Defence Minister visits disabled veterans' charity to discuss Armed Forces Covenant

Wednesday 1 February, 2017

The Poppy Factory's new CEO, Deirdre Mills, together with 27 disabled veterans welcomed Minister of State for Defence, Earl Howe, to their headquarters in Richmond today.

The Poppy Factory is the country's leading employability charity for disabled veterans and provides a free employability service across England and Wales, supporting those with a medical condition or impairment back into rewarding and sustainable work. The factory also directly employs 27 disabled veterans in Richmond to produce poppies and wreaths for the Royal Family and The Royal British Legion.

Having helped almost 700 disabled individuals back into work since 2010, the charity won the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Silver Award last year for demonstrating great support to the Armed Forces community. One of Deirdre's' key goals this year is to go for gold.

As part of the Armed Forces Covenant, the annual Defence Employer Recognition Scheme encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same – and The Poppy Factory is certainly doing that.

Defence Minister Earl Howe said:

"From helping veterans across the country overcome adversity and get back into work, to empowering those who have inspired me here in Richmond today to contribute to such an honourable cause, the magnificent work of the Poppy Factory is a credit to the Armed Forces Covenant and I'm thrilled to see Deirdre is driving for even more success."

Deirdre enjoyed a successful career in the British Army before getting involved in charity work. She said:

"There is a growing need to support our wounded, injured and sick veterans and registrations for our service are increasing substantially. Our support is really making a difference, whether it be providing career advice or meeting the more complex needs of some of the hardest-to-help individuals in society. There is also a growing number of disabled veterans who are being referred to us by other organisations; this is both testament to the quality of our work and indicative of the growing number of military charities that are now working together to produce the best results.

"We are working hard to accommodate and champion the needs of disabled people and a Gold Award will really help us demonstrate this to our donors and the public - we need to secure over £2m in sustainable funding each year to provide our life-changing service."

Earl Howe spoke with several veterans on his visit, including Gregg Howell, who served in the British Army before being medically discharged in 1988. Gregg said, "*I was in a dark place, living on the streets and battling PTSD. Now I have a job, a purpose, and I am training to help others who might find themselves in the same situation. I am forever grateful to The Poppy Factory for helping me get back on my feet again."*

Media:









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