



The Royal British Legion

The Image

To many the RBL is simply an organisation that sells cheap beer to members, collects for the Poppy Appeal and turns out on Remembrance Sunday. It is too often seen as rather an old man's charity with no real relevance to today. Nothing could be further from the truth and it will surprise many that the RBL is not only the largest welfare charity in the country but also very successfully campaigns on behalf of the Service Community.

The Poppy Appeal

The Poppy Appeal has been run since 1921 when The Legion was first formed after the First World War, the aim then, and now, being to help those serving and those who have served, together with their families, by providing welfare support.

The 1921 appeal raised £106,000 and last year the total collected was £31,000,000, however the RBL spends £1m a week on benevolence, so fund raising needs to be an all year round affair. Additional funds are found in a variety of ways including: local and national events, corporate funding, donations, investments, legacies and income.

Welfare

Anyone who has served 7 paid days in the British Armed Forces (Regular, Reserve, National or Wartime service) and their dependants qualify for help. Currently this means there are some 10.5m people eligible for RBL assistance.

RBL support is coordinated at local level by the County Field Office which has a small professional team responsible for assisting those in need. The office in Thame covers Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire where, in the last 12 months, we were able to assist nearly 1200 people at a cost of £380k. The range of assistance available includes:

- Benefit and Money Advice
- Grants in Aid: Priority debt and essential household bills
- Careers advice, training and resettlement Support
- Disability advice and assistance, including employment
- Residential accommodation, respite and short stay homes
- Holidays and Battlefield tours
- Equipment for the disabled, such as powered wheelchairs, stair lifts
- Pension and compensation advice

All aspects of a case are considered to ensure that we give all the help we can. Initially everyone is seen by a volunteer caseworker, who completes a case report, which includes a means test to confirm genuine need. The report is then passed to the professional welfare staff who assess how much help can be given.

Campaigning

The RBL also campaigns vigorously on behalf of the services. For example two years ago the "Honour the Covenant" Campaign led to direct talks with the Government, including one to one talks with the Prime Minister. As a result a number of improvements were made including the doubling of compensation to those most badly injured.

Membership

Anyone can join the Royal British Legion, either locally or at national level (many serving personnel join St James' Branch) and many of our fundraising and welfare volunteers are found from the membership.

Any questions please call the Thame Office: 01844 216961