

Veterans Hearing Fund Eligibility Application



Eligibility

The Veterans Hearing Fund (VHF) is managed by The Royal British Legion (the Legion). It endeavours to meet the wellbeing needs of veterans who acquired hearing loss or impairment during their Service in the UK Armed Forces through the funding of hardware or therapies not typically available through statutory sources (for example: the NHS). Please note that the VHF is unable to consider funding for hearing aids, hardware or therapies where payment has already been made.

The purpose of the *eligibility application* is to ascertain whether your hearing loss was acquired during Service. Applicants will need to submit a completed eligibility application form with a copy of their Service audiometry records, which in most cases will allow the Legion to determine whether hearing loss was acquired during Service. To request a copy of your Service audiometry records, you can submit a Subject Access Request to the relevant Service Records Office. The Legion's website provides information on how to request Service records; guidance is also available by calling our Contact Centre on 0808 802 8080. Where audiogram data is not available, a provisional approval of eligibility will be given. Your audiologist will be asked to consider whether they feel that your hearing loss was acquired during Service. If the applicant is in receipt of a War Pension or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Award, and this was awarded due to hearing loss, then they can submit a copy of their documentation confirming this in lieu of Service medical records. This is also the case if an applicant applied for a war pension, however was refused, yet has documentation that hearing loss was accepted as being caused by their service. If an applicant was previously provided hearing aids by the MOD then documented evidence of this is also enough to approve Eligibility.

Next Steps

Please complete the eligibility application and return with a copy of your Service audiometry records to:

**Veterans Medical Funds
The Royal British Legion
199 Borough High Street
London SE1 1AA**

Applications received by the Legion will be acknowledged within five working days.

Once we have received your completed eligibility application form and Service audiometry records you will receive a decision on eligibility within ten working days. If your eligibility application is approved or provisionally approved, you will be issued the second stage application form which must be completed and submitted by your audiologist. Please note that an invitation to stage two is not a guarantee that your application for financial assistance will be approved.

Veterans Hearing Fund – Eligibility Application

For further information on the Veterans Hearing Fund, please visit the Legion's website (www.britishlegion.org.uk), call 0808 802 8080 or email medicalfunds@britishlegion.org.uk.

PERSONAL DETAILS			
Full Name			
Date of Birth*			
NHS Number		Telephone	
Email Address			
Postal Address			
	Postcode		
Current Occupation			
MILITARY SERVICE DETAILS			
Service Number			
Division/Regiment(s)			
Enlistment Date		Discharge Date	
Are you in receipt of a War Disablement or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Payment?	Yes No	If Yes, for what was it awarded?	
MEDICAL INFORMATION			
Do you wear hearing aids / hardware now?	Yes No	If Yes, how were these funded?	NHS Private MOD
Name and Address of Dispenser / NHS			
	Postcode		
Date of Last Appointment			
VETERAN'S DECLARATION			
<p>"I declare that the information I have given is correct to the best of my knowledge. I consent to the details provided being used by TRBL on my behalf to request my Service history and medical records from appropriate agencies (eg, MOD). I consent to the full medical records being disclosed to TRBL for the purpose of assessing my eligibility to the Veterans Medical Fund."</p>			
Signature			Date
			

* With the exception of age, which can be clinically relevant for some cases, none of the information in the 'Personal' or 'Military Service' Details sections will be shared with the VHF Advisory Panel.

The Royal British Legion's Veterans Hearing Fund

HM Treasury provided TRBL with £10million in 2015 to create the Veterans Hearing Fund (VHF). The grant, using fines associated with the LIBOR rate fixing scandal, was due in no small part to our '[Lost Voices](#)' report. Lost Voices highlighted the very real impact of Service on hearing health; one of its findings was that working age veterans are **3.5 times more likely** to suffer from hearing loss than the general population. The report called on Government to make support available to those affected.

After much consultation with the MOD, NHS England and the Devolved Administrations, and a swathe of expert clinicians and academics, VHF launched just over one year ago. In a very short period of time, we have already received 400 applications for support. We know that's only the tip of the iceberg – it estimated that more than 300,000 veterans of HM Armed Forces suffer with hearing impairment related to their Service. (See below for information on eligibility and application process.)

VHF typically provides grants to purchase:

- high specification hearing aids, including those with tinnitus support
- peripheral devices such as Bluetooth streamers or telephones
- therapies and classes such as cognitive behavioural therapy for those who suffer from tinnitus, or lip-reading classes for those who find that technology isn't enough

The purpose of VHF is to maximise wellbeing – in effect, we want to reduce disadvantage to those who Served. Feedback from successful applicants includes, 'I can hear birdsong for the first time in years' and 'Now I can go swimming with my daughter and still be able to hear her'. Hearing loss and tinnitus can be a significant barrier to living a comfortable life, and VHF can help overcome it.

VHF is eligible to veterans or reservists of HM Armed Forces who acquired hearing impairment during Service. This is usually evidenced by reviewing in-Service medical records or through official correspondence attributing hearing impairment to Service. There is not, however, a firm requirement that hearing impairment be formally recognised by Government as *attributable* to Service. The programme was built to be as accessible to as many people as possible. It is usually sufficient to demonstrate that there was a deterioration in hearing health while Serving.

Applications to VHF are two-stage. The **eligibility stage** is completed by the applicant. The Medical Grants Officers assess the available evidence (typically medical records received through a Subject Access Request [SAR]) to determine whether hearing impairment was acquired during Service.

Evidence: *Unless* the applicant has official correspondence attributing their hearing impairment to Service, applicants must secure their in-Service audiology records to TRBL with their VHF eligibility application. SARs must be submitted by the applicant to the appropriate MOD disclosure cell. MOD's current processing time for medical records is up to 40 calendar days. If the applicant *does* have correspondence attributing hearing impairment to Service, a copy of that letter should be sent to TRBL with their VHF eligibility application.

The **second stage** application is a much more comprehensive assessment which must be completed by an audiologist and submitted by them to TRBL's Medical Grants Officers. The application will include recommendations for appropriate equipment or services. Note that applicants should under no circumstances purchase equipment themselves, as we are unable to reimburse the cost.

Unfortunately, TRBL does not have an equivalent programme for spouses or dependants, and is unable to consider support for hearing impairment where that impairment is *not* related to Service.

VHF is available to veterans and reservists of HM Armed Forces regardless of where they live. For more information, including SAR and VHF application forms, please visit www.rbl.org.uk/hearing.