



ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Our Strategy to 2035





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Welcome

Founded in the aftermath of the First World War, the Royal British Legion (RBL) has been a constant presence for our Armed Forces community for over a century and today is woven into the fabric of British life.

In its Strategic Defence Review 2025, the Government refers to a new era of threat and the need to move the UK's Armed Forces to a warfighting readiness. If we are to remain relevant to our Armed Forces community, the RBL must evolve and be ready to meet the needs of the future.

Decreasing numbers of the Second World War and National Service veterans alongside societal changes, mean that today's Armed Forces community is smaller, more diverse, and with a younger average age. Over the course of this ten-year strategy we expect to support more veterans of a working age.

Our new strategy focuses on the changing needs of the whole Armed Forces community; serving personnel, veterans, families, and the bereaved. As our Armed Forces face uncertainty on how it might be deployed over the next decade, the RBL must remain the constant that they can turn to, whatever the need, whenever it's needed. And we remain committed to continue our work to ensure the Armed Forces Covenant, the commitment between the nation and those who undertake military service and their families, is upheld and implemented by wider society.

Our Royal Charter is the foundation of our new strategy. We have created our strategy around three pillars – Connect, Remember, and Support. Our ambition is to bring society together to recognise, remember, and support the Armed Forces community.

Much of our work already revolves around the connections made across our communities and wider society.

The Armed Forces community remain at the heart of everything we do, and we owe it to them to be the very best we can, to have enduring impact, and to ensure their unique contribution is not forgotten.

Lynda Atkins
National Chair

Mark Atkinson
Director General



Creating our strategy

Our Strategy to 2035 is a strategy for the future that maintains our links to our past and recognises the changing landscape within which we operate. In developing the strategy, we examined our charitable purpose, set out in the RBL's Royal Charter over a century ago. It was clear that despite the passage of time, the intent of the Royal Charter endures – to support and remember the Armed Forces community. We wanted to ensure we understood, and could respond to, the changes affecting our community and so we also invested in research, engaged widely, and carried out analysis to build an evidence base to support any future activity.

It's been a truly collaborative approach that has seen our Executive Board work closely with our Board of Trustees, directors, employees, members, volunteers and other stakeholders.

In addition, we set up an external challenge group to encourage fresh perspectives and include views and experience from outside the organisation. These engagements and our research have allowed us to hear from people with different backgrounds from across the Armed Forces community and the charity sector.

Our strategy sets out the ambition to meet the changing needs of the Armed Forces community and identifies the outcomes required to guide our work. We've defined our mission, vision, the goals we want to achieve in both the short and long term, and the values we'll adopt. Our strategy supports a sense of shared purpose across RBL and outlines what we need to do to make sure we will be fit for the future.



“I was so keen to have a connection with like-minded people again. I was hoping to come away [from a Battle Back course] feeling a bit more confident in myself but I came away with a much better outlook, generally.”

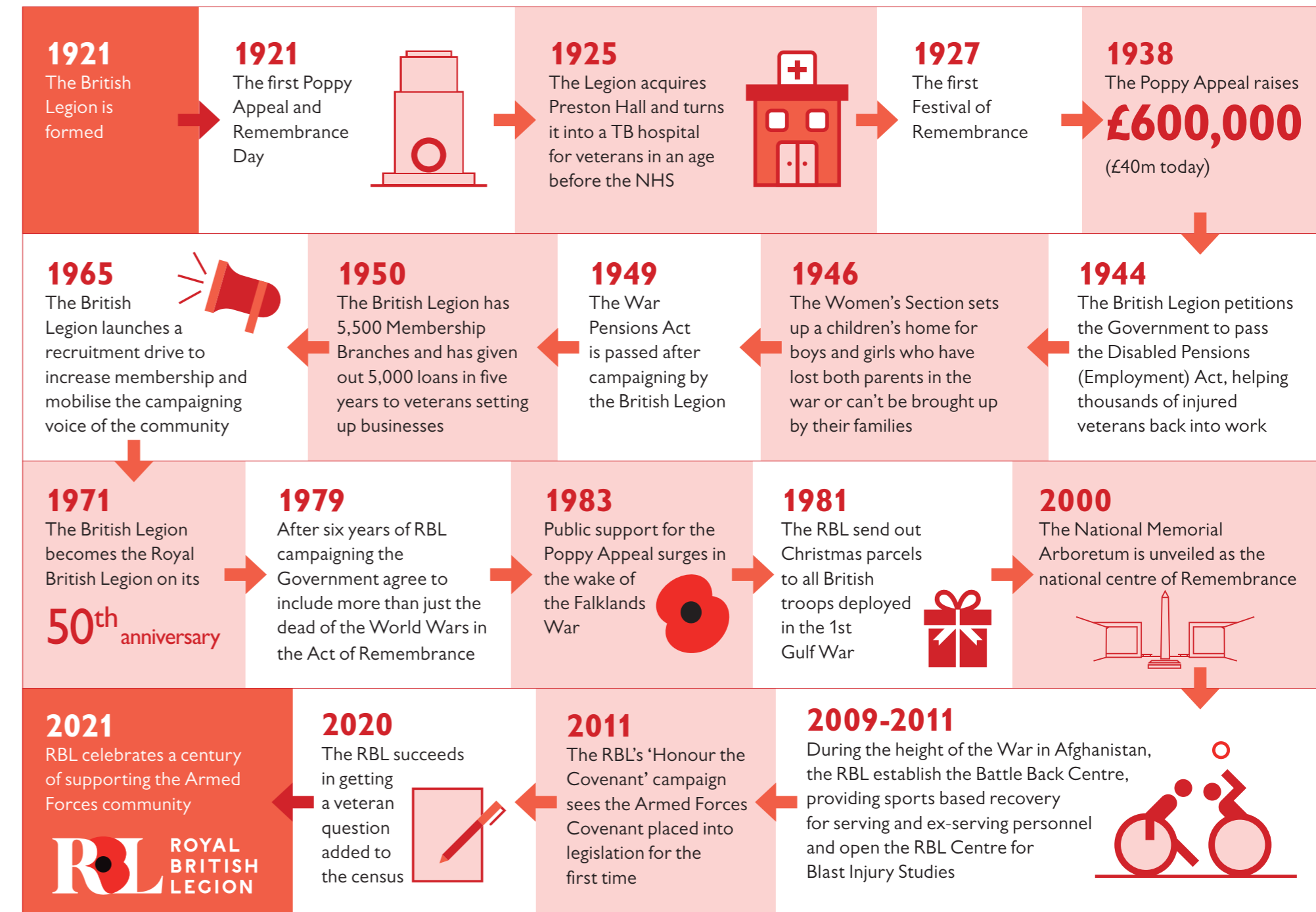
Bronwyn Wilkinson



Our first century

The British Legion was founded in May 1921 to provide care to those who suffered as a result of service in the First World War, to support their families and to honour their sacrifice. For over 100 years we have stood alongside the Armed Forces community, championing their rights and ensuring all who serve and sacrifice on behalf of the nation get the fair treatment and recognition they deserve. We have a rich history, solid foundations to build on, and much to be proud of from small interventions to life-changing and sometimes lifesaving support – work which continues today.

We've supported multiple generations during our first 104 years, and we stand ready to support the next generation when they need us.





Our vision and mission

OUR VISION

Bringing society together to recognise, remember, and support the Armed Forces community.

OUR MISSION

The Royal British Legion will support our Armed Forces community and ensure that their unique contribution is not forgotten.

At a local, regional, national, and international level, RBL has a strong convening role bringing people and communities together.

Our charitable objects define our role to remember and support the Armed Forces community. Our research identified the importance of recognising the service, contribution, and sacrifice of our Armed Forces community so we've also included recognition in our vision.

We are responding to the changing world and the evolving needs of the Armed Forces community. We want society to value its Armed Forces, and we want RBL to be part of that, ready for the future and be the best it can.



Nigel Hardisty

Nigel Hardisty grew up in the seaside town of Scarborough and had always wanted to join the Royal Navy. However, when he went to enlist, aged 15, the Navy was full. He was persuaded to join the Royal Marines instead – and never looked back. “It was the making of me,” he says. In his almost ten years in the Armed Forces, Nigel served in Northern Ireland during the riots in West Belfast and in the Falklands at the height of the conflict – where he experienced a narrow escape.

After marching towards Port Stanley, Nigel says his “knees were shot”, so he was put onto support ship RFA Sir Galahad to get a couple of days’ rest. But on 8th June, 1982, Sir Galahad was attacked. “There was no warning, just a huge bang as the ship was targeted by three Argentinian Skyhawks,” he recalls. “There was instant black smoke – you couldn’t see a thing, and I couldn’t breathe.”

Nigel managed to escape, but he later learned that 32 Welsh Guards, 11 soldiers and five civilian crew had died in the attack. After safely reaching shore, he was reunited with his unit who had made it to Port Stanley.

He discovered that during his absence, four of his section had been killed in an ambush. Nigel was already struggling with survivor’s guilt, and this made it far worse. “I was sent home and my family put on a massive homecoming event for me, but I hated it,” he reveals. “I felt guilty about coming back and leaving lads behind.”

Nigel left the Army in 1985 and worked as a decorator and a professional driver. Then, in September 2023, his 15-year marriage ended suddenly. “I was 64 and retired. I lost my home and my savings and was effectively made homeless,” he says. “You can’t rent a house or a flat without a job, and I had no income, so I had to register with the council for the first time ever. It was tough – I needed help.”

He reached out to the RBL for support, followed the charity’s advice and was moved further up the priority housing list thanks to the Armed Forces Covenant. “One day, the local authority rang and offered me a flat,” he says. “I moved in on my 65th birthday, in March last year.” Nigel adds: “I’m eternally grateful. I’ve been provided with new carpets, a cooker, a fridge-freezer and the RBL paid my first month’s rent. My case officer has kept in touch and been a rock for me. I never thought I would need the RBL, but I’m so glad they were there.”



“I never thought I would need the Royal British Legion, but I’m so glad they were there.”

Nigel Hardisty

Responding to changes

Over the course of its history, the RBL has evolved and adapted to respond to the needs of the Armed Forces community. In the past we’ve not always responded to people’s changing needs as quickly as we should. We’ve learned from this, and we’re committed to meeting the needs of the Armed Forces community, whatever their circumstances.

With uncertainty in terms of what the next decade will bring for the Armed Forces, we must plan better and be more agile so that we can anticipate the needs of our community. To do this we need to modernise our ways of working and maintain strong relationships with our partners so that together we can deliver the best we can for the Armed Forces community.

Our community is becoming more diverse and current trends suggest that more people will need our help earlier in life. We remain steadfast in our commitment to be there for the whole of the Armed Forces community, while recognising the need to tailor our services to meet the changing demographics.

Our strategy will respond to these changes by strengthening the connection between the Armed Forces community and wider society. We aim to foster understanding, provide meaningful support, and honour service and sacrifice. We will continue to make the most of the RBL’s unique ability to bring people together – working alongside our members, volunteers, employees, supporters, and partners to reinforce and grow the bonds between the Armed Forces community and society.





Strategic focus

The work of the RBL is broadly split between three pillars; Connect, Remember, and Support, and this is how we've structured the new strategy. We've created five strategic outcomes that will help us during the next 10 years to achieve our vision.



OUR PILLARS

CONNECT

Much of our work already revolves around the connections made across our communities and wider society. We will better harness the power of those connections to support our communities in the most effective way possible and promote our important role in bringing people together. These connections create the conditions for our remember and support strategic outcomes.

REMEMBER

While we have long established traditions when it comes to Remembrance, we are continuing to evolve our Remembrance activities so that we can bring society together in recognising the contribution of the Armed Forces community. It's important to us that people can choose how they remember.

SUPPORT

We know that Service life is changing, as it has done since we were established. We need to adapt our service provision so that we can continue to support people's needs.

OUR STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

- The Armed Forces community have more and better opportunities to connect and come together.
- Connections are created and sustained across communities to understand and support the Armed Forces community.
- The Armed Forces community feel that their service and sacrifice is valued and recognised.
- People acknowledge the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces community and participate in Remembrance.
- The Armed Forces community are receiving the services and support that they need.

For each of our five outcomes, we've developed long-term goals. By delivering these long-term goals we'll be able to achieve our strategic objectives and, ultimately, our vision and mission.

We've also identified a number of areas (Our Enablers) that will help us to deliver our strategic outcomes.

CONNECT

What we want to achieve

We have defined two strategic outcomes we want to achieve:

- The Armed Forces community have more and better opportunities to connect and come together.
- Connections are created and sustained across communities to understand and support the Armed Forces community.

We are focusing on two long-term goals:

1. Strengthening camaraderie

We will understand how the Armed Forces community seeks to connect and collaborate with one another, and we will support and strengthen these connections.

2. Building supportive communities

We will build supportive communities that have a positive impact for the wider Armed Forces community, including in places and with those who have found it hard to connect.

In the short-term we will create opportunities to empower and grow our membership to support our Armed Forces community. Our clubs and branches are integral to this, be it through physical meeting points or plans to support branches in the UK or overseas to provide opportunities for camaraderie.

We are committed to improving our connections with school age children. We need to begin this work with understanding how best to connect with children and young people either in groups or as individuals and then ensure that our engagement work with schools is both intentional and impactful.

We will also continue to enhance existing relationships and identify opportunities to build a network of supportive communities.



REMEMBER

What we want to achieve

There are two strategic outcomes we want to achieve:

- The Armed Forces community feel that their service and sacrifice is valued and recognised.
- People acknowledge the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces community and participate in Remembrance.

We are focusing on three long-term goals:

1. Celebrating our story

We will place the story of the poppy and the history of Royal British Legion at the heart of our content, events, and sites to ensure our Remembrance work is well understood and valued by society.

2. Evolving remembrance

We will build and adapt our Remembrance activities with a greater focus on the specific needs of the Armed Forces community.

3. Widening participation

We will increase the ways of participating in modern Remembrance to make it easier and more accessible to show respect and support.

We've started refreshing our Remembrance story, making sure we celebrate our history and the poppy so that we can help people to better recognise the Armed Forces community and understand why we remember. We are redefining what it means to participate in Remembrance which will help people to better understand the ways they can choose to get involved.





SUPPORT

What we want to achieve

There is one critical strategic outcome we want to achieve:

- The Armed Forces community are receiving the services and support that they need.

By introducing new technology, we will provide people with more choice and make it easier for them to access our services to get help. We'll also expand our recovery services to give more support and better quality support in more locations. Our specialists will help people sooner and improve the chances of a 'right first-time' compensation award by providing expert help with compensation applications.

We'll use our Armed Forces community data and insights to inform how we adapt and evolve our services, campaigns and marketing to meet the changing needs of our community.

We are focusing on four long-term goals:

1. Responding to changing needs

We will continue to deliver, improve, and evolve our services and partnerships.

2. Introducing earlier interventions

We will help more people at an earlier stage by introducing early intervention or preventative services and support.

3. Modernising our services

We will transform our service delivery and accessibility by understanding and embracing technology and digital.

4. Active campaigning

We will achieve tangible, positive change for the Armed Forces community by enabling their voices to be heard, challenging disadvantage, and inspiring better provision.

Sophie Pugh

For Sophie Pugh, the RBL was there for her and her family at their exact time of crisis, highlighting the charity's ability to respond quickly to an immediate need. Sophie's husband, Dan, is a sergeant in 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards.

"On Robertson Barracks, the housing is split – half the camp is oil-heated housing and half is electrically heated," says Sophie. "The oil houses are often much easier to run and much more energy efficient, so you always want one of those, but we got an electric house. It was a four-bed, so it was quite a big house to heat using electric heaters." Sophie became pregnant and as the couple went into their first full winter, they were faced with a poorly insulated house and rising bills caused by the post-pandemic energy crisis.

"The house just wouldn't heat up – the electric heaters weren't efficient enough. Dan and I worked full-time, and although between us we were on ok money, we were really struggling to pay our electricity bills. It was so expensive to try and keep warm."

Sophie says it felt like they were "fighting this losing battle". She was always cold and it was getting nearer her due date.

"It was really affecting us, mentally and physically." The couple were pushing to be moved to an oil-heated house, and when they contacted the Army Families Federation for help, it was suggested they get in touch with RBL. "We applied online for an Everyday Needs Grant [issues when someone needs urgent assistance to help with a temporary crisis] and, a few days later, someone from the RBL reached out to us for more information. They looked at our income versus our outgoings and realised that although we were earning a good wage, we were still struggling to make ends meet."

The application was successful, and within weeks the couple received a grant of £200 towards their electricity bill, which went directly to their energy supplier, getting them through the winter period before they moved.

In April 2025, two years after the grant, Sophie ran the London Marathon to raise funds for the RBL. "I wanted to give back," she says. "We live in a military community and see, daily, the struggles that personnel and their families face. There is this misconception that the RBL is purely for serving personnel – its help extends to their families too. This support is vital."



PHOTOGRAPHY: SIMON BUCK

"There is this misconception that the RBL is purely for serving personnel – its help extends to their families too. This support is vital."

Sophie Pugh

David Plant and Anthony Coughlan MBE

Veterans of the conflict in Afghanistan, David Plant and Anthony Coughlan have experienced physical and mental scars as a result of their military service. Both were severely injured on the same day in 2010, and their friendship has been tested since those fateful moments. Anthony signed up to the Queen's Lancashire Regiment in 2005, aged 18 and later became a Duke of Lancaster's Kingsman when the regiments amalgamated. David was 19 when he joined the Duke of Lancaster's in 2009.

Some soldiers can go their whole Army career without seeing active duty, but the Duke of Lancaster's is an infantry regiment specialising in dismounted close combat and often deployed on peacekeeping missions in complex terrains and climates. In 2010, Anthony and David found themselves fighting the Taliban in Helmand, Afghanistan, as part of 1st Battalion.

Both men experienced several near-misses and genuinely feared for their lives. "I remember rounds of ammunition whizzing past my ear and hitting the wall behind me," says Anthony. David added, "Looking back, I'm not sure how any of us got out of there alive – it was just so dangerous."

In July 2010, a terrible coincidence saw both men being flown back to a UK hospital in the same Army helicopter, having each stepped on IEDs (improvised explosive devices) just minutes apart.

Anthony lost both of his legs, several fingers and his left eye, and suffered a severe brain injury, while David also lost both of his legs. They ended up on the same ward together at the same time. Despite such a close friendship, it was during the recuperation period that the men lost touch.

The next ten years were difficult, and both men found the process of accessing the right support and medical treatment very challenging. During this period, both of them, at different points, considered taking their own lives. But while Anthony focused on his mental and physical wellbeing and threw himself into fundraising for veteran's charities, David found himself in a dark place in Spain. "I was ready to end it all," he admits. Instead, he contacted the Royal British Legion Spain District North's Murcia Branch, which helps administer and support the delivery of the RBL's welfare services in northern Spain.



"Looking back, I'm not sure how any of us got out of there alive – it was just so dangerous."

David Plant

David Plant and Anthony Coughlan MBE

"Within an hour of my call, Carl Thomas and Billie Graham-Thomas [Chairman and Branch Community Support Officer] were there. They scooped me up and took me to stay near them – without them, I wouldn't be here now."

Meanwhile, Anthony had learned to speak again and had worked hard to repair his injured brain. "I had to do things repetitively – just as you would physiotherapy – and, over time, the brain gradually relearns things," he explains. David returned to the UK and, once again, the RBL were able to help, securing a new home for him. Happily, the two men are now back in touch.

"On a visit to the RBL's Battle Back Centre years ago, I got to try out a handcycle for the first time and loved it, so they let me keep it," says Anthony. "I'd been looking for some kind of training method that didn't solely take place indoors, and it was perfect." David had been zipping around the mountains of Spain on a second-hand machine he'd bought online. When he came back to the UK, RBL helped pay for a new handcycle.

Both men admit to experiencing PTSD as a result of their injuries and agree that it will always be a part of who they are. David says, "There's too much stigma attached to mental-health conditions, including PTSD, and I'm always trying to help reduce that stigma. I really want people to understand how and why PTSD makes life so difficult, because that might help us to access the support and services we need." However traumatic the memories might be, shared experiences can be invaluable. "I find it comforting that David understands how I feel," says Anthony. "He has had the exact same experiences, so he knows precisely what I went through."

Today, Anthony and David are proud of what they have achieved. They both help to promote the work of the RBL by sharing their stories, and Anthony was made an MBE in 2023, for voluntary services to veterans.



"I really want people to understand how and why PTSD makes life so difficult, because that might help us to access the support and services we need."

Anthony Coughlan MBE

Our Enablers – creating the conditions for success

To achieve the ambitions laid out in our strategic outcomes, we must ensure the whole organisation is focused in the same direction and operating effectively and efficiently. There are several departments whose work is essential to enabling our strategic outcomes.

We've defined a number of areas to focus on under one long-term goal:

- Our people, assets and capabilities deliver every day, ensuring our services are compliant, maintained, improved and aligned with our strategic outcomes and goals.

People

We will have high performing, skilled and motivated people aligned to our vision, mission, and strategic outcomes.



Property

We will develop and implement plans for our property portfolio so that Haig House, the RBL Clubs, and Aylesford enable the delivery of our strategic outcomes.

Fundraising and Poppy Appeal

We will deliver the funds required to support the ambitions of our strategy.

Change and Transformation

We will strengthen our delivery, achieving agreed change priorities, bringing our people with us on change journeys.

Technology

We will use modern technology to deliver value and improve our experiences, with a focus on being agile, cost-effective, secure and resilient.

Marketing

We will develop our brand so that it works across the full breadth of Connect, Remember and Support.



Data

We will use high-quality and governed data to drive decision-making, enable activities, and provide insight for innovation.

Strength through partnerships and working together

Our work is made possible thanks to the tremendous efforts of our members, supporters, volunteers, and employees. To continue building on our success, we will need to work even better together so that the RBL can go from strength to strength and continue delivering support for life to those who need us.

As part of a wider network of Armed Forces charities, we work together with and fund partner organisations to deliver much needed support to beneficiaries. We want to continue our partnership working so that we can deliver even greater benefit to the Armed Forces community.

Clearly defining what we do is essential to align our efforts towards our shared goals/vision – but how we go about our work matters just as much as what we achieve.

We've developed a new set of values and behaviours that will guide how we work. They were shaped through input from multiple audiences who helped us to understand both our strengths and the areas where we can improve. These values will form the foundation for us to be at our best.



Our Values

<p>STAND TOGETHER</p> <p>We stand with an ever-evolving Armed Forces community, sharing a life-long commitment to support and comradeship. We share knowledge and build connections. Together with a national network of charities and partners, we ensure life during and after service is filled with purpose and community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborate, create meaningful connections and partnerships• Build trust, share knowledge and add value• Recognise and value each other, say thank you	<p>BE RESPECTFUL</p> <p>We stand with the Armed Forces community, valuing and respecting all experiences with empathy. We put people first, treating everyone with fairness and kindness, acting with integrity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actively listen and seek to understand• Value inclusion and demonstrate fairness• Show empathy and respect	<p>TAKE PRIDE</p> <p>We exist to make a positive difference to the Armed Forces community, remembering and honouring service and offering support. We are thoughtful and focus our passion in the right way, taking ownership to ensure every action counts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take pride in everything you do• Aim to make a positive difference• Own your actions and outcomes	<p>EMBRACE CHANGE</p> <p>We look ahead to better understand the needs of those we serve, leading with confidence, expertise, and relevance. Guided by evidence and committed to learning, we are responsive and adaptable, empowered to ensure what we do is meaningful and impactful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be curious and stay open-minded• Embrace change, be proactive and look ahead• Never stop learning, be evidence-led
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We are excited for our future. We will continue to use data and insight, learn from our successes, and adapt our ways of working and services to meet evolving needs, so that we can support more people and have an even greater impact on the Armed Forces community.



“The Legion is different to other charities. I don’t know how they do it, its heartwarming, you know someone’s always there if you need help.”

Anthony Coughlan MBE

