



Introductory Brief

Before January 2000, when the ban on LGBT+ UK military service was finally lifted, LGBT+ personnel were shamefully dismissed or forced out of military service without forewarning and with no regard for employment, housing, financial or emotional support. They faced prison for a crime that had no place in civil law, medals were snatched from their chests, pensions and resettlement provisions were denied, they were fined, shamed, assaulted, and then 'discharged in disgrace'.

Despite the UK Armed Forces evolving into today's exemplar employers of LGBT+ personnel, nothing has been done to support those LGBT+ Veterans. The health and well-being impacts have not been researched though anecdotal evidence suggests many still endure consequential hardship and mental health struggles and remain isolated from the military family and support services.

Founded in January 2020 as a lived-experience military charity, Fighting with Pride (FWP) is leading a campaign to support the health and wellbeing of LGBT+ Veterans, service personnel and their families. In particular, FWP is supporting those most impacted by the ban on LGBT+ personnel and helping reconnect these Veterans with the military family and its support services

FWP developed early partnerships with NHS England, the Royal British Legion, SSAFA and Stonewall, and is working with many Armed Forces charities, organisations and NHS mental health trusts in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The charity is also working with Westminster on community reparations and the devolved Governments for national support, and is conducting research on the impacts of the ban, in partnership with Northumbria University. The research work has gained international interest and the charity has strong connections with associated organisations in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

FWPs Vision is that the United Kingdom will become the best place in the world to be an LGBT+ Veteran, and its mission is to be a beacon for LGBT+ Veterans, serving personnel and their families, supporting them to live their best lives. The charity's 4 key commitments are:

- **Policy Development.** Working with the Government to provide recognition and reparation for the LGBT+ Veterans community. There is an urgent need to further convey the true, human impact of the ban, using a combination of lived experience, emerging data and clear policy 'asks'. FWP has campaigned for a government enquiry and on 19th January the Cabinet Office finally announced an Independent Review, to investigate the impacts of the ban on LGBT+ veterans. FWP has formed an Independent Review Reference Group that includes leaders in key UK organisations that support LGBT+ Veterans or the LGBT+ community or are conducting research.

- **Capacity Building.** Working with organisations that have a duty to support LGBT+ Veterans, by raising awareness from a 'senior management through to the frontline carer' level, building understanding, creating respect, and facilitating an openly inclusive and welcoming environment. FWP is also developing a Pride In Veterans Standard, focused on early intervention. Seed funding for the Standard was provided by NHS England. AFCFT funding for the Veterans Places, Pathways and People programme has enabled FWP to recruit regional LGBT+ Veteran Community Workers (VCWs) who will help deliver PiVS regionally across the UK and work with regional and national organisations to build their LGBT+ welcome.
- **Direct Support and Building Community Confidence.** The LGBT+ Veterans community is isolated and lacks trust in organisations associated with the military that dismissed them. They don't identify as Veterans or LGBT+ when seeking support, due to their service experience, including rejection, harassment or discrimination, that endures even today. FWP is building that confidence directly, including through befriending projects, and is raising awareness of its existence, to provide help, signpost LGBT+ inclusive support services and raise awareness and trust in a service providers commitment to support. FWP's LGBT+ VCWs will enhance this awareness whilst also finding and supporting LGBT+ Veterans and building community confidence through regional and national means.
- **Commissioning and Supporting Research.** FWP's research programme, with the Veterans and Families Research northern Hub (VFRH) at Northumbria University, is supported by Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and NHS England grants. The research will identify impacts of the LGBT+ ban on community health and wellbeing and shape the best possible outcomes and pathways to enable recovery. It will also be used to capture the history of LGBT+ service in the UK's Armed Forces and help raise public awareness and interest. It has already gained international interest, particularly in the USA and Canada. The research has completed the Qualitative Phase and first look outcomes are due in June 2022 with a final report in April 2023. Although the research findings are important, the provision of essential support is needed now and FWP continues that work in parallel.
- **Independent Inquiry & Call for Evidence.** This is a moment for LGBT+ veterans affected by the ban to be recognised and to tell the Independent LGBT Veterans Review what happened. The Government accepts that our LGBT+ veterans met the challenges of military service. This Review will help find out what happened and what must be done.

We need LGBT+ veterans to step forward and tell us 'what happened to you and how it has affected your life? It's not just those who were 'Dismissed in Disgrace', or sent to prison for being LGBT+. The Review needs to hear from ALL veterans affected/involved/witnessed by the ban and also the families of those we have lost. The Review also wants to hear from those who survived the oppression of the ban and served beyond 2000.

We know that LGBT+ veterans left the Armed Forces in lots of different ways, some via prison, some through administrative process, some forced to retire, others because they felt they had no choice. No matter how you left, the Review needs to hear from you. All your accounts are invaluable. Your evidence can support the Independent Review to shape a better future for those affected by the ban, please step forward.

The evidence giving completes on 15th November. If you were affected or if you know somebody who may have been affected, tell them about the Independent Review and help us make sure that our LGBT+ veterans get the help and support they need, and their stories are told.

FWP has LGBT+ Veterans Community Workers across the UK. They can support you, so that everyone has the opportunity and means to provide their own lived-experience accounts as evidence.

- **Your Area Representative for the North East, Cumbria and Yorkshire is:**
Kate Husband
Kate.husband@fightingwithpride.org.uk
07704 271893

FWP Joint Chief Executive Officers:
Caroline Paige - caroline.paige@fightingwithpride.org.uk
Craig Jones MBE - craig.jones@fightingwithpride.org.uk



FIGHTING WITH PRIDE: The LGBT+ Military Charity
Registered Charity No. 1191863

Website: www.fightingwithpride.org.uk
Twitter: [@fightingwpride](https://twitter.com/fightingwpride) | Facebook: [@fightingwithpride](https://facebook.com/fightingwithpride)