



## What you need to know about your Armed Forces' charities

A large number of charities exist to benefit the Armed Services, and those who serve, or who have served, in the services. Some are charities which provide assistance to those who are in financial need, or who have been wounded or injured whilst on active service. Other charities are concerned with the efficiency of the "Armed Forces".

The "Armed Forces" means the British Army, the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines and the Royal Air Force. It encompasses regular, auxiliary, territorial and volunteer units. Whilst it does not include youth organisations such as cadet corps, the support of a cadet corps which is attached to a regiment or unit may promote the efficiency of the armed forces if it encourages recruitment.

Promoting the efficiency of the armed forces of the Crown assists with the defence and security of the country and it is, therefore, a charitable purpose for the public benefit.

Until the Charities Act 2006, many charities established for "the efficiency of the armed forces" were excepted from the requirement to register with the Charity Commission and enjoyed a lighter-touch regulatory regime. Following the changes introduced by the 2006 Act many formerly excepted charities have been required to register with the Charity Commission and this has resulted in a closer examination of the objects and activities of those charities.

There are a vast array of charities which conduct activities that promote the efficiency of the armed forces. The money held within these charities might be known within military circles as "non-public" funds or they might take the form of regimental charities.

The following are examples of the types of aims that armed forces charities might be set up to achieve:

1. Helping members of the armed forces to perform their individual roles
2. Encouraging esprit de corps and morale boosting
3. Meeting needs of service personnel and their dependents



## Helping members of the armed forces to perform their individual roles

### 1. Increasing physical fitness of members of the services through the provision of sporting facilities, equipment and sporting competitions

There are numerous charities which promote the efficiency of the armed forces by providing sporting and leisure facilities including football, rugby football, rowing, tennis, squash, golf, sailing, horse riding and gliding and soaring. These facilities are often available to a membership consisting of serving and former serving personnel and other members of the public; the latter two categories might be there to help to finance the activity and provide camaraderie which, in turn, promotes esprit de corps; sometimes the expertise required to provide continuity of training in the sport is only to be found amongst the civilian members of the sport or activity. This is because members of the armed forces often only stay in an area for a fixed period following which they may be posted elsewhere or be abroad on active service.

### 2. Providing opportunities for service personnel to gain additional experience relevant to their jobs

Examples are aeroplane and parachuting clubs for RAF personnel. This differs from paragraph 1 insofar as the facilities are not available to the general public and may not be intended to promote esprit de corps.

### 3. Increasing technical knowledge of members of the armed forces through the provision of educational resources, competitions and prizes

A charity might educate serving personnel in the history and structure of the services or a regiment in a way which promotes military efficiency.

### 4. Providing and maintaining band instruments and equipment

A charitable fund may be available to support military bands. A charity may also own musical instruments which are played by members of a band.

### 5. Providing facilities for military training e.g. drill halls

This is different to paragraph 1 in that it supports serving personnel where physical training and other military duties form a part of their routine employment.



## Encouraging esprit de corps and morale boosting

### 1. Supporting messes (NCOs and Officers) and institutes (other ranks), including the provision of items of silver and plate etc

Messes are where officers congregate, eat together and enjoy social activities. They increase morale and therefore promote efficiency of the armed forces. Many regiments have a collection of silver and plate and this is a popular way of perpetuating the deeds of the regiments and thereby increasing morale. They are often put on display within a mess and exhibited at social events or lent to other regiments to put on display.

### 2. Researching the military history of a regiment or other unit, and publishing books about it

This is another popular means of perpetuating the deeds of regiments.

### 3. Promoting and strengthening bonds between allied units

### 4. Providing memorials to commemorate the fallen or victories

### 5. Maintaining chapels, e.g. regimental chapels in cathedrals, or churches

Other activities might include promoting religious and spiritual life by funding a padre attached to a serving unit and religious counselling.

### 6. Maintaining a museum or other collection for the preservation of artefacts connected with a military unit or service and supporting military and service museums generally

Army Ogilby Museum Trust is a registered charity which provides support and best practice for such museums.

In addition to military efficiency, military museums might also have objects for the advancement of education of the general public in the history and deeds of a particular unit or regiment.

### 7. Encouraging esprit de corps

This means to encourage loyalty of a member or former member to the unit to which he or she belongs and recognition of the honour of the unit. It extends to those who have left a unit. Activities include funding for social gatherings attended by serving personnel and former serving personnel.



## 8. Associations which support a unit and enable serving and former serving members to mix together

Association meetings are often the means by which members of the armed forces keep in touch with former serving members; typically they keep abreast of what former serving members are doing; they might also lay a wreath at funerals of former serving members; and they ascertain whether former serving members or their widows are in financial need. In practice Associations are often best placed to identify charitable needs and to act as a conduit for information between the trustees of regimental funds and former serving members.

## 9. Encouraging recruitment to the services

Regiments might hold exhibitions designed to encourage young people to enlist. See also Fly Navy Heritage Trust which is a charity whose purposes include the promotion of the efficiency of aviation in the Royal Navy. Giving grants to cadet corps which are linked to a regiment may encourage cadets to enlist when they are adults - the Charity Commission's view is that there is no evidence to show that this does encourage recruitment. Trustees should be satisfied that it will do so if they are going to give grants to support cadet corps. A grant given on the basis that it **might** do so is not sufficient.



## Meeting needs of service personnel and their dependents

1. Providing hospital care and other services for the recovery of wounded serving personnel, former serving personnel and their dependants
2. Relieving sickness or other needs of serving personnel, former serving personnel and their dependants

This includes benevolent funds for the relief of poverty, sickness and disability; providing almshouse accommodation and other housing support.

3. Resettlement or rehabilitation of former serving personnel into civilian life

This could include assisting former serving personnel to find employment plus the funding of courses of higher education and re-training and meeting other needs of serving personnel in the transition to civilian life.