

# Funding boost to LGBT charities supporting veterans

- Businesses and other employers across the UK have joined a new group to support the government on helping veterans get into employment
- First meeting of the Veteran Employers Group was chaired today (20 October) by the Minister for Armed Forces and Veterans.
- Small businesses praise the government's cost saving measures for employers who hire veterans.

LGBT charities who support military veterans are to receive a £45,000 cash boost from the government.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs is providing the money to charities who support individuals providing testimony to an independent review that is looking into the impact the pre-2000 ban on homosexuality in the military has had on veterans.

Funding has been provided to Fighting with Pride, the LGBT Foundation and Forward Assist to ensure veterans are able to comfortably share their experiences serving in the armed forces.

The funds will also provide direct support to veterans and their families who are giving a submission to the LGBT Veterans Independent Review, including signposting to mental health and wellbeing support for those who may struggle before, during and after providing testimony.

Minister for Armed Forces and Veterans James Heappey said:

We want to ensure that those giving evidence to the LGBT Veterans Independent Review are able to do so in a safe space. These grants will ensure that veterans who may require support when providing their testimony will be aided throughout the process.

We want the voices of veterans to be heard so we can adapt our services to help all those who have served. I encourage those who have yet to submit testimony to the review to share their stories.

Veterans providing their testimony will be supported while providing their submissions to the review, for example through transcription of verbal testimony and offering one-to-one emotional support during the process.

Chief Executive of Fighting with Pride Caroline Paige said:

Fighting With Pride is delighted to have been awarded grant funding from the Office for Veterans Affairs to deliver critical work in connecting LGBT Veterans to the LGBT Veterans Independent Review's

Call for Evidence.

This welcome support will enable FWP to further raise awareness of the importance of this once in a lifetime opportunity for LGBT veterans, and those dismissed because they were perceived to be LGBT, helping them to say what happened to them in the past, what the impact has been upon their whole lives and to create a better future for those who live with the consequences of the ban.

Hiren Patel, Operation Equality Project Coordinator for LGBT Foundation, said:

Through Operation Equality, we know LGBTQ+ veterans are still dealing with the fallout of the ban. It forced people to come out to family and friends and resulted in a loss of livelihood.

Thanks to funding from the LGBT Veterans review, we can create a people, LGBTQ+ centric service that helps veterans access in-person story-sharing and support from our team, ensuring the experiences of a diverse range of LGBTQ+ veterans inform the research.

We look forward to supporting the review and understanding the full extent of the distress caused by that ban.

To date, over 500 individuals have submitted their testimony to the independent review.

From these testimonies, the review team will be able to make evidence-based recommendations as to how the government can meet its commitment in the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan and ensure the service and experience of every LGBT veteran is understood and valued.

#### **Notes to editors**

Veterans interested in providing testimony to the review can find out more [here](#).

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## **New professional standards and stricter regulation to drive up social housing standards**

- Changes to the Social Housing Regulation Bill will strengthen the powers of the regulator

- All social landlords will be required to ensure that their staff meet competency standards
- Regulator to publish plan for regular inspections of largest landlords

Social housing tenants will benefit from better quality housing and have their complaints dealt with quicker under government measures to increase inspections and drive-up competency amongst staff.

Social housing providers will have to ensure that all their staff – from neighbourhood housing officers to senior management – have the right skills, experience and knowledge to deliver a high-quality service for residents. The new standard will be set out and enforced by the Regulator of Social Housing.

The Regulator will also have a legal duty to publish a plan on its commitment to regularly inspect the largest landlords, including details on how often these will happen.

The move comes as a result of amendments to the Social Housing Regulation Bill which completed Report Stage in the House of Lords yesterday. These changes will improve the regulation of social housing, ensuring landlords deliver better services and higher quality, safer homes for tenants.

Minister for Housing Andrew Stephenson MP said:

Social housing tenants deserve a high-quality service and to be treated with respect. This Bill marks a revolution in the way we regulate social housing, making sure landlords put things right when they go wrong.

For the first time there will be a professional standard that social landlords have to meet, along with increased inspections on the biggest providers. This is a vital step as we deliver on our mission to half the number of poor-quality rented homes by 2030 and level up the nation.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has also committed to consulting on a minimum energy efficiency standard in the social housing sector within six months of the Bill receiving Royal Assent.

Last month, £1.5 billion was made available for social housing providers and local authorities to [make energy efficiency upgrades](#). This could see bills for around 130,000 low-income households slashed by £400 to £700 a year.

The Social Housing Regulation Bill will strengthen the rights of tenants, empower them to make their voices heard, as well as giving the Regulator stronger powers to act if things go wrong.

Qualifications such as those offered by the Chartered Institute of Housing will be one way landlords can ensure their staff have the right skills and

knowledge to meet new standards.

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## Russia's horrendous attacks on civilians continue: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you Mr Chair. Since commencing its illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, the Russian military have demonstrated a complete disregard for international law, including international humanitarian law (IHL). President Putin and his Russian military leaders have consistently planned and authorised operations which clearly breach the principles and substantive protections of the law of armed conflict. Ukrainian towns and cities reduced to rubble and the horrendous number of civilian casualties are the shocking consequences of this reprehensible and cowardly approach.

Over the past week, as Putin's ill-conceived invasion continues to falter on the battlefield, Russia has resorted to employing Iranian-provided Shaed-136 UAVs (or "Kamikaze drones") against civilians, residential buildings and civilian infrastructure in Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities. They cause yet more unnecessary suffering and spread terror among the civilian population – another reprehensible breach of IHL.

I ask our Russian colleague directly, to explain to the participating States here: how they can justify such callous attacks? They are in clear breach of international humanitarian law. As a diplomat, to condone these attacks on civilians would be nothing short of disgraceful. To advocate and justify them as part of the so-called "Special Military Operation" infers complicity in the atrocities committed.

Mr Chair, these horrendous attacks on civilians are another terrible example of the increasingly desperate and vindictive decision making from Putin and his military leadership. We condemn Iran's decision to supply drones and training to Russia. Iran's supply of drones to Russia is inconsistent with UN Security Council resolution 2231.

Russia's indiscriminate attacks against Ukrainian cities and residential areas seek to distract from the enduring poor performance of the Russian military on the battlefield. In southern Ukraine, Russia faces significant challenges supporting its already strained forces in Kherson. Their acute logistical issues are exacerbated by the damage caused to the Kerch Bridge on 8 October. Now, as mobilised Russian reservists are deployed into Ukraine, it is also evident that their issued equipment is of a lower level than that of the already poorly equipped professional forces. Badly trained, badly equipped and badly led, demoralised professional soldiers are being reinforced by even more poorly trained and equipped amateurs.

Mr Chair, the announced “counter terrorist operation” in Belarus in response to contrived threats on its borders appears to be nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt at distraction and misdirection ordered by the Kremlin. Lukashenko said that 70,000 Belarusian troops would be involved in the “Grouping of Forces”, along with 10,000-15,000 Russians. However, Russia is unlikely to be able to generate combat ready formations of this size because of the number of forces it has committed in Ukraine. In truth, this Russian/Belarusian “Group of Forces” are unlikely to be combat capable and are probably an attempt to convince Ukraine to divert forces to guard their northern border – a tactic we also saw the Belarusian regime attempt earlier this year.

We also note the announcement on 16 October by the Belarusian Ministry of Defence which updated that “just under 9000 Russian troops” would be stationed in Belarus as part of the “regional grouping”. The apparent coincidence that the [Vienna Document](#) notification threshold of the arrival or concentration of troops in the zone of application is “at least 9000 troops” is also noted – as is Belarus’ recent but solid history of Vienna Document tokenism. In this regard, we would also remind our Belarusian colleagues that providing briefings to accredited military attaches in Minsk is not a substitute for their obligation to provide necessary transparency to this Forum for Security Cooperation.

Mr Chair, we call on the Belarusian regime to desist from supporting Russia’s attempts to stoke further instability in the region and to stop its active support of Russia’s illegal invasion, which itself constitutes a breach of international law. Since 24 February, it has been overwhelmingly clear to the world from which side of the Belarusian/Ukrainian border the threat is emanating – and it is not from Ukraine.

Mr Chair, as Putin’s miscalculations continue to mount, he and the Russian military leadership are resorting to new depths of depravity against the Ukrainian people. But they continue to underestimate the determination and courage of the Ukrainian military and civilians to defend their homeland from a barbaric invader. The escalation to the horrendous drone attacks this week only strengthens our resolve to support our brave and resolute Ukrainian friends. We remain steadfast – for however long it takes – to ensure that the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the independence of Ukraine is fully restored. Thank you.

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**[Teenager has sentence increased after killing one man and seriously wounding](#)**

# another in a revenge attack

## News story

A teenager who took part in a revenge attack which resulted in the death of one man and serious wounding of another has received an increased sentence after the case was referred to the Court of Appeal.



A teenager who took part in a revenge attack which resulted in the death of one man and serious wounding of another has received an increased sentence after the case was referred to the Court of Appeal.

Following an altercation in Bradford City Centre involving Sheryar Khan's brother, Khan now aged 17 returned with his brother and others armed with knives and machetes. Khan chased and fatally stabbed Kian Tordoff before chasing and stabbing Matthew Page, who survived the attack.

On 15 July 2022 Khan was sentenced to a minimum of 16 years' detention at Her Majesty's Pleasure for the murder of Kian Tordoff. Khan was also ordered to serve a concurrent sentence of 8 years' detention for wounding Matthew Page with intent. The sentencing took place at Bradford Crown Court.

Khan's sentence was then referred to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme.

On 19 October, the Court of Appeal found Khan's original sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to a minimum of 19 years' detention at His Majesty's Pleasure (less time spent on remand).

Speaking after the hearing, HM Attorney General Rt Hon Michael Ellis KC MP said:

"Today my thoughts are with the family of Kian Tordoff, who tragically lost his life during Sheryar Khan's senseless and brutal attack, and also with Michael Page, who was badly injured in the attack and has been left absolutely devastated by the loss of his best friend.

"I welcome the decision of the Court of Appeal to increase the sentence which better reflects the severity of Khan's atrocious crimes."

## Environment is yet another casualty of Russia's war: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you Mr Chair. Good morning from London. I would like to thank the Secretary General and the three panellists for their interventions. It is right that the OSCE continues to focus on this topic. Climate change remains an existential threat to our shared environment.

Mr Chair, as Mr Fedorenko, the Ukrainian Deputy Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources has so eloquently set out, the environment is yet another casualty of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. We have seen appalling environmental damage to Ukraine, such as degradation and pollution of land and water, which will take decades to remedy. Russia's reckless attacks on nuclear facilities risk a catastrophe that could cause continent-wide contamination.

Russia is weaponising energy to support its illegal war and we cannot let it succeed. Energy should never be used as a tool of political coercion. Many countries have now recognised Russia as an unreliable supplier and are limiting their consumption of Russian hydrocarbons which are helping to fund Putin's war machine. This is why the UK plans to phase out imports of Russian oil by the end of this year. Reducing our collective dependence on Putin's oil and gas has a practical as well as moral imperative.

Russian forces have destroyed city after city in Ukraine. Helping to rebuild the country and its natural environment will be one of the great tasks for our generation. The UK and our allies will continue to make substantial financial and economic support available to Ukraine to strengthen the resilience of its economy. The UK calls upon the international community to put the principles of environmental protection and sustainable, low carbon development at the heart of this reconstruction effort.

Mr Chair, the brutal attacks in Ukraine have shown the environmental damage that militaries can do. But even militaries at peace can have significant environmental impact. In the UK for example, defence accounts for 50% of central government emissions. In future, our armed forces will embrace the green energy transition, trialling new types of vehicles, fuels standards, and energy storage. Our defence ministry's [Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach report](#) sets out how we will do this.

Mr. Chair, I wish to conclude by highlighting again the importance of this topic. As we have seen in our own region, including recently in Central Asia, climate-related disruptions risk straining existing international security arrangements, creating new geostrategic flashpoints, and raising the

potential for further inter-state military competition and conflict.

Finally, we once again call on Russia to cease all hostilities and immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw all of its troops and military equipment from all of Ukraine. Wars not only damage the environment but they also divert attention and resources away from addressing existential climate challenges and break down the cooperation needed to address them.