marathon, sky-diving and white water rafting. She says: “I no longer want my life to end; in fact, I’m living it to the full. Blind Veterans UK has helped me regain my confidence in basic life skills as well as encouraging me to do things I never thought I would do. My happiness and independence is down to them.”



### Champion archer Peter is proud to represent Team GB

“Blind Veterans UK has given me so much”

Peter Price joined the Royal Army Service Corps in 1964 and served for over eight years. He lost his sight later in life due to the condition cone dystrophy. Peter has been supported by Blind Veterans UK since 2010.

As part of his Blind Veterans UK rehabilitation process Peter tried archery and became hooked, becoming a member of our archery team. Peter reached a competitive level in the sport and in 2015 was invited to represent Team GB at the World Archery Para Championships winning a silver medal: “When my vision went, my world fell apart. My confidence and self-esteem vanished in a very short space of time, but Blind Veterans UK has given me so much, it’s not just the archery, it has got me out of myself.”

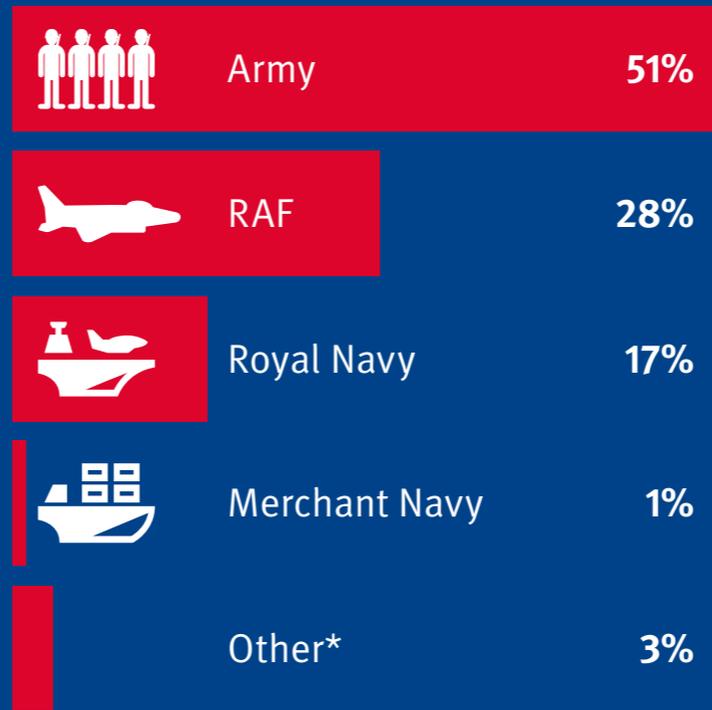


## Living life to the full

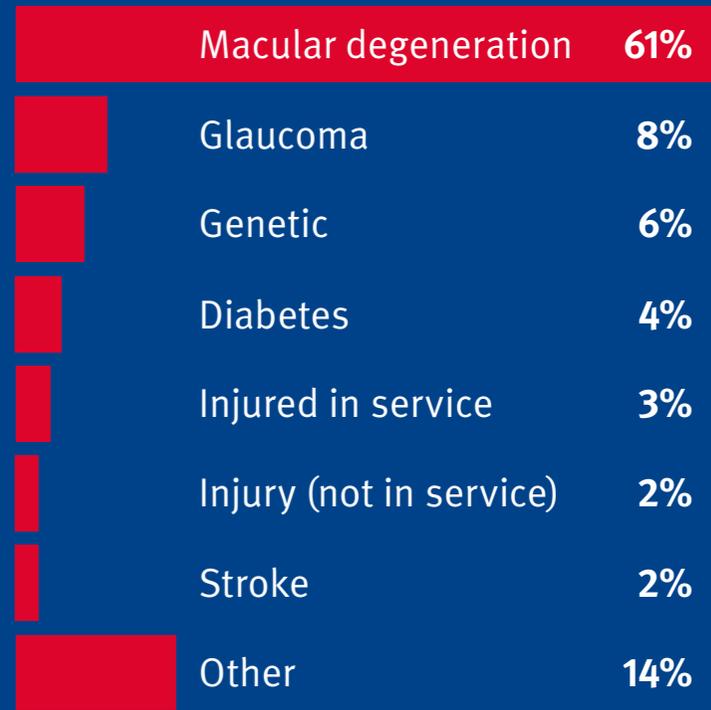
As well as facing challenges with day-to-day life, the veterans we support may have initially stopped doing many of the things that make them happy, from meaningful work to hobbies and activities. We work with every veteran individually, helping them to overcome the barriers blindness can put in place, and instead to find new paths to success and fulfilment.

# We support veterans...

...from a variety of Service backgrounds...



...and a variety of causes of blindness<sup>2</sup>



\*This includes people in the emergency services who suffered severe sight loss while on duty or people who were injured performing war work (e.g. in a munitions factory) and were entitled to a war pension as a result of their sight loss.



I commit to ensuring  
that no veteran in my  
constituency will have to  
battle blindness alone.