



THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION CENTENARY BRANCH GUIDANCE

The Centenary of The Royal British Legion will take place in 2021. This is a milestone which your branch may already be planning to celebrate, and the following guidance is provided to help you with planning activities and ideas.

We will be providing further materials as the anniversary date approaches, including a published book with snapshots of the Legion's work and people across 100 years.

We are very much aware that planning for the Centenary is taking place amongst great uncertainty. While we hope that conditions will have improved by next year, we should also prepare for restrictions which may remain in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

When planning your centenary activity, we recommend being as flexible as possible and making allowances for such possibilities as social distancing, shielding, or virtual alternatives.

This document includes guidance on:

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The Legion 100 Theme – *Celebrating our Past, Looking to Our Future*

Legion 100 activities will bring together nations, individuals, and communities to celebrate both the tremendous achievements of the Legion over the last 100 years and more importantly to demonstrate why we are just as essential in 2021 and beyond.

When planning for the Centenary, we should look for stories that illuminate our past heritage and bring into focus how they are shaping the Legion of today and tomorrow.

Keeping this theme in mind when planning your activity, will help you build new connections in your community as well as recognising the positive impact of those links you already have.

How Legion 100 helps the Charity

Branches and Members are asked to organise activities that celebrate everything the Legion stands for and highlight how the Legion and its Members support the Armed Forces community.

These activities can be grouped as:

- Community Engagement and Awareness Raising
- Fundraising
- Community Support
- Remembrance

When planning for the centenary, consider how your events and activities can help to fulfil these charitable outcomes.

It is important to remember that many of these outcomes require your branch to engage people who you may already be working with in your area. For ideas on who to engage and how, visit the [Who to Involve in your celebrations](#) section below.

When to Celebrate

The 100th anniversary of the Legion is Saturday, 15 May 2021, but the Centenary will be celebrated across the entire year.

Many Legion branches running today can trace their history back to this date whilst others will be celebrating their branch 100th anniversary at a point later in the year.

The right date to achieve the most impact in your community may be earlier or later in the year, so consider how best to engage and involve people when choosing when to celebrate Legion 100.

Ideas on how to Celebrate

With the experience of our 90th anniversary and some plans already underway for Legion 100, there are numerous examples to provide inspiration. Below are just some ideas and examples to consider when planning your activity.



Challenges and Sporting Events: Runs, walks, or sport competitions are great ways to get people involved while supporting the Legion and celebrating the outdoors. Indoor challenges could include stationary bicycles, exercises, or a tea dance marathon.



Creative Challenges: Legion branches have launched interesting initiatives in the past such as photography competitions, cards created by children and poetry. This is a great way to provide recognition to new audiences, help with remembrance and improve your community engagement.



Say It With Flowers: Councils could be asked to plant floral displays in the Legion colours, perhaps spelling a congratulatory message. Communities can also be encouraged to plant a floral display, with a winner selected by Legion judges.



Telling our Legion Story: Ask members to collect and share the materials and stories that chart the history of the charity. Through printed materials, letters, Legion records, photos, and personal recollections we can tell the human story of the Legion over the past century – while demonstrating our record of togetherness, Remembrance, and caring for the Armed Forces community will signpost our role in the future.



Concerts: Legion 90 featured Cathedral Concerts across the UK, but music can just as successfully be staged at the local level, perhaps with the assistance of a Legion Band, a Military Wives Choir, a military band, or a community music group.



Quilting Bee: Create a quilt, banner, or tapestry depicting the history of the Branch and its people over the past 100 years, alongside messages from the Legion of today. This could be easily taken up at a County or Regional level with Branches contributing an individual square to a template pattern.



Torch Relay: Organise a Torch of Remembrance Race around the local community, district, or County, involving our community partners, youth groups, and military personnel.

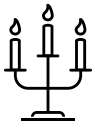


Dinner: An anniversary dinner for the Legion Centenary can range from a gala affair to a potluck special in the community hall – the important thing is that it brings people together.



Community Events: Consider hosting a fête or getting on board with other local events, air shows or county fairs. These events can give you access to new communities and neighbouring organisations that you could work with in the future.

If you are concerned that you might not be able to organise an event alone, consider working with others in your community on group activities like memorial or garden maintenance. These events can highlight the role of the Legion while refreshing community links.



Celebration Service: Many branches will choose to hold a celebration service in a church with religious elements included. You may want your service to contain a diversity of religious groups, so you could consider holding it in a community space to be more inclusive. Such services should focus upon gratitude to one another, to the Armed forces, and to the community.

You may even wish to organise an event like those taking place at a national level. For information on these events, view the [National activities](#) section.

For guidance on other activities, who to involve and how to launch them, have a look at the [Community Engagement guide for branches](#) and the [Events planning guide for branches](#) on Office 365.

Who to involve in your Celebrations

Whether through events or celebration services, the Centenary is an opportunity to give reward and recognition to those who have contributed much to the Legion as members, volunteers or community partners.

Such appreciations would recognise their hard work and outcomes gained for the charity, and Branches could choose from among the four main charitable activities undertaken by membership: Community Engagement and Awareness Raising, Fundraising, Community Support, and Remembrance.

Legion members selflessly contribute to the charity and are often well known in the community for their charitable works. Certificates and other forms of appreciation, suitably presented, would provide well-deserved recognition and inspire others in the community to get involved.

Your Community Partners

The Legion relies on a wide range of partners and stakeholders in the community who have long supported our work, and the Centenary is an opportunity to reward and recognise their contribution also.

Such partners range from the many private enterprises which support the Poppy Appeal to the youth groups who support Remembrance. They also include local authorities and service agencies, Armed Forces and Reserves, community associations, and local dignitaries, media, and influencers.

To ensure that our Centenary is not only about ourselves, consider how to include the groups who help us to succeed.

Good stories of such partnerships can also attract the attention of local press, raising the profile of your branch and demonstrate your value in the local community to those not already familiar with the impact of the Legion.

Your Outreach

The Centenary is a good opportunity to build a broader range of support within the community by reaching out to groups and individuals who may be less familiar to us.

Often, these people will have descended from Commonwealth Armed Forces who stood at Britain's side during two world wars. We share a Remembrance story with them, and the Legion honours the service and sacrifice of all UK and Commonwealth Forces, as well as other groups under British command such as the Polish free forces in World War Two.

This shared heritage provides a point of interest and contact, but more importantly these communities are a potential avenue for supporting the charity's work in the future. To learn more about these groups and ways to engage them, visit the [Community Engagement guide for branches](#) on Office 365.

National Activities

To mark the Centenary we intend to organise events at a National level, but given the current environment we will clearly need to remain flexible. We will be working with the Membership Council on how we can manage membership participation in these events.

The Annual Conference of The Royal British Legion

Saturday 15th May marks the 100th anniversary of the Legion and will coincide with the Annual Conference due to be held at the Queen Elizabeth II Centre, London. At the Annual Conference of 1921, the British Legion was voted into creation by conference delegates.

Buckingham Palace Garden Party

Should conditions allow, the Legion has made a request to Buckingham Palace for a dedicated Garden Party to mark our Centenary next year. While no decision has been made, even a favourable decision would not provide the numbers for all members to attend. However, this could inspire a similar garden party event of your own.

National Celebration Service

The Legion is planning to hold a Special Service to mark our Centenary from Westminster Abbey in September 2021, should conditions allow.

Again, however, numbers are limited and not all members would be able to attend. This could serve as inspiration for similar services at the Branch, County, or Regional level.

Legion formations may wish to organise their own service of celebration to give thanks to the community for its support over the years and to rededicate themselves to the Legion's charitable mission.

Keep in touch

With planning for the Centenary taking place during these uncertain times, our plans and activities may evolve alongside measures in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic. While we hope that conditions will have improved to enable our plans to go ahead, these may change.

To keep in touch with the latest updates on our national Centenary activity, to seek advice on your local plans or to share your ideas with other branches, join our [Legion 100 Yammer Group](#) or contact membershipcomms@britishlegion.org.uk.