

Charity registration number 100908

Company registration number NI607703 (Northern Ireland)

**AA VETERANS SUPPORT**  
**ANNUAL REPORT AND UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

# AA VETERANS SUPPORT

## LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

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<b>Trustees</b>	Mr A Allen Mr M Bingham Mr T Keenan Mr Alan Mearns
<b>Charity number</b>	100908
<b>Company number</b>	NI607703
<b>Registered office</b>	Unit C3 Edenderry Industrial Estate 326 Crumlin Road Belfast Co Antrim Northern Ireland BT14 7EE
<b>Independent examiner</b>	AAB Group Accountants Limited 1-3 Arthur Street Belfast Co Antrim Northern Ireland BT1 4GA
<b>Bankers</b>	Ulster Bank 11-16 Donegal Square East Belfast Co Antrim BT1 5UB
<b>Solicitors</b>	O'Reilly Stewart Solicitors Courtside House 75-77 May Street Belfast BT1 3JL

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# AA VETERANS SUPPORT

## CONTENTS

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	<b>Page</b>
Trustees' report	1 - 9
Independent examiner's report	10 - 11
Statement of financial activities	12 - 13
Balance sheet	14
Notes to the financial statements	15 - 27

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# AA VETERANS SUPPORT

## TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

### *FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024*

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The trustees present their report and accounts for the year ended 30 June 2024

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**

It is my privilege to present the Annual Report of AA Veterans Support Trustees for the year ending 30 June 2024, reflecting on another year of dedication, growth, and unwavering support for our veteran community.

Since our foundation in 2011, our journey has been defined by resilience and commitment. Over the years, we have navigated many challenges, from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to the rising cost of living and, sadly, we have also experienced the loss of some of our valued and dedicated volunteers—individuals who gave their time, energy, and compassion to help others. Their contributions will never be forgotten, and we remain committed to honouring their legacy by continuing the work they so passionately supported.

This year, we have continued to offer a wide range of services, from respite breaks and outdoor activities to breakfast clubs, counselling, and more. These initiatives not only provide practical assistance but also help strengthen the sense of camaraderie that is so vital to the well-being of those who serve or have served and their families. None of this would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers, the generosity of the public, and the support of our funders, including the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, the National Lottery Awards for All, the Community Fund, and the Veterans Foundation.

Our counselling service remains one of the cornerstones of our support offering, providing hundreds of hours of counselling every year to veterans in need. We know that transitioning from military to civilian life, coping with service-related trauma, or managing personal challenges can be difficult, which is why we ensure that these services are easily accessible and available without delay. We pride ourselves on removing unnecessary barriers so that those who need help can receive it promptly and confidentially. This commitment to physical and mental well-being is at the heart of everything we do.

Our monthly veterans' breakfast clubs remain a vital part of our support network, offering a safe and welcoming space where veterans can come together, share experiences, and access essential information about the support available to them. These gatherings foster a strong sense of camaraderie, helping to combat isolation and ensuring that no veteran feels alone.

We are deeply grateful to Ledley Hall Boys and Girls Club and Jumna Street Linfield Supporters Club, whose unwavering support makes these events possible. Their generosity in opening their doors and assisting with the delivery of our breakfast mornings goes above and beyond, creating a warm and supportive environment for all who attend. Their commitment truly exemplifies the community spirit and dedication to integrating our armed forces into the wider community, strengthening the bonds between veterans and the society they have served. Meanwhile, our Tri-Service Veterans Football team has not only provided a space for fitness and teamwork but has also brought veterans together through the shared love of the game.

At our outdoor activity centre, we have been able to deliver life-enhancing programmes thanks to the generosity of Laurencetown Orange Hall, which has allowed us to use the site free of charge. These activities have given veterans and their families the opportunity to spend quality time together, benefiting from the peace and healing that nature provides. The positive impact of this initiative has been truly remarkable.

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## **AA VETERANS SUPPORT**

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

***FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024***

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The increasing demand for our respite breaks highlights just how crucial these opportunities are. Veterans and their families rely on these breaks as a chance to step away from daily pressures, reconnect with loved ones, and focus on their well-being. The speed at which bookings fill up is a testament to just how valued these opportunities are. Respite breaks are more than just a getaway—they are a vital tool in promoting mental health and emotional resilience. Recognising this growing demand, we are actively seeking ways to expand our capacity to ensure that more veterans can access this essential support.

Beyond these core initiatives, we have remained committed to providing welfare assistance, counselling, and other tailored support, while also engaging in outreach efforts across Northern Ireland. Through veterans' information sessions and community events, we have continued to raise awareness of the services available, ensuring that no veteran feels alone or unsupported.

As I reflect on the past year, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to our staff, volunteers, trustees, and supporters. Their dedication is the driving force behind everything we do. Their hard work and passion have allowed us to make a real difference in the lives of so many.

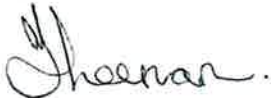
I also want to express my deep appreciation to the public. In difficult times, your generosity has not wavered. Your support enables us to continue providing essential services and making a meaningful impact in the lives of veterans and their families.

As we look ahead, our commitment remains strong. Together, we will continue to build on our successes, address the challenges that lie ahead, and ensure that those who serve or have served and their families receive the support, respect, and care they deserve.

**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 2024

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#### Objectives and activities

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.

#### 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 2024*

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### Achievements and performance

#### Expanding Our Impact Through Meaningful Projects.

Over the past year, AA Veterans Support has continued to grow and evolve, delivering an expanding range of projects and services aimed at improving the well-being of veterans and their families across Northern Ireland. Our commitment to **support, community integration, and skill development** remains unwavering, and we are proud to share some of the achievements from this reporting period.

#### Building on the Success of the Veterans Film Project

Following the success of the **Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust-funded Veterans Film Project**, we expanded our support for veterans interested in media production by launching a **dedicated video editing course**. This initiative built on the skills developed during our original film project, providing veterans with the opportunity to refine their expertise in **editing, storytelling, and production techniques**. With the necessary filming equipment now in place, we are confident this programme will further enable veterans to **continue producing high-quality content** while **developing transferable skills** for both personal and professional growth.

#### Tower to Tower Project – Learning from the Past

The Tower to Tower Project was a remarkable initiative that brought veterans and local children together in a cross-community educational programme exploring the sacrifices made during both World Wars.

The project culminated in a visit to the Somme battlefields, where participants could experience first hand the historical significance of the region and gain a greater appreciation for the courage and resilience of those who served. This initiative was a powerful example of education, remembrance, and community engagement, helping bridge the gap between past and present generations.

#### Honouring Service Through Sport

##### Ulster Branch of the Irish Guards Association Golf Day

We were deeply honoured to be chosen as the charity beneficiary for the annual Ulster Branch of the Irish Guards Association Golf Day. Not only did this event raise a significant amount of funds to support our work, but it also helped raise awareness of our services among a wider audience, many of whom veterans.

##### Frank Hewitt Memorial Trophy

In memory of our esteemed colleague and trustee Frank Hewitt, we were proud to host a memorial football tournament featuring several military and veterans' teams. This event was a fitting tribute to Frank's commitment to the veteran community and underscored the importance of sport in fostering well-being, teamwork, and camaraderie among those who have served.

## AA VETERANS SUPPORT

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

#### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

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##### *Veterans Camera Club – Creativity Through Photography*

The **Veterans Camera Club** has continued to grow, providing **both experienced and novice photographers** with the opportunity to explore their creativity through the **medium of photography**. This initiative has proven to be a **therapeutic and engaging activity**, allowing veterans to connect, **express themselves artistically**, and **develop new skills in a supportive environment**.

##### **Veterans Respite Garden – Growing a Sense of Purpose**

Supported by **Argyle Business Centre and the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust**, our **Veterans Respite Garden Project** has been an impactful initiative over the past year. Veterans involved in this initiative have spoken of a **renewed sense of purpose and belonging**, with one veteran sharing

*“Reaching out to AAVS about the garden project turned out to be one of the best decisions I have made in a long time. Since leaving the army years ago I have struggled to find a sense of purpose and missed the camaraderie. However, volunteering with this project changed that. It reignited my sense of purpose and belonging. Witnessing firsthand how my efforts are transforming into something meaningful that will assist others like myself has been incredibly rewarding*

With the project coming together, we are excited to **expand its reach**, offering even more veterans and their families the chance to **connect, learn new skills, and enjoy the outdoors**.

##### **Veterans Christmas Lunch – A Celebration of Camaraderie**

A **second successful Veterans Christmas Lunch** was held at the **Royal British Legion on Montgomery Road**, generously sponsored by the **Belfast City Council Veterans Champion and the Northern Ireland Veterans Support Office**. The event was a **joyous occasion**, bringing veterans together for a **Christmas lunch, entertainment, and the opportunity to reconnect**.

We were honoured to welcome the **Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner and serving members of the Armed Forces**, further strengthening **collaboration and support networks** within the veteran community.

##### **Engaging with BLESMA and Blind Veterans UK**

We were privileged to host **veterans from BLESMA and Blind Veterans UK** along with their families for a day at our **Veterans Outdoor Activity Centre**. Attendees took part in a variety of activities, including **fishing, static airsoft, bushcraft, archery, and more**. The event provided an invaluable opportunity for **friendships, banter, and camaraderie**, reinforcing the **power of community in veteran well-being**.

##### **Core Services and Continued Growth**

##### **Counselling Services – Delivering Essential Mental Health Support**

Our **counselling services** have remained a critical lifeline, offering **hundreds of hours of professional support** to veterans facing mental health challenges. Thanks to our **dedicated team of counsellors**, we were able to deliver **hundreds of hours of counselling** over the past year, ensuring that veterans received the **prompt and effective support they needed**.

## AA VETERANS SUPPORT

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

#### *FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024*

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We take **immense pride** in our ability to provide **swift access to mental health services**, with the **majority of appointments scheduled within 48 hours** of the initial request. This commitment to **timely intervention** ensures that veterans are **not left waiting for critical support**. We are incredibly grateful to **National Lottery Awards for All** and Community Fund for funding that has helped sustain this vital service.

#### **Tackling Isolation Through the Camping Project**

Now in its **second year**, our **Tackling Isolation Through Camping Project** supported at the outset by the **Armed Forces Covenant Fund**, has provided **transformative outdoor experiences** for veterans and their families. With access to **state-of-the-art camping equipment** and our **Veterans Outdoor Activity Centre near Banbridge**, participants have engaged in activities including **bushcraft, archery, airsoft, fishing, and kayaking**.

This initiative has not only provided **enjoyable recreational opportunities** but has also played a crucial role in **reducing isolation, fostering community connections, and promoting mental well-being**.

#### **Veterans Breakfast Clubs – Strengthening Bonds**

Our **monthly veterans' breakfast clubs** have continued to be a cornerstone of our outreach efforts, offering a **welcoming space** for veterans to **connect, share experiences, and access support**.

We are particularly **grateful to Ledley Hall Boys and Girls Club and Jumna Street Linfield Supporters Club**, whose **generosity and community spirit** have been instrumental in supporting these gatherings. Their commitment to **integration and inclusion** has helped ensure that veterans feel **welcomed and valued within the wider community**.

#### **Veterans Football Team**

Our **Veterans Football Team** has gone from strength to strength, participating in **training sessions, matches, and tournaments** both locally and in England. In collaboration with the **Irish Football Association's 'Ahead of the Game' initiative**, we have also helped **deliver coaching qualifications**, allowing veterans to **gain new skills and contribute to local football clubs**.

#### **Welfare Assistance and Respite Breaks – A Lifeline for Veterans**

Our **welfare and outreach team** has been instrumental in supporting veterans facing **financial hardship, housing challenges, and other critical issues**. In addition, **respite breaks** continue to be in **high demand**, with **every available date booked and a waiting list in place**. These breaks offer a **much-needed sanctuary**, providing veterans and their families with an opportunity to **rest, reconnect, and recharge** in a **peaceful and supportive environment**.

#### **Looking Ahead**

As we reflect on the past year, we remain **deeply committed** to our mission of supporting veterans and their families. With **new initiatives under development** and a **strong foundation of partnerships, funders, and community support**, we look forward to **expanding our reach and making an even greater impact in the years to come**.

# AA VETERANS SUPPORT

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

### FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

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**Together, we can make a difference.**

Some of the 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
- Outreach
- A range of bespoke projects

**The information detailed within the achievements and performance section is a snapshot detailing some of the activities, programmes and initiatives are involved or have directly delivered.**

#### FINANCIAL REVIEW

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

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

The restricted funds as at 30th June 2024 is £69,398 This is an increase of £21,154 from the previous year. The unrestricted funds as at 30th June 2024 is £82,601. This is a decrease of £5,020 from the previous year.

Income as at 30th June 2024 is £132,932 which is a decrease of £63,146 from the previous year. Expenditure as at 30th June 2024 is £116,798 which is a decrease of £27,794 from the previous year.

# AA VETERANS SUPPORT

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

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024**

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### **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 Act on (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 T Keenan

Mr Alan Mearns

### **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 2024**

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#### TRUSTEE 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.

In relation to the financial statements which comprise the statement of financial activities, 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 AAB Group 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 2024.

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



Mr T Keenan

Trustee

Dated: 