

Charity Registration No. 100908

Company Registration No. NI607703 (Northern Ireland)

AA VETERANS SUPPORT
ANNUAL REPORT AND UNAUDITED FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

AA VETERANS SUPPORT

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Trustees	Mr A Allen Mr M Bingham Mr T Keenan Mr Alan Mearns
Charity number	100908
Company number	NI607703
Registered office	Unit C3 Edenderry Industrial Estate 326 Crumlin Road Belfast Co. Antrim Northern Ireland BT14 7EE
Independent examiner	FPM Accountants Limited 1 - 3 Arthur Street Belfast Co. Antrim Northern Ireland BT1 4GA

AA VETERANS SUPPORT

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AA VETERANS SUPPORT

TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

The trustees present their report and accounts for the year ended 30 June 2023.

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the accounts and comply with the charity's governing document, the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (as amended for accounting periods commencing from 1 January 2019)

OPENING STATEMENT FROM OUR CHAIRMAN – THOMAS KEENAN

I am delighted to present the Annual Report of the AA Veterans Support Trustees for the year ending 30 June 2023, highlighting our accomplishments and endeavours over the past twelve months.

Since our inception in June 2011, our journey has been marked by resilience and dedication, overcoming various challenges, notably the recent impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent cost-of-living crisis, which have affected numerous households.

Throughout the years, we have remained steadfast in our mission, delivering a diverse range of support services to thousands of veterans and their families throughout Northern Ireland. From respite breaks to counselling, from outdoor activities to camaraderie-building breakfast clubs and a dedicated film club, our support service offerings have provided vital assistance. None of this would have been achievable without the unwavering support of our volunteers, the generosity of the public, and the invaluable contributions from our funders, including the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and the National Lottery Awards for All.

Our monthly veterans' breakfast clubs have served as safe havens, fostering camaraderie, and providing essential information about available support services to countless veterans. Additionally, our Tri-Service Veterans Football team has not only trained diligently but has also engaged in matches against other teams, fostering a sense of community and pride.

A small team of our dedicated volunteers have tirelessly worked towards not only the establishing the Veterans Outdoor Activity Centre in Banbridge but further expanding its output, offering veterans and their families a wide array of outdoor activities to enjoy and bond over.

The increasing demand for respite breaks during the caravan season underscores the critical role these breaks play in the well-being and rejuvenation of our veterans and their families. As bookings fill up rapidly, it is evident that these breaks provide much-needed relief and support to individuals who have served our country with honour and dedication.

Our respite breaks offer a sanctuary from the daily challenges and stresses that veterans and their families may face. They provide an opportunity to unwind, recharge, and reconnect with loved ones in a peaceful and supportive environment. For many, these breaks serve as a lifeline, offering a temporary reprieve from the physical and emotional tolls of military service. Moreover, the respite breaks promote mental health and emotional resilience by providing individuals with the time and space to focus on self-care and reflection.

AA VETERANS SUPPORT

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)(INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

As we witness the increasing demand for respite breaks, we recognise the pressing need to expand our capacity to accommodate more individuals in need. We are actively exploring opportunities to broaden our offerings and expand the number of breaks we can provide each year.

Beyond these projects, we have continued to provide welfare assistance, counselling, and other forms of support, while actively participating in events and engagements across the province. Our outreach efforts, including veterans' information sessions, have aimed to raise awareness about the services we provide within the veteran community.

In conclusion, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to our staff, volunteers, trustees, and supporters whose dedication and commitment have propelled our mission forward. Their unwavering support has been instrumental in enabling us to deliver essential services to the service community throughout Northern Ireland.

I also extend my deepest appreciation to the public, especially during these challenging times, for their continued generosity and support. Your contributions enable us to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who serve or have served and their families.

Together, let us continue to make a positive impact.

Thomas Keenan

(AAVS Chairman)



AA VETERANS SUPPORT

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)(INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

Objectives and activities

The trustees of AA Veterans Support present their annual report and accounts for the year-end **30 June 2023**.

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's Memorandum and Articles of Association, the Companies Act 2006, the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP 2005)", issued in March 2005 and the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008).

OBJECTIVES

The Charity's objects ("Objects") are specifically restricted to the following: -

To promote the welfare and well-being of all serving and ex-service men and women from or living in Northern Ireland by all or any of the following means:

1. Provide, secure or promote the provision of counselling and other forms of therapeutic intervention, training and other assistance to find suitable employment, rehabilitation and resettlement services, advocacy, advice and guidance and general support services;
2. Provide respite and support services to the families and carers of such persons;
3. Seek to obtain medical treatment within Northern Ireland for all those who are injured.

AA VETERANS SUPPORT

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)(INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The public benefits that flow from the purpose of promoting the welfare and well-being of all service and ex-service men and women living in Northern Ireland are -

(1) Improved coping skills to deal with the adjustment to civilian life; reduced levels of stress and anxiety, improved self-care and self-help strategies and enhanced self-esteem and confidence leading to better mental, physical and emotional well-being; and enhanced employment prospects resulting in reduced levels of financial hardship.

(2) Reduced levels of stress and anxiety on the part of family members and increased knowledge and understanding of the range of support services available and how to access them.

(3) Diminished sense of isolation and heightened contact and engagement with family, friends and community. The beneficiaries are service and ex-service men and women living in Northern Ireland and their families and carers. These benefits can be evidenced by internal progress records kept by AA Veterans Support, feedback from beneficiaries, evaluations of the work and impact of AA Veterans Support and ongoing research into the problems arising from adjustment to civilian life. No harm or private benefit arises from these purposes.

- Accommodation/housing
- Advice/advocacy/information
- Counselling/support
- Disability
- Education/training
- General charitable purposes
- Human rights/equality
- Medical/health/sickness
- Relief of poverty
- Research/evaluation
- Volunteer development
- Welfare/benevolence

AA VETERANS SUPPORT

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)(INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

Achievements and performance

Counselling Services

In the past financial year, our counselling services for veterans have maintained a strong trajectory of support and engagement. We have seen a consistently high number of veterans seeking mental health assistance, which came majority as direct referrals but also through partner agencies. Throughout the reporting period, we have sustained our capacity to promptly respond to veterans' needs, ensuring timely access to mental health appointments. The majority of appointments were scheduled and conducted within provided within a 48-hour window from the initial point of contact.

This swift response time underscores our commitment to delivering timely and effective support to those in need.

Operating across Northern Ireland, our dedicated team of eight experienced counsellors has been instrumental in delivering compassionate care and assistance to our veteran community. Collectively, they have contributed a total of 344 hours of counselling services during the reporting period, exemplifying our steadfast dedication to meeting the mental health needs of our veterans.

As we reflect on our performance and service delivery, we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing accessible, responsive, and impactful mental health support to our veterans across Northern Ireland. Additionally, we extend our immense gratitude to the National Lottery Awards for All who provided funding to support the delivery of counselling.

Tackling Isolation through Camping Project

Thanks to the generous funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, our Tackling Isolation through Camping Project, now in its second year, has made significant strides in enhancing the well-being of veterans and their families throughout the reporting period.

This initiative empowered AAVS to procure a diverse array of camping equipment, facilitating immersive outdoor experiences for veterans and their families. Our recently established Veteran's Outdoor Activity Centre, situated just outside Banbridge, stands as a pioneering endeavour in Northern Ireland, offering a comprehensive range of outdoor activities tailored to the unique needs and interests of our veteran community.

From engaging in bushcraft activities to mastering archery, airsoft, outdoor games, fishing, and navigating the waters through kayaking and canoeing, our veteran participants have embraced a wealth of opportunities for camaraderie, skill-building, and rejuvenation.

Through the Tackling Isolation through Camping Project, we have not only provided recreational outlets but also fostered a sense of belonging and connection among veterans, thereby mitigating feelings of isolation and promoting holistic well-being.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of this project, we express gratitude to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund for their unwavering support and reaffirm our commitment to enriching the lives of veterans and their families through innovative and inclusive initiatives.

AA VETERANS SUPPORT

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)(INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

Veterans Breakfast Clubs and Christmas Lunch

Throughout the year, we delivered a series of Veterans Breakfast Clubs on a monthly basis, along with a Veterans Christmas Lunch event. These initiatives were designed to foster a sense of community and support among service personnel, veterans, and their families, helping to tackling loneliness and isolation.

Provided free of charge, these gatherings served as inclusive spaces where attendees could come together to share stories, build camaraderie, and forge lasting friendships. Beyond the enjoyment of a

hearty breakfast and lunch, these events served as invaluable platforms for disseminating information about available support services and resources tailored to the needs of veterans and their families.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to expanding and enhancing our outreach efforts, ensuring that every veteran and their family members feel valued, supported, and connected within our community.

We continue to have a positive working relationship with other veteran's charities and sector stakeholders who we have worked closely with over the past twelve -months and in some instances in direct partnership to deliver projects. We recognise these relationships are crucial to ensure we deliver the best people support for those who serve or have served and their families throughout Northern Ireland. We will endeavour to not only maintain but also grow these relationships with other service charities and statutory agencies, as they are of vital importance to our service delivery.

Veterans Football Team and IFA Ahead of the Game Project

We are pleased to present the progress of the Veterans Football Team and the IFA Ahead of the Game Project as part of our annual report, made possible through funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

In collaboration with the Irish Football Association, our Ahead of the Game Project continues to flourish. We are proud to report the establishment and success of our veteran's football team, which has shown remarkable growth since its inception. The team convenes regularly for training sessions and has actively participated in numerous spirited and competitive matches. Notably, they showcased their skills in two tournaments, one held in Northern Ireland and the other in England.

Furthermore, the project surpassed our initial expectations by delivering a greater number of football coaching qualifications. This achievement facilitated the increased participation of veterans in our project, with many of them extending their involvement to local clubs. We are delighted to witness the project's positive impact and look forward to its legacy through the qualifications delivered and the establishment of the veteran's football team.

AA VETERANS SUPPORT

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)(INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

Veterans Film Project

The Veterans Film Project successfully wrapped up its activities for the reporting year by offering three courses tailored for veterans – an additional course than the two originally planned. Moving forward, we are preparing to introduce a more in-depth video editing course in the following months to complement the three film projects. These initiatives equipped veterans with diverse skills in film production, spanning script writing, sound design, lighting techniques, videography, and more.

Furthermore, the conclusion of the Armed Forces Covenant Funded veterans film project does not mark the culmination of the overarching initiative. As previously mentioned, a comprehensive video course will kick off soon, adding to the project's legacy. With a wide range of essential filming equipment now at our disposal, coupled with advanced editing skills, veterans will soon be able to produce mini productions in the near future.

Welfare Assistance and Respite Breaks

Throughout the reporting period, our welfare and outreach team were heavily engaged in assisting veterans with a wide array of challenges. These included but were not limited to cost-of-living increase, housing concerns, financial benevolence, and assisting in the establishment of setting up a home.

Like pre-pandemic years, we witnessed substantial demand for our respite breaks. Our available dates filled up swiftly, necessitating the creation of a waiting list. The overwhelming demand underscores the necessity for expanded capacity, a matter currently under exploration. Our breaks provide much-needed relief and support to individuals who have served our country with honour and dedication.

Our respite breaks offer a sanctuary from the daily challenges and stresses that veterans and their families may face. They provide an opportunity to unwind, recharge, and reconnect with loved ones in a peaceful and supportive environment. For many, these breaks serve as a lifeline, offering a temporary reprieve from the physical and emotional tolls of military service. Moreover, the respite breaks promote mental health and emotional resilience by providing individuals with the time and space to focus on self-care and reflection.

Some of the main services we provided during this period were:

- Counselling
- Support groups
- Benefits advice & guidance (including form filling)
- War pension & AFCS support and referrals
- Housing advice, guidance, and signposting
- Welfare Grants
- Respite breaks
- Breakfast clubs
- A range of bespoke projects

AA VETERANS SUPPORT

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)(INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

Reserves Policy

The total funds of the charity for the year ended 30 June 2023 were £45,865 (2022: £84,379) which includes restricted funds of £3,244 (2022: £1,019) and therefore not available for general purpose of the charity.

The trustees have developed a reserves policy in order to protect against unforeseen circumstances. The policy states that AAVS will seek to build sufficient financial reserves to provide for twelve months in order that the charities ability to deliver services and develop the business in the manner planned can be achieved without any negative impact. At 30 June 2023, the charity's free reserves are £20,866 which represents 2.25 months of unrestricted expenditure on charitable activities.

The reserves policy is kept under review and amended accordingly to ensure current and future demand is met.

Risk Assessment

The trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks.

AA VETERANS SUPPORT

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)(INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN AND GOALS

Our priorities for 2020-2025 reflect the growing demand for our services and the need to campaign to ensure those who serve or have served and their families throughout Northern Ireland receive the best possible support. Over the course of the past 5 years, we have delivered and built upon many aspects of our 5-year strategic plan. Our centre has become a central hub for veterans in Northern Ireland – providing a one-stop shop, which provides many vital support services under the one roof. Further to our centre in Belfast, working in collaboration with a dynamic group of former service personnel, we have, through the support of the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, worked to establish a second hub providing support within the Londonderry and surrounding areas.

- Develop new and continue to deliver existing support services whilst evaluating areas of improvement and ongoing need.
- Evaluate the impact support services, are having and better inform any required improvements or changes.
- Continue to maintain and grow our 'Drop in & training Centre'.
- Continue to raise funds in order to support existing activities and growth plans to meet the need of our service users.
- Build new and grow existing relationships with other service providers to maximize the benefits for the service user – both within the statutory and voluntary sectors.
- Develop our volunteers, systems and operating methods to ensure that they effectively support AA Veterans Support's charitable activities, growth and development.
- Carry out research into the needs of our service users.
- Continue to develop and grow our counselling service alongside therapeutic support groups across Northern Ireland.
- Develop and grow our 'on the ground' presence and awareness of our services.

In the coming year we will be reviewing and where necessary updating our 5-year strategic plan and goals to ensure that as a organisation we continue to deliver the maximum output for those who serve or have served and their families across Northern Ireland.

AA VETERANS SUPPORT

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)(INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

Structure, governance and management

The charity is a company limited by guarantee. Every member of the Company undertakes to contribute to the assets of the Company, in the event of the same being wound up while it is a member, or within one year after it ceases to be a member, for payment of the debts and liabilities of the Company contracted before it ceases to be a member, and out of costs, charges and expenses of winding up, and for the adjustment of the rights of the contributories among themselves, such amount as may be required not exceeding £1.

The Trustees meet at least once a month and further as required.

AA Veterans Support is a member of the following bodies and are committed to best practice:

- The Confederation of Service Charities (COBSEO)
- The Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Forum
- Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA)
- Fundraising Regulator
- NIVSO Mental Health Forum

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Mr A Allen

Mr M Bingham

Mr V Hewitt

(Resigned 20 May 2023)

Mr T Keenan

Mr Alan Mearns

Trustees Responsibilities

The trustees are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year, which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company at the end of the financial year and of the surplus or deficit for that period. In preparing the financial statements, the directors are required to:

- ✓ select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- ✓ make judgments and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- ✓ prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose, with reasonable accuracy, at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company, and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention, and detection, of fraud and other irregularities.

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TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)(INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

DIRECTORS (TRUSTEES)

A Director must be aged eighteen years or older. No one may be appointed a Director if he or she would be disqualified from acting under the provisions of article 34. The number of Directors shall not be less than three. A Director may not appoint an alternate Director or anyone to act on his or her behalf at meetings of the Directors.

APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS (TRUSTEES)

- Not less than three-quarters of the Board of Directors shall be made up of serving or ex-service men or women.
- The current board of trustees for AAVS recognise the importance of having a diverse board, bringing a wealth of skills, experience, views, knowledge and approaches.
- New trustees are invited onto the Board at the annual general meeting and new board members receive induction training upon membership of the board.

AA VETERANS SUPPORT

TRUSTEES' REPORT (CONTINUED)(INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

In relation to the financial statements which comprise, the Balance Sheet and the related notes:

- The trustees approve these financial statements and confirm that they are responsible for them, including selecting the appropriate accounting policies, applying them consistently and making, on a reasonable and prudent basis, the judgments underlying them. They have been prepared on the going concern basis on the grounds that the charity will continue in operation.
- The trustees confirm that they have made available to FPM Accountants Limited, all the charity's accounting records and provided all the information necessary for the compilation of the financial statements.
- The trustees confirm that to the best of their knowledge and belief, the accounting records reflect all transactions of the charity for the year ended 30 June 2023.

The trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.



Mr T Keenan

Trustee

Dated: 22/3/2024