



The partnership between Northumbria's Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research and Fighting with Pride is the first of its kind in the UK. (Shutterstock: 1506427451)

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STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TO REVOLUTIONISE SUPPORT FOR LGBT+ VETERANS

Northumbria University and Fighting With Pride - The LGBT+ Armed Forces Charity - have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with a shared mission of transforming support for LGBT+ Veterans.

Dedicated to championing the health and social wellbeing of LGBT+ Veterans, the partnership between [Northumbria's Northern Hub for Veterans](#)

[and Military Families Research](#) and Fighting with Pride (FWP) is the first of its kind in the UK.

The agreement marks the intention of the University and the charity to work collaboratively on research and consultancy projects which will influence national policy and service delivery of support for the LGBT+ Veteran community.

FWP supports the health and wellbeing of LGBT+ Veterans, service personnel, and their families, particularly those who were affected by the ban on the open service of LGBT+ personnel in the Armed Forces prior to the lifting of the ban on 12 January 2000.

The 'gay ban'

Before the ban was lifted, if found out, many LGBT+ military employees were subjected to interrogation without counsel, arrest, degrading medical examinations, court martial, imprisonment and dismissal in disgrace. Service Record Cards were marked in red pen 'Dismissed in Disgrace' or 'Services No Longer Required'.

Individuals were outed to family and friends and removed from the military without any consideration of duty of care. They were denied education, training or resettlement opportunities and were often turned away from Veterans' charities. Many also received letters forbidding them to wear their uniform on occasions of remembrance or to use their military ranks.

It is not known exactly how many military personnel ended their careers as a result of the 'gay ban', but it is understood that thousands were affected by this policy.

In the 21 years since the ban was lifted, the Armed Forces has been listed as a Stonewall Top 100 Employer: military colleagues march in uniform in Pride celebrations, they are supported at every level of command, are welcomed in their units and they are respected. In stark contrast, the Armed Forces Covenant has failed LGBT+ Veterans, for whom time has stood still.

The lives of many LGBT+ Veterans have never recovered, scarred by the consequences of blighted careers and living estranged from families. Many

experience housing issues and are impoverished by fractured careers and being denied pensions.

Fostering long-term, targeted support

Now, Northumbria University and FWP seek to raise awareness of a hidden history. This work will be closely supported by SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity as both FWP and Northumbria University have strong links with the 136-year old tri-service charity. The shared objective of the MoU is to develop a research strategy which serves to address the gaps in knowledge surrounding the support services LGBT+ Veterans need; whether that's health services, jobs or housing, for example.

Building on the work of the 'Map of Need' project being led by the Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research, based at Northumbria University, Fighting with Pride will be able to ascertain what type of support is needed and where across the country it is required.

The Map of Need project analyses data from across the NHS and charities within the Armed Forces charity sector, which has provided government and the wider Veterans' sector with a health and social care overview of the Veterans and military families community. Using this data, FWP can work with the Government and the wider Veterans' sector to improve existing services and create new ones.

[Dr Matt Kiernan](#) is an Associate Professor of Mental Health and Veteran Studies at Northumbria University and a former Lieutenant Commander in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service. He said: "With hindsight it is quite astonishing to consider that in the last years of the 20th century we were still prosecuting and dishonourably discharging members of the British Armed Forces for no other reason than who they chose to love, or who they chose to be.

"The work we are about to undertake is long overdue, as we must strive to understand the long-term emotional, psychological and financial impact the actions of the ban had on this hard to reach, hidden population of Veterans."

Caroline Paige and Craig Jones MBE, Joint Chief Executives of Fighting with Pride said: "The treatment of our LGBT+ Veterans has been a national

disgrace for which there has been no remedy, or reparations. Many of these Veterans were left unsupported and fell on hard times. Disassociated from the military they became isolated and often discarded by family. For many individuals, the circumstances, methods, and consequences of dismissal precipitated debilitating mental health issues.

“As the UK’s only LGBT+ Veterans charity, FWP is working with the government, NHS and charitable organisations, to bring the LGBT+ Veterans community into the protection of the Armed Forces Covenant and welcome them back to the military family.”

Lieutenant-General Sir Andrew Richard Gregory, KBE, CB, DL, Patron of Fighting with Pride and Chief Executive of SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity said: “A key milestone occurred on 12 January 2000, when the ban on homosexuals being military personnel was removed. We still do not know how many this impacted, but what we do know that many have suffered hugely over the years as a result of their experiences.

“The partnership between Fighting with Pride and Northumbria University is an important step towards addressing the wrongs of the past and will be closely supported by SSAFA and the work we do within the Armed Forces Community.”

Kate Davies CBE - Director of Health and Justice, Armed Forces and Sexual Assault Services Commissioning NHS England and NHS Improvement, said: “The partnership between Fighting with Pride and Northumbria University marks a significant milestone in making sure that our LGBT+ Armed Forces Veterans community can get dedicated support. We are proud to be working closely with and supporting the work Fighting with Pride are doing with our LGBT+ serving personnel, Veterans, and their families.”

- Ends -

Notes to editors:

- Smith and Grady Vs the United Kingdom, the case that lifted the ‘gay ban’ was heard in the European Court of Human Rights in September 1999. The court ruled that the ban could not be justified and was an infringement of

Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights (Right to a Private Life). The ban was lifted on 12 January 2000 in a speech in the House of Commons during which then Secretary of State for Defence noted that "there are many in the Armed Forces who would have preferred that the ban remained in place, but the law is the law and we cannot pick and choose".

- The ban was targeted in its concept against gay men however in the military context the word 'homosexual' extended to all LGBT+ personnel who were treated equally harshly. The ban on the open service of trans personnel was lifted slightly earlier in January 1999.
- If found out, many LGBT+ service personnel were subjected to interrogation without counsel, arrest, degrading medical examinations, court martial, imprisonment (commonly between 28 days and 6 months) and dismissal in disgrace. Service Record Cards were marked in red pen 'Dismissed in Disgrace' or 'Services No Longer Required'. Individuals were outed to family and friends and removed from the military without any consideration of duty of care. They were denied education, training or resettlement opportunities and many were turned away from veterans' charities. Many received letters forbidding them to wear their uniform on occasions of remembrance or to use their military ranks.
- Of the thousands affected by this policy, just 157 received compensation, which the Treasury Solicitors wrangled over for a further nine years after the ban was lifted. Legal bills and impoverishment forced hundreds to give up or their cases or accept derisory sums. Hundreds more were dismissed on technicalities and many had no idea that they could apply.
- It is not known how many service personnel ended their careers as a result of the 'gay ban' and records held by the MoD are known to be incomplete and not specific. Whilst some personnel were dismissed for the military criminal offence of 'homosexuality', thousands more were convicted of less specific crimes (conduct prejudicial) or they were administratively discharged, forced from service or elected to resign due to the hostile workplace environment. Thousands of service personnel were affected by this policy.
- On 12 January 2020, Fighting With Pride (FWP) was launched as a charity at an event in the Palace of Westminster. FWP is the first organisation to reach back to this lost legion of Veterans, seeking redress, reparations and support for those who sought the privilege of service but were so harshly treated.

FWP is working closely with the Government to agree reparations for LGBT+ Veterans.

About Northumbria University

Northumbria University, Newcastle is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence.

Northumbria is one of the largest universities in the UK with more than 30,000 students from over 130 countries

About Fighting With Pride - The LGBT+ Armed Forces Charity

Fighting With Pride (FWP) is the UK's military LGBT+ charity* and supports the health and wellbeing of LGBT+ Veterans, service personnel and their families. FWP's lived-experience team spans 40 continuous years of LGBT+ Armed Forces community leadership and the charity is particularly concerned with the welfare of Veterans affected by the 'gay ban', which ended on 12th January 2000. FWP is working with the Government, Veterans organisations and the NHS to welcome LGBT+ Veterans back to the protections of the military family and the Armed Forces Covenant.

*Charity (1191863) registered in England and Wales and in application in Scotland.

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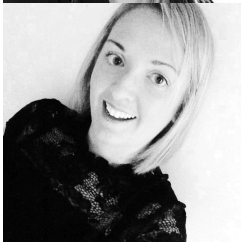


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