Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League

'helping Commonwealth veterans who fought for our freedom'

Background Information on the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League

Background

The Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League (then called the British Empire Services League) was founded in1921 by Earl Haig and Field Marshal Jan Smuts at the Empire Conference in Cape Town, South Africa. The First World War left many service personnel disabled or dependent. To try and ensure that no Commonwealth veteran was left without help, the British Empire Services League was created, initially provided pension advice as well as assistance with disability claims, migration to other countries, tracing lost relatives and money transfers by mail. The key contribution of 5 million Commonwealth volunteers to fight in the Second World War alongside British troops is a legacy which lasts to today supporting the ongoing requirements of Commonwealth veterans who served the Crown prior to their country's independence. The League's name has changed twice during its history and became the Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League in 2003.

Purpose and Current Situation

The purpose of the League is to seek to ensure that no man or woman resident overseas who at some time served the Crown should suffer undue hardship. The League currently delivers welfare support to some 2,200 pre-independence veterans and widows across the Commonwealth who are resident overseas and living in poverty. Beneficiaries are concentrated in Asia (Indian sub-continent), Africa and the Caribbean. Up to 2015, funding of welfare grants was financed by the League supported by some of the major UK Service charities including the Royal British Legion and the Army Benevolent Fund, with no government support. In 2015, LIBOR funding from the government enabled a substantial increase in individual welfare grants to beneficiaries.

Since 2019, UK aid funding from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has allowed the League together with our supporters from the major UK service charities to provide food grants to our beneficiaries equating to two nutritious meals a day. The food grants are disbursed to beneficiaries by our network of Member Organisations (Tier 2 partners) based in each country. The life changing increase in value of the food grants has succeeded in lifting out of absolute poverty some 7,600 veterans and widows cumulatively since 2019 and sustained them over the period of the Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent inflationary cost of living crisis over the past 5 years. All beneficiaries are living well beyond the life expectancy of their relevant countries.

Future

The current UK aid funding agreement with FCDO is due to finish in March 2027, however a further 2-year extension for the programme has been agreed until March 2029, which with the ongoing support of the major UK service charities, enables the League to maintain grants to the beneficiaries at current levels. It is anticipated that support will be required for our beneficiaries until around 2035. The ambition is to secure further funding beyond 2029 to support the beneficiaries to the mid-2030's.

Our Values

- **Service -** We support and serve. We provide a positive and understanding interface to all the people who encounter us. We are accountable, transparent and act with integrity.
- **Collaboration** - We value working together and with partners to achieve shared goals. Through strong communication and support, we build trust with each other.
- **Dignity and Respect** – We treat people with dignity, respect and honesty regardless of their culture, religion, age, race, sexual orientation or disability. We accept and respect people's individuality and take time to listen to people; think about what needs to be known about the beneficiary to provide what is needed. We undertake to protect and respect people's confidential personal information.
- **Excellence** - We strive to be the best we can. We are effective and efficient.
- **Learning and Reflection** - We are open to new ideas and approaches, challenge each other constructively and are willing to learn.
- **Valuing Our People** - We support, encourage and provide opportunities for all our people - ensuring we recognise and value everyone's contribution.

Organisation & Governance

