

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant



Annual Report 2022



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Cllr John Fox



2022 has seen a lot of excellent action in Peterborough especially around work with Cross Keys Homes who have become very involved in supporting the Armed Forces Community through the Covenant.

It has also been very pleasing to witness Parish Councils signing the Armed Forces Covenant and supporting the communities that live and work alongside them.

It would be remiss not to mention the sad passing of HRH Queen Elizabeth II who

played such an important part within the Armed Forces Community and how proud they must have made the nation with their professional and dignified ceremonial support.

Cllr John Fox
Armed Forces Champion
Peterborough City Council

Cllr Mike Davey



It has been another productive year as we work in partnership to deliver the Covenant actions. I am delighted to see local communities continue to support our armed forces personnel and their families across the County, particularly at a time when the world is a far less safe place.

On a parochial level I am heartened by the increased involvement of local authorities, be it at parish or district level. I am delighted by the expansion of the network of breakfast clubs, which does far more for our veterans than offer an endless supply of egg banjo's.

And finally, some thanks. To Debbie Kaye for all her work in Cambridge prior to her retirement and finally to Tommy for keeping the show on the road over the last twelve months.

Cllr Mike Davey
Cambridgeshire Armed Forces Covenant Board Chair
Cambridge City Council

Cllr Sebastian Kindersley



As the shadow of war again darkens Europe it is a reminder that for our military communities and in particular for our veterans, recollections of conflict can resurface in their lives long after the world has moved on.

The Military Covenant seeks to ensure that veterans; their families and communities as well as serving forces are always in our minds. In Cambridgeshire we are working hard to ensure that there is no disadvantage for anyone caused by service; and I am proud that Cambridgeshire continues to hold a Gold Employer Recognition Scheme Award from the Ministry of Defence.

Cambridgeshire has also embraced the new Armed Forces Covenant Duty which seeks to build on the excellent work already done by the Military Covenant and I look forward to us building on that over the next year.

Cllr Sebastian Kindersley
Armed Forces Champion
Cambridgeshire County Council



An Enduring Covenant between the People of the United Kingdom, His Majesty's Government and all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown And their Families

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm.

Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces.

In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Royal Naval Service, the Army, and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most, such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.

This year, UK Armed Forces provided support to Ukrainian soldiers in the UK after the Russian invasion of their land in February as part of Operation Interflex, the UK mission to train Ukrainian forces.

Celebrations for The Queen's Platinum Jubilee ran between February and June and the UK Armed Forces provided ceremonial support with Parades, Gun Salutes, and Flypasts on numerous occasions with expected pomp, swagger and pride.

Later in the year, the nation was delivered the very sad news of the passing of The Queen and with unwavering dignity and professionalism the UK Armed Forces provided professional support and ceremonial duties throughout.

Changes to the Covenant coming into force in November this year has meant that specified bodies within Health, Education and Housing must demonstrate due regard to the Armed Forces Community in certain legal functions.





Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Overview & Project Update

Both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant Boards have continued to deliver support to the Armed Forces Community by supporting the Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan.

New members and partner organisations joined the boards with a combined membership of around 120 personnel from over 90 organisations or service areas providing a width of expertise and knowledge.

Cllr's Mike Davey and Sebastian Kindersley as Cambridgeshire Armed Forces Covenant Board Chair and Vice Chair respectively continued to lead the board and drive actions and engagements. The introduction of regular City and District partner updates from Champions or Officers at the boards have allowed members to understand the work that is happening within each authority and provide support or assistance as required.

Cllr John Fox and Cllr June Bull as Chair and Vice Chair for Peterborough's Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board respectively have continued to support the work in Peterborough City alongside partners and have enjoyed connecting with new partners.

Sadly, at the end of the year Cllr June Bull stood down as Vice Chair with the December Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board being her last. June was instrumental in supporting the board and a great stickler for detail and her enthusiasm will be missed.

The Armed Forces Covenant Officer, Tommy Kelly, himself, an Army Veteran, completed his first full year in post and with the support of the board has been able to engage, support and collaborate with numerous military-focused and civilian organisations, local authorities, and members of the Armed Forces Community.



Both the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Boards have seen detailed presentations to understand and support the work by numerous partners and external organisations. Highlights include,

Veterans In Custody Support scheme (VICs) HMP Peterborough

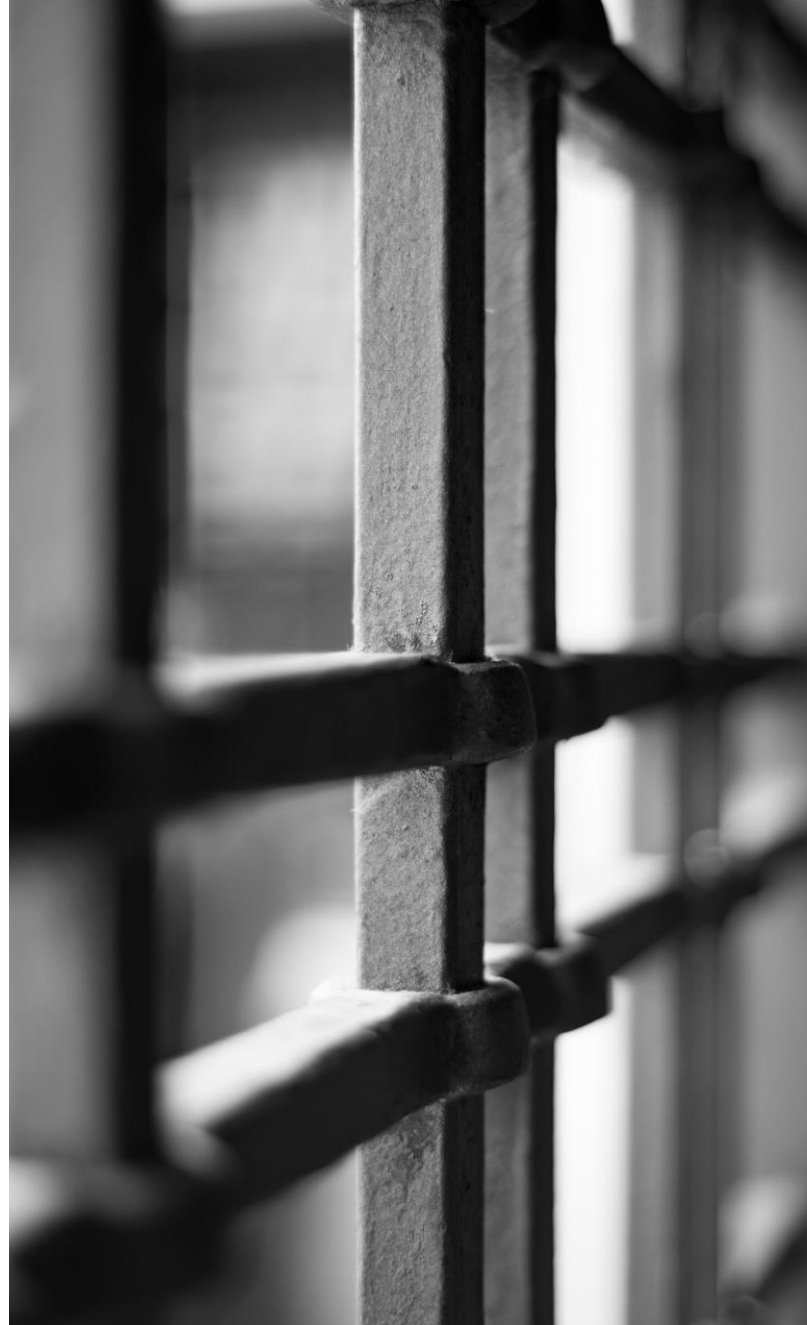
Jules Thorn presented about the Veterans In Custody Support scheme that is run at HMP Peterborough and explained that when new prisoners come to HMP Peterborough they are asked if they have served in HM Forces previously.

This allows the volunteer officer, known as Veterans In Custody Officers, to identify veterans and provide appropriate support in the form of a welcome pack which contains information about what the VICs team does to support veterans and information regarding the charities the veteran has access to.

Since VICs started in HMP Peterborough, help and support has been provided to prisoners and their families which has included,

- Help with travel costs
- Pension queries
- Housing on release
- Veterans badge application support
- Employment and Advice

Since joining the Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board, the VICs team have engaged with and established working relationships with other Armed Forces Community support organisations.



Department for Work and Pensions

Mark Knight from the DWP presented to the Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board about the work that that DWP are undertaking to support Veterans, Early Service Leavers and Service Spouses.

Mark explained that to assist Armed Forces personnel further, an additional question has been added into the Universal Credit (UC) system. Now when you apply online there is the option to select whether you are a veteran, or currently serving. This identifier will make it easier to tailor support.

A new role of Armed Forces Champions Lead has been added, in addition to the existing 50 Armed Forces Champions. These Leads will be responsible for overseeing the Champions, and will be based in each Jobcentre Plus district.



The Armed Forces Covenant

March Armed Forces Fair (MAFF)

Lt Col “Spence” Spencer MBE provided a presentation to the Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board to explain the plans behind the March Armed Forces Fair, what it hoped to achieve and how members of the Armed Forces Community and Support Organisations could become involved. A full update about the March Armed Forces Fair is included later in this report.



Veteran Mental Health Services in East Of England

Ellie Duke spoke about the High Intensity Service (HIS) from Op Courage: NHSE Veterans Mental Health Services. Ellie’s presentation explained the breadth of the service offered under the “Op Courage” umbrella and that HIS works collaboratively with local services and alongside existing NHS crisis and in-patient services, providing immediate wrap-around care. Ellie further explained that HIS provides rapid access to an assessment and intensive support package in conjunction with local services for veterans who are experiencing a mental health crisis.

HIS accepts professional referrals only, however a Veteran can self-refer into Op Courage via: 0300 323 0137





Peterborough Armed Forces Support Organisations

Elaine Danaher from **the East Anglia Veterans Association**, formerly Supporters of Combat Stress, provided updates to the board throughout the year including information about their location change and Jubilee Celebrations.

A further update about the East Anglia Veterans Association is included later in this report.

Patrick “Paddy” Greville introduced **Peterborough Veterans Social Fund**.

Paddy explained that the group meets on a Wednesday afternoon each week in Peterborough and provides support to local members of the Armed Forces Community in the form of socialisation, refreshments, mutual support and organise day trips out.



Household Support Fund / Cost Of Living Support

Partners from both Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council provided updates along with the Armed Forces Covenant Officer about the range of support that is available to the Armed Forces Community to help with the cost-of-living increases.

Local Authority information surrounded the Household Support Fund and other local/national avenues for support whilst the Armed Forces Covenant Officer’s update centred on the assistance provided by military support organisations such as the RBL, SSAFA, Benevolent Funds and Families Federations.

Legislation and the Armed Forces Bill 2021

The further enshrinement of the Covenant into law came into full effect this year to provide an opportunity for councils to build upon work that they are already leading to help serving personnel, reservists, veterans, and their families to have the same equality of access to public services as their civilian neighbours.

Whilst good procedures and initiatives had already been put in place by service providers, the Government was concerned that some members of the Armed Forces Community are still suffering disadvantage in accessing public services which was often caused by a lack of awareness of the Covenant and the unique nature of service in the Armed Forces.

The legislation imposes a new Duty on relevant public bodies, when exercising certain aspects of their public functions in the areas of housing, healthcare, and education to have due regard to the three principles of the AF Covenant:

- The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces
- The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for service people from membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces
- The principle that special provision for Service People may be justified by the effect on such people of membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces





It means that service providers will have to demonstrate that they have considered the principles of the Covenant when making decisions in these key areas.

A lot of preparation work was undertaken in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to engage with the MOD, Local Government Association and Armed Forces Covenant Lead Officers from other Local Authorities to understand the new requirements.

This helped shape the work we do to support colleagues in Housing, Education, and NHS partners with the support of the Transformation Team to smoothly implement the legislation to ensure that service delivery is in line with statutory guidance.

Work with Education department leads within Cambridgeshire County Council has helped each area to understand their obligations to support service children and further work to look at best practice examples from the Statutory Guidance will further help shape the service delivery.

Other work carried out this year at Cambridgeshire County Council was to include the Armed Forces Community in the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) process. EqIAs ensure the council make evidence-based decisions about how they work. This includes when writing strategies, policies, & procedures, designing services, running procurement processes and producing business cases (to name just a few). Carrying out an EqIA helps the council consider and understand if new strategies, policies, procedures etc have an adverse effect on different communities. This now includes the Armed Forces Community.

District and City Councils are continuing to review their housing policies to ensure that the statutory obligations in the Armed Forces Bill are being met and changes, where required, are being put in place.

This includes enhancing Personal Housing Plans to ask service-related questions, training frontline staff to understand that the Armed Forces Community may have difficulties due to unfamiliarity of the housing process and ensuring that frontline staff are aware of and can access the Forces Connect Signposting application.



Town & Parish Council Engagement with the Armed Forces Covenant

At the start of 2022 there was only 1 Parish Council (Wyton-on-the-Hill) that had signed the Armed Forces Covenant in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough.

A focussed and determined drive by the Armed Forces Covenant Officer, District AFC champions, officers, and other interested parties, with support from Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC), ensued this year to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Community and Covent across numerous Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and Parish and Town Councils.

Initial council engagement was restricted to Parish and Town Councils that physically bordered an Armed Forces Unit or Station and those with over 5000 residents. This was conducted with a letter from the respective Armed Forces Champion which highlighted the Armed Forces Community and disadvantages they can face during and after service. It went to explain that small changes or initiatives can remove or mitigate these disadvantages. Councils can also provide support through sign posting or by appointing an Armed Forces Lead Councillor or officer.

Through meetings and documentation Councils were informed that the Armed Forces Community are usually more visible around Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday although can become less conspicuous throughout the rest of the year.

Disadvantage due to service, issues around mental or physical health and difficulty with reintegrating back into civilian life can remain and it is essential for Town and Parish Councils to be aware so that they can support this, sometimes, hidden community.

Knowing where to signpost the individual or family is also very important as there are a high number of Armed Forces Community support organisations.

The Armed Forces Covenant Officer further supported by responding to queries and, when requested, attending council meetings to explain in more detail about the benefits of supporting the Armed Forces Community.

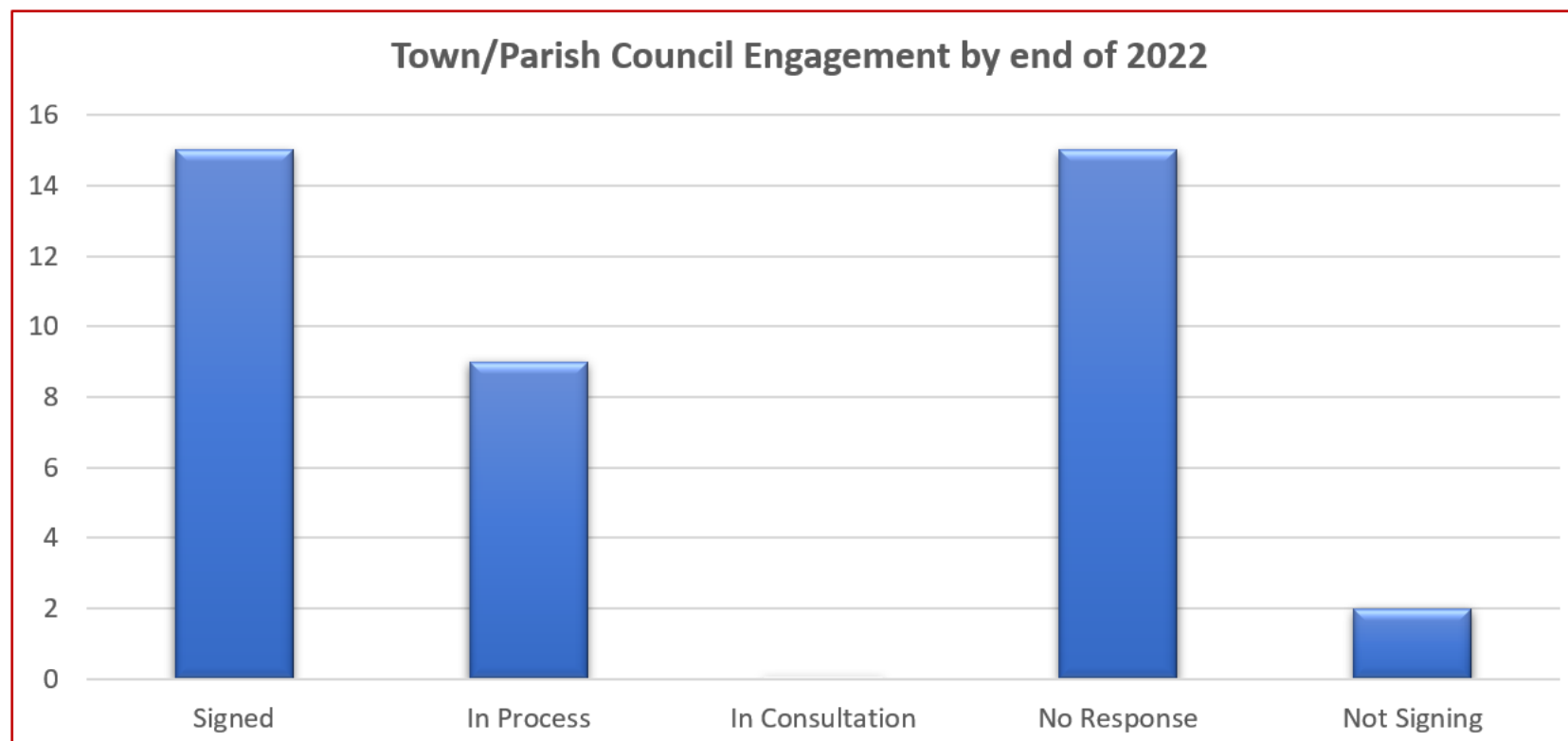


The Armed Forces Covenant



By the end of this year the Parish and Town Councils overleaf have signed the Armed Forces Covenant with commitments from 9 others.

Council	Type	District
Benwick	Parish	Fenland
March	Town	Fenland
Wisbech	Town	Fenland
Wisbech St Mary	Parish	Fenland
St Ives	Town	Huntingdonshire
Brampton	Parish	Huntingdonshire
Godmanchester	Town	Huntingdonshire
Huntingdon	Town	Huntingdonshire
Wyton-on-the-Hill	Parish	Huntingdonshire
Yaxley	Parish	Huntingdonshire
Hampton Hargate & Hampton Vale	Parish	Peterborough
Orton Longueville	Parish	Peterborough
Wittering	Parish	Peterborough
Bassingbourn cum Kneesworth	Parish	South Cambridgeshire
Shepreth	Parish	South Cambridgeshire



The Armed Forces Covenant

Some of the pledges that Town and Parish Councils have made are listed below,

1. Promoting that they are an Armed Forces-friendly organisation, to staff, customers, suppliers, contractors and wider public.
2. Supporting local and national Armed Forces Community support organisations with posters or flyers and website content.
3. Supporting other national events such as Armed Forces Day and Reserves Day.
4. Appointing an Armed Forces Lead Officer or Councillor to support any Armed Forces related work or enquiries.
5. Promoting the Armed Forces Covenant to other organisations.
6. Signposting veterans to support charities and providing assistance to ensure they can access services.
7. Supporting service charities in the local area.
8. Supporting the formation of Armed Forces Community/Veteran groups by providing access to buildings, organisational support or promotion.
9. Working closely with the partners to understand and implement best practice.



Housing & Homelessness

Engagement with Housing Organisations

Following on from work that started in 2021, further engagement with Housing Associations that operate in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough continued with numerous engagements and training sessions being provided to frontline housing staff from different Registered Social Landlords and Housing providers. Notably, training for 56 officers from Longhurst Housing, 17 for Chorus Housing and 67 from various homeless support organisations.

Cross Keys Homes further cemented their commitment to the Armed Forces Community by Signing the Armed Forces Covenant stating...

We have affirmed our commitment to supporting UK military personnel, reservists, veterans and their families by signing the UK Armed Forces Covenant.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a commitment made by organisations of all types to ensure those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, and those who have served in the past including their families, face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.



We are able to support members of the armed forces, their families and veterans who live in our homes with access to our community support services, including employment support, education or training opportunities and money advice, and to help them receive the support they require. Our team are also able to signpost and refer people to specialist support services to help them receive any additional help needed.

Our Chief Executive, Claire Higgins, said: “We know that veterans of our armed forces can face some very unique challenges, as they adjust to civilian life. Whilst we have not personally experienced the trauma many of them have experienced, and the effect it can have on them for years to come, we want to ensure as a business that we have our team fully equipped with all the knowledge and contacts they need to help support not only veterans, but their families and carers in any way that we can.

We are also very proud to support any family members of serving armed forces personnel and those who serve in Reserve Forces who are CKH employees.”

Tracey Manton, Service Manager, Income Management Team and Army Veteran was appointed the Armed Forces Covenant Lead for Cross Keys Homes and worked closely with the Armed Forces Covenant Officer, Tommy Kelly on this work and Cross Keys Homes’ pledges of support for the Armed Forces Community.

Cross Keys Homes are hoping to achieve Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze award in 2023

Hastoe is an award-winning rural housing association that manages over 7,500 rented, shared ownership and leasehold homes across the south of England. They hold charitable status and support communities by providing affordable and environmentally sustainable homes for local people.



Hastoe demonstrated their commitment to support the Armed Forces Community this year by working alongside the Armed Forces Covenant Officer to create a webpage that lists support and information specifically targeted at the community.

By defining the Armed Forces Community at the top of the support page helps members of the community understand they are part of it as sometimes many don't. This can be those that did national service, the bereaved or those that did a shorter period of service compared to others.

The support page lists many of the key Armed Forces Community charities and information about the Forces Connect App including download links.





Kickstart Funding

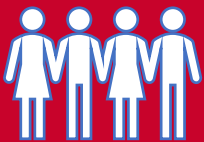
March Armed Forces Fair

£1500 was awarded to the March Armed Forces Fair that took place on the 4th of September 2022 in West End Park, March, Cambridgeshire. The event, lead Lt Col “Spence” Spencer MBE, was conceived around 3 core aims.



Short Term – The Armed Forces Fair

To bring the Armed Forces Community in and around March together so they can see the Armed Forces Organisations we have locally. To start to work together, and for everyone to see the Armed Forces Support Organisations that are available, and for everyone to have a great time!



Medium Term – During the Armed Forces Fair

Encourage people to join one or more of the Armed Forces Organisations and for people to use Armed Forces Support Organisations if they need help. Armed Forces personnel and their families can sometimes be reluctant to ask for help and often suffer in silence. By bringing these people into contact with the support agencies during the Fair may encourage them to engage with them.



Long Term – Post Fair

Set up a March Armed Forces digital presence where each Armed Forces Organization in March and the surrounding area can share their events and annually hold a March Town Armed Forces Organisation meeting.



The Armed Forces Covenant

With attendance estimated to be around 8-10k the expected 3-5k was unquestionably exceeded and helped along with bright, calm & warm weather.

A large portion of the Armed Forces Community within the MAFF catchment area either attended or assisted with the running of the day. Those who volunteered their time and assisted with the running of the day stated they would help again, as it provided an opportunity for them to work as part of a team, giving them a sense of purpose within the community.

Initial feedback from the Armed Forces Organisations who attended has been extremely positive. They have increased their membership across the board, raised their profile and gained funds. For example;

- a. The Army Cadet Force gained 8 new cadets and raised nearly £400 after expenses and the Air Training Corps had 6 new cadets at their parade nights.
- b. The Fenland Sappers increased its membership by 8 and raised £1100 towards their Battlefield Tour to Normandy.
- c. The Armed Forces Breakfast Club has seen an increase attendance over the last 18 months, a part of which can be attributed to the MAFF Team encouraging people to join other armed forces organisations. The March Armed Forces Breakfast Club has increased membership by 30.
- d. Approximately 50 persons registered an interest in joining the Regular and Reserve Army.

The feedback from the charities was extremely positive, all of which benefited from charitable donations. It is considered that visitors may have been more willing/able to donate due to there not being an entrance fee.



The MAFF was organised and delivered with no paid staff.

- a. A total of 34 people volunteered their time to help organise or deliver the MAFF.
- b. A mixture of serving, veterans and people from the local community volunteered to be stewards, which demonstrates one of the aims of the MAFF, bringing the community together.
- c. The Army Cadet Force (ACF) played a major part in delivering the MAFF on the day.



MAFF in Numbers

8-10k

There were 8-10k visitors to MAFF 2022

£6000

MAFF 2022 was funded by 6 public and private supporters. The event was run for £6000

14

Running costs were reduced thanks to 14 supporters providing goods or assistance

30

AF&V Breakfast Clubs had positive engagements from 30 potential new members

15

The Air Training Corps gained 15 new members from engagement at MAFF 2022

50

Approximately 50 people registered an interest in joining the Regular and Reserve Army

£1100

The Fenland Sappers raised £1100 towards their Battlefield Tour to Normandy

£30-£700

32 organisations fundraised between £30-£700

600

Fenland Sappers sold 600 Bratwurst

34

A total of 34 people volunteered their time to help organise or deliver MAFF 2022

37

MAFF 2022 organisers listed the event on 37 separate Facebook Groups

12

The Army Cadet Force gained 12 new members from engagement at MAFF 2022

The Armed Forces Covenant

The purpose and aims of the MAFF can be summarised in three words

REMEMBERING

CONNECTING

INSPIRING

Remembering the past - This is achieved with a formal act of remembrance and by the attendance of re-enactors, living history enthusiasts and vintage vehicles.

Connecting with the present - This is achieved by the attendance of Armed Forces support organisations and charities who can reach out to veterans and their families. The MAFF allows organisations to a) advertise their existence b) offer guidance, help and assistance c) raise funds.

Inspiring the future - This is achieved by the attendance of local Armed Forces Units (regular and reserve), Armed Forces Engagement Teams and Cadet organisations. The MAFF is a free to attend event and is centrally located with good transport links. This ensures that the event does not exclude people by means of an entry fee, allowing a greater demographic to;

Remember the past,

Connect with the present

and be

Inspired by the current Armed Forces Community.



Kickstart Funding

March Armed Forces & Veterans' Hub

In April this year members of the Armed Forces Community in the Market Town of March in Fenland, North Cambridgeshire started the March Armed Forces & Veteran's Hub. The idea was conceived by RAF Veteran Jeff Walters and a number of volunteer supporters from the March Armed Forces & Veterans' Breakfast Club.

Jeff and his team wanted to create a safe and secure drop-in for serving armed forces, veterans, first responders and their immediate families giving somewhere to visit for a brew and chat or just to sit and read from a modest library of military themed books or support literature.



Armed Forces Covenant Kick Start funding was secured to provide tea and coffee as well as for promotional material and the Hub has supported numerous members of the Armed Forces Community with a wide range of support needs, including, socialisation, signposting for mental health support and help with bills and the cost of living.

Jeff added, "The hub is very welcoming, and we have done a lot of work to understand the support that is available to members of the Armed Forces Community and to engage with as many support networks and charities as possible. From time-to-time we have support services and charities visit the hub and support and advise our attendees as needed.

We also like to provide activities for mental health and integration with others and one of our popular activities is new age curling which we learnt about after meeting Jenny Lambert from Living Sport. Jenny visited the hub and explained the services and support that Living Sport provide and set up a few activities for attendees to try. We also provide access to several other activities including chess, cards, dominoes, and darts.

We feel our impact has been significant to many of our guests as it has provided them with company and socialisation that they wouldn't have got remaining at home alone. We have also signposted many of our guest to external agencies and charities including a few requiring mental health support for PTSD.

We even helped one of our regular visitors by conducting a welfare check at his property after he failed to attend. It was found that he had slipped out of his chair and was unable to get back up. He was very pleased to see when we helped him back into his chair after the best part of a night on the floor. We have since supported him with a new, more suitable chair, better management of his distress alarm and even supported him to make healthier diet choices."

The hub runs weekly from Cassanos Bar & Grill in March, Cambs and is supported by business owner Kevin McCourt who has also supported & hosted the March Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club for over 3 years.

Partner News

Cambridge City Council

In 2022, Cambridge City Council was incredibly proud to have its work supporting its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant recognised by the award of the Silver Level, MoD Employers Recognition Scheme. This is publicised on our website - <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/armed-forces-covenant>

In July, Debbie Kaye, lead officer for the Council's work made a presentation to the County Armed Forces Covenant Board, assisted by colleague and Armed Forces veteran Carl Higgs.



The presentation consisted of;

Profile of serving personnel/veterans in city

Home to Regimental Headquarters & 163 Support Squadron of 254 Medical Regiment, Royal Army Medical Corps on Cherry Hinton Rd

Cambridge University Officer Training Corps on Coldhams Lane, an Army Reserve unit that recruits exclusively from universities

According to 2011 Covenant Data there were 801 working age veterans living in Cambridge City

2017 survey indicated that there were 310 Military Pension and Compensation recipients of which 25 were war widow(er)s

The Census 2021 data will provide a clearer understanding of veterans and current members of the Armed Forces once the AF data is released later in 2022

Our approach

Leadership
Building a team
Training – bringing the AFC to life
Simple shared action plan
Motivation - build on small achievements
Communication
Ownership
Pride

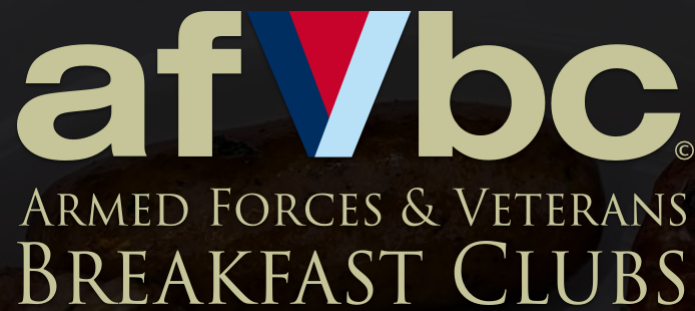
Our action plan

To the bronze level
Asking the question
Improvements to our recruitment process
Supportive business approach
Marking Armed Forces week

To the silver level
Active engagement & involvement of people with an armed forces background
Policies supporting reservists
Breakfast club



Cambridge City Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club



The inaugural Cambridge City Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club started on Monday 31st January this year with a modest turnout which has grown throughout the year. Carl Higgs, who runs the breakfast club decided that wider support could be provided to the Armed Forces Community in and around Cambridge City by expanding the Breakfast Club offer to a second, out of work hours on a Saturday, event at another location each month. See <https://www.afvbc.net/> for more details.

During the presentation Carl provided information on;

Research

Data on suicide

Background to AFVBCs

Impact and benefit

How the Cambridge AFVBCs work

Summing up –benefits

Services are proactively involved

Raising awareness in the Council and wider community: pride + improved understanding

Better service for serving personnel, their families, veterans, cadets and reservists

Cambridge City Council (continued)

The Council continues to convene a growing network of colleagues from services across the organisation, seeking to inform, educate and adapt Council policy and activities to reflect the needs of service people, their families and veterans. A number of the staff involved have association with the Armed Forces, via service or family connections, and this has help in bringing the topics to life.

The network is hugely appreciative of the input from County Covenant Development Officer Thomas Kelly, whose knowledge, support and guidance has been invaluable to shaping the Council's approach

The Council's action plan is updated on a regular basis. Key developments in the past year have included:

- a) Adaptions to protocols at the Council's customer service centre and in other service areas to ensure better signposting and support for customers who have a connection to the Armed Forces. The CS team have been briefed to ask this question wherever appropriate. It's a critical point in ensuring we provide the right type of service and it is reiterated in meetings and training.
- b) Additional training on a range of topics including ensuring benefit officers and CSC advisors are aware of additional earnings disregard for reservists in receipt of benefit
- c) Further development of the Armed Forces Breakfast Club, now extended to two venues, seeing 50-60 visits a week.
- d) Support for the establishment of the Cambridge Veterans Club at Chesterton Working Mens' Club, a monthly event featuring entertainment and a buffet
- e) Initiation of the Cambridge Veterans Hub, a network of veterans and groups to understand aspirations of veterans and bring forward projects
- f) Updated recruitment literature and online information which details our Silver Award/ Commitment. We have attended a number of in person career events to showcase our opportunities which have been linked to DWP and Cambridge BID. We continue to publish our opportunities on specific sites that are for military/ ex-military/ families of individuals. The Council continues to support reservists and cadets through revision of policies, mayoral appointments and civic events .
- g) Lead Councillor for the Armed Forces Covenant, Cllr Mike Davey chairs the County Covenant Board.
- h) We have restructured our community development team and appointed an officer whose duties include a specific remit to support the work of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Our plans for 2023 include furthering partnership with the CV Hub and, depending on successful funding applications, bringing forward a community 'Mens' Shed. There are also plans for an event in Armed Forces Week (June 2023). The Council is also exploring how it might create a community allotment site for serving personnel and veterans.



Fenland District Council



2022 has been a very encouraging year for the Armed Forces Community in Fenland and the District Council has worked alongside the Armed Forces Covenant Officer on a series of actions to support the community locally.

Following on from work started in 2021, Cllr Bob Wickes, an RAF Veteran, Whittlesey Town and Fenland District Councillor, continued to engage with Town and Parish Councils in Fenland to explain the benefits of signing the Armed Forces Covenant to support the Armed Forces Community in their respective areas. By the end of this year, we have 2 Town and 2 Parish Councils signed with 2 town and 3 Parish Councils committed to signing next year.

The big Armed Forces Community event for Cambridgeshire during 2022 was the March Armed Forces Fair and Fenland District Council were instrumental in supporting the event with close liaison with event organisers.

The District Council also worked closely with the Armed Forces Covenant Officer to ensure that our housing policy is up to date in terms of satisfying the changes to the covenant brought in by the Armed Forces Bill 2021 and are looking at other best practice examples to further increase support for the Armed Forces Community.

Soldiers', Sailors', and Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA)



This year we have worked closely the Armed Forces Covenant Officer, Tommy Kelly and Lianne Parrett from Cambridgeshire County Council to submit an application to the Cultivate Cambs Fund, in the hope of securing £13,300 to help support the work of SSAFA within Cambridgeshire. This is new ground for SSAFA, working closely with partners to enhance the services they also provide, whilst ensuring that the service we provide for the beneficiary remains of a high standard. Below is a more descriptive idea of the work we carry out, with the local research attached to it.

The direct beneficiaries of SSAFA services provided via the hub and local branches will potentially be all members of the Armed Forces community within Cambridgeshire which includes 22586 veterans, their family members, all serving military personnel (including 975 children registered with schools as service children according to academic year 2022-2023 government statistics), reservists and their families.

We support beneficiaries who are working with housing department colleagues to find suitable accommodation – whether they be homeless or needing to move from a house to ground floor accommodation due to increasing issues with mobility – and this will continue. People may ultimately need social care support as ability declines however SSAFA support enables this to be moved into the future rather than it being a need when initially contacting us.

Clients may also be in receipt of mental health services – via the NHS's Op Courage so complementary council services may need to be accessed however with SSAFA support in place need should be reduced.

In general terms SSAFA's beneficiaries may well need to use a range of council services like any person in the authority's area however as the result of SSAFA support that need for council support will be pushed further in the future. Our service will reduce our beneficiaries need for council services through a variety of means.

Cambridgeshire branch, for the period January to December 2022, achieved income of £126,298 from a range of military benevolent funds to directly support 65 beneficiaries – averaging £1943 per person. This will continue and is expected to increase in the coming year in terms of number of beneficiaries and funds received.

As examples where we have reduced beneficiaries need for council services in Cambridgeshire – Support has enabled mobility equipment to be purchased (where not funded by statutory authorities however with OT report and specification) which ensured people's ability to get out and about, socialise to prevent loneliness and isolation and protect their mental well-being.



In addition, costs of adaptations to people's homes have been funded (where statutory authorities cannot meet the full cost) enabling people to remain independent in their homes for as long as possible, reducing the need for residential care placements because people could not cope in inappropriate accommodation. (£47,657.96)

We have provided people with deposits for accommodation reducing the risk of on-going homelessness and provided white goods and furniture to enable them to establish themselves in their new home. (£34,803.35).

We have achieved funds to pay off rent arrears (and other debt) to prevent homelessness therefore reducing the burden of work on local authority homelessness services and crisis teams. (£8746.27)

General needs and maintenance grants have been provided to bring up people's basic income to a level that is sufficient to meet their needs and circumstances. (£10,200).

The general and financial support provided helps people to reduce their overall levels of stress and maintain level of mental well-being where they are far less likely to reach crisis point and need to access council services.



158 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps

158 Regt RLC have had a busy year. In May the regiment deployed to Cyprus for their Annual Continuous Training (ACT) Exercise, Ex KORONOS HUNTER was a 2-week Dismounted Close Combat Training exercise designed to test the skills and drills of the regiment in the robust heat of Cyprus.

In July, 8 of our Reservists deployed to Birmingham for 5 weeks on Op UNITY (support to the Commonwealth Games). Taskings were varied and centred on the control of the Personal Search Areas; ensuring members of the public and athletes were able to safely and efficiently access the Games. The team had the opportunity to work with Regular and Reserve soldiers from all 3 services, civilian security contractors, games volunteers as well as civilian police officers from different forces.

IMAGE OP_UNITY



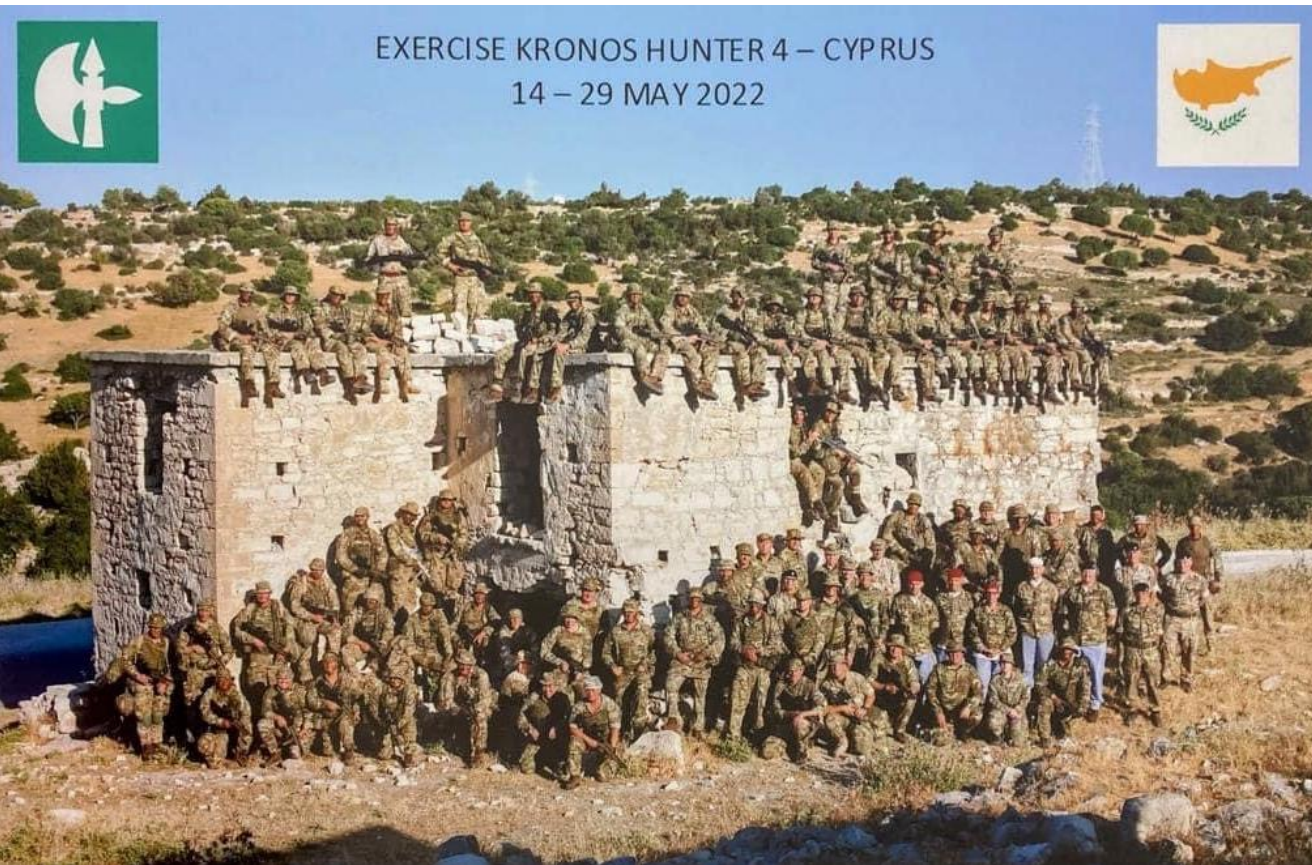
The Armed Forces Covenant

The regiment conducted a second ACT in Sept for those who were unable to deploy in May. The ACT concentrated on trade qualifications, Driver Upgrades and License Acquisition were the priority however there was the opportunity for some to other training such Range and Defence Train the Trainer qualifications.



The Armed Forces Covenant

Individuals have also had the opportunity to deploy this year, Cpl Millard deploy in Oct on Op NEWCOME to Gibraltar returned in Dec to then re-deployed to Kenya supporting the Regular Army on Ex ASKARI STORM. Cpl Matthews and Pte Chiverton have returned to Cyprus on Ex KORONOS HUNTER 9 with the Signals Regiment providing Chef support.



158 Regiment held a summer Festival of Sport in Kendrew Barracks where soldiers were given the opportunity to take part in a number of sports. Pte Benson has enjoyed individual success on the Cricket pitch as well as the golf course, he represented the RLC in both sports and gained a call up to the Army Cricket Development squad. He was also part of the Army team that won the Cricket Inter Services 20/20 Competition.

10 soldiers from across the Regiment were given the opportunity to attend the British Grand Prix at Silverstone in July. This was in support of the Armed Forces recruiting and engagement efforts with Pte Goldsmith & LCpl Isles receiving coins from Commander 7 Brigade for their part in providing catering support. Pte Benson was interviewed by Forces TV and some of our team were able to grab a selfie with the eventual winner Carlos Sainz Jr.



RAF Wittering

RAF Wittering located in Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, is the main operating base and headquarters for the RAF A4 Force and is a major Station for flying training.

The A4 Force deploys the vital engineering and logistic support needed to sustain RAF operations and exercises around the world, from explosive ordnance disposal to catering, and aircraft repair to ground transport vehicles.

No 16 Squadron is part of No 3 Flying Training School and provide elementary flying training to the next generation of RAF pilots.

The squadrons of No 6 Flying Training School, teach qualified pilots to become flying instructors, deliver elementary flying training to University Air Squadron students and give Air Cadets their first flying experiences.

Around 1,400 Service, civilian and contractor personnel work at RAF Wittering, although a large number of the Service personnel can be deployed across the globe at any one time.



RAF Wittering

Tackling Loneliness Programme

Project Title – Something for everyone

Amount Received £70,000 – commence 1/4/21 – 2 years funding.

The funding supports service personnel and their families in tackling loneliness.

RAF Wittering identified a concern around mental health issues, stress and anxieties around isolation and established a number of projects to alleviate loneliness and bring people together.

The funding will also be used to set up new projects to ensure support reaches as many parts of our Station and community as possible.

Aviator Lounge Project - £13,500 contribution (overall cost of project £50,000)

Following consultations with the Station's Junior Ranks an ambitious project is underway to create an area where personnel can relax within the Aviator Restaurant.

Separate from the main dining space up to 30, personnel will be able to enjoy a modern, high-street feel, soft furnished, comfortable, non-military environment.

It is planned that Junior Ranks will have a place where they can drink good coffee, access to Wi-Fi and USB charging points, and watch TV with friends and colleagues.

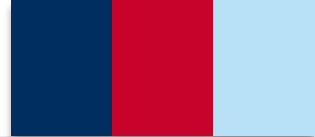
This area will be available to them from breakfast through the day to the end of dinner service. Its fabric and fittings will comply with catering clean requirements and offer a noise reduction separation from the hustle and bustle of a dining hall.

Tots group - £500

Funds were used to purchase new toys and rejuvenate the club, which had been forced to close during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Families with young children, particularly those who had moved to the Station during the pandemic, were encouraged to meet up and socialise with others.





RAF Wittering

RAF Wittering Station Cinema - £1,200 contribution

Covenant Funding was used to;

- Establish sessions for the Station's Tots groups
- Support dedicated SEN sessions
- Support deployed families
- Trial e-sports sessions to bring service personnel out of their blocks to socialise and game face to face.

Plans are also in place for Veteran's Cinema sessions in 2023.

The Cinelink is also used for personnel and staff on Exercise at RAF Wittering, similarly to how it was used for deployed personnel as a welfare function free of charge. This is to promote rest and recuperations and help mental wellbeing, giving personnel relief from the pressures of the exercise.

Community Support has also been working with the Cinema to provide deployed families with cinema tickets to reduce loneliness whilst serving family members are out of station. This initiative has delivered direct access to support and respite for families at no cost to them.

Case Study:

One of our dependant SEN children is now attending cinema sessions and has a 'magic' set of pink ear defenders which have transformed, not only her ability to attend, but, her parents report, "it has enhanced her whole outlook and ability to engage". She absolutely loves her cinema visits, and this led to the expansion of the dedicated SEN sessions on the back of TOTS group's success.

Allotment Project - £10,000 contribution (overall cost of project £20,000)

A chance to meet new people, brings individuals and squadrons together, learn new skills, share knowledge with others.

It took a while for some land to be identified and the project commenced early this year. The team plan to create a station vegetable allotment at RAF Wittering for service personnel and their families to combat loneliness.

The money from The Armed Forces Covenant will enable the purchase of the community greenhouses, shed and tooling.

The project is being driven by Cpl John Barker.

Cpl John Barker said: "I want to create the allotments for a few reasons. My son and I love spending time at the allotment at home and I want more people to experience the benefits of an allotment community. During and following the pandemic, society was facing the increasing issue of loneliness and I really believed that building an allotment community on camp would help tackle this. The Armed Forces Covenant Fund offers funding exactly for this reason, 'combatting loneliness,' which is what initiated the allotments project."

The project is also being supported by Fg Off Caroline Turner. She said: "The allotments will have so much potential for community events and station gatherings. It's the perfect set up for friends, families, and local community groups to gather, garden and grow food."

RAF Wittering

Deliver local Childminding training course

Families in Stress Programme – Project Title – Families Centre for Service Families

Amount received £86,622.00. Commenced 1/10/20 – 2 years funding.

This funding has been used to support staff costs (Families Centre Manager & Family Support Worker) and for additional resources at Wittering Families Centre which is based at Wittering Primary School within Wittering village.

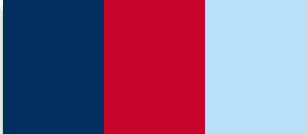
The Families Centre for Service Families deliver a number of sessions, 5 days a week, for parents and children. The sessions include Bumps & Babies, Ben (RAF Benevolent Fund) Stay & Play, sensory sessions, baby massage, musical minis and also provide an opportunity to share parenting concerns whether you are a new parent, want to make new friends, or learn new skills.

Family Support is offered to families both within the setting and, if needed, to those with children attending school.

The team work closely with SSAFA, health visitor, other health professionals as well as the RAF Wittering Community Support Team.

After the challenges of having to adapt working practices during the Covid pandemic, the Centre fully reopened at the end of 2021, meaning that throughout this year, staff have once again been able to deliver a full programme of activities.





RAF Wittering

Beach Trip - £750

A day trip to Hunstanton for families of personnel took place during the May/June half term.

A total of 10 families went on the trip and funding was used to pay for the hire of the coach.

The aim of the trip was to give families, many of whom had young children, an opportunity to connect with others in a similar situation.

Members of the Community Support and Welfare team attended to support as required on the day and used the opportunity to build relationships with families going forward. This was the first Community Support trip permitted after the pandemic.



WITTWELL – £4,500

Wellbeing walk and overnight camp in Wakeley Woods.

Service personnel identified as in need of support attended with the welfare team. The walks took place once a month with a two-day walk and talk group comprising between eight to 12 service personnel.

The walks included a chance to sit around a campfire to talk and offload in a safe environment.

Participants were carefully selected via welfare and management squadron teams.

East Anglian Veteran's Association (EAVA)

2022 has been a slow, but good year for the East Anglia Veteran's Association. We moved to a new venue in Peterborough (Army Reserve Centre, London Rd).

We are slowly returning to the numbers pre Covid, which is encouraging. We had a great day at the March Armed Forces Fayre in September 2022 which involved a lot of networking with other support organisations as well as raising funds for the Association. During the year we supported a Veteran with a food hamper and we also we had a Festive morning at our December meeting.

Our trip to the Crocodile park, Old Hurst, Huntingdon was a great success and we have been very grateful for the continued support of Project Nova, Veterans UK, Matthew Project, Blind Veterans UK.

We realised one of our ambitions for the EAVA during 2022 and now have a number of merchandise items to help promote and provide modest funding for the Association.

Looking forward to 2023, we are continuing support for our patrons with trips out and occasional breakfasts at the Army Reserve Centre, Peterborough. We also plan to continue with networking with other interested agencies and supporting, and sign posting Veterans for a better life.





East Anglia Reserve Forces and Cadets Association

Defence celebrates tremendous support from local employers

Since 2014, a special relationship has been developing between Defence and employers across the UK. The Employer Recognition Scheme was launched by the Prime Minister to recognise employer support for the wider principles of the Armed Forces Covenant; a promise from the nation ensuring those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly.



Image: 28 East Anglian employers attend ERS Silver Award 2022 at Madingley Hall, Cambridge

The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employers that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to Defence and the Armed Forces community. This includes the Reserves, Service Leavers, Armed Forces Veterans, the Wounded, Injured and Sick, Cadets, Military Spouses or Partners and their families.

To date, six organisations across Cambridgeshire have received gold and a phenomenal 21 have achieved silver. In 2022, the latest cohort of silver alumni included Cambridge City Council, Cambridge Regional College, First Ascent Group, Magpas Air Ambulance and Musketeer Solutions Ltd.

The Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Leo Docherty said: “Regardless of size, location or sector, employing members of the Armed Forces community is good for businesses.

The Armed Forces Covenant

These awards recognise the outstanding support for our Armed Forces from employers across the UK and I would like to thank and congratulate each and every one.”

Mark Robertson, Principal and Chief Executive, Cambridge Regional College, added: “We recognise that Defence People bring a vast array of transferable skills and life to their new careers and acknowledge the range of expertise and knowledge that the students, employers and communities we serve, benefit from in turn.”

The Ministry of Defence’s Regional Employer Engagement Director, Kristina Carrington, has worked with local businesses for the past 13 years to nurture and build this support for the Defence community. “Year after year, I witness the innovative and generous ways within which our local business community support our troops past and present alongside their loved ones. It’s very humbling to see the positive impact their support has on individuals and how it’s positioned them as an employer of choice.”

To discover more about the benefits of partnering with Defence, Kristina Carrington can be contacted on ea-empsp@rfca.mod.uk





Forward Thinking & Conclusion

The Action Plan for 2023 will be refreshed with a greater focus on engagement with City, District, Town, and Parish partners to support Armed Forces Covenant work at all levels of public service.

This year saw a lot of work with engagement from numerous public sector and private organisations and maintaining momentum will be a key driver to help us continue to develop a cultural change around how approaches for support, advice or services are managed, ensuring that understanding of, and consideration for, the Armed Forces Community are part of everyday practice.

Ensuring that the whole Armed Forces Community are considered in decision making and realising that some of the disadvantages that the Armed Forces Community experience can be removed or mitigated with small changes to policy or practice and often without the need for onerous project work requiring large costs and demands on resource.

We can't conclude our thoughts on 2022 without mentioning the sad passing of her majesty Queen Elizabeth II and how the UK Armed Forces supported with great professionalism and dignity.

Her Majesty
QUEEN ELIZABETH II
1926 - 2022



ARM YOURSELF

The Forces Connect App contains links to and information about support and advice for AF Personnel and Veterans

It is free, and you are urged to download it so you can use it yourself and promote the benefits of it to applicable people you may be working with

Android



Apple

