



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH ARMED FORCES COVENANT

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



FOREWORDS



I have been honoured to chair the Cambridgeshire Covenant Board for the last 9 years. This year is the first time we have released an annual report to showcase the covenant progress. 2019 has seen a welcomed increase in the covenant work across the county. With the Covenant Grant funding and the Development Officer role, we have been able to unpick the needs in the county and raise much needed awareness of the covenant.

In this coming year, we see the introduction of a housing officer specific for the Armed Forces, thanks to funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Governments.

The partnership board members are key to ensuring the maximum effect of this work, with continued efforts in moving forward to a consistent and sustained approach to the Armed Forces Covenant locally.

Cllr Mac McGuire

Armed Forces Champion, Cambridgeshire County Council



The Armed Forces Partnership Board in Peterborough has gone from strength to strength as more organisations and charities come together to share knowledge and network with people who all share a common aim, the Welfare of our serving personnel, veterans and their families.

We continue to bring more and more organisations to the table, so we are not working in our own little silo's but working as a central hub for all those who serve or have served.

My role as Chair of the Peterborough AFPB has been made a lot easier and more productive since the arrival of our Covenant Development Officer, who has been outstanding, acting as a go between with all the various organisations and partnership boards.

Organising the first AFC conference took a lot of time. It was not only a great success, it was a template of what we can work on in the future to make it even bigger and better.

Cllr John Fox

Armed Forces Champion, Peterborough City Council

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THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT

**An Enduring Covenant Between
The People of the United Kingdom
Her 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.

INTRODUCTION



The Armed Forces covenant was signed by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough local authorities between 2011 and 2013. Since its creation, a lot has changed and this year we have seen a boost, due to funding from the covenant grant team, to develop the covenant work in the county.

Armed Forces Covenant Partnership boards were created back in 2011, initially to be the local connection for the national covenant agenda and act as a civilian-military partnership board. The partnership boards have now expanded and in attendance are our local military units regular and reserve, local authorities, health, voluntary and military charity sector and other local partners.

A new Action Plan and Work Stream programme were created for the Cambridgeshire County Board with a local supporting plan in the process of being developed for Peterborough. Our partners have increased and a key part of the current project is to increase awareness of the covenant in the county across organisations and the public.

The work stream and action plan focus on specific areas;

- Communication
- Education
- Family and young people
- Housing
- Health and Wellbeing
- Employment and Transition

Only by working together as a partnership can we tackle the issues faced by our armed forces community.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH OVERVIEW

Both local and national partners sit on the covenant partnership boards that meet quarterly. Without the partners input the work would simply not happen. Relationships between the individuals on the board allow us to build strong connections which are vital when dealing with an individual in need.

Strategically the boards have oversight of all the work in the county and can ensure the work streams and action plans are implemented effectively.

Our current partners are represented below.

The covenant development project began in January 2019, funded by the MOD through the covenant Grant Trust, with the project officer sitting within Cambridgeshire County Council. The key objectives of the project are;

- Support the covenant boards to develop strategic element of the covenant and begin to implement the actions.
- Raise awareness and provided training across the organisations to staff and the public
- Collate data on what is happening across the county and pull together the information
- Create a digital signposting platform

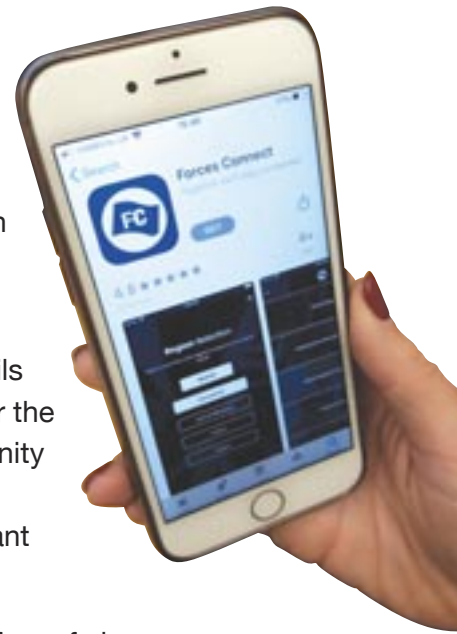
As part of the project we launched the Forces Connect app in November 2019. Created by the

Forces Connect South East Partnership in 2018, it has been rolled out across the country with many other counties now signed up.

The app provides details for support services for the Armed Forces Community locally and is updated monthly by the Covenant Development Officer.

It can be downloaded free of charge on any smart device and will continue to be managed by the partnership boards once the project has concluded.

Whilst it is accepted that not everyone in need can access a smart phone, it will be communicated out to all practitioners so those that are working with the elderly or vulnerable who don't have access to a smart device can still obtain the same information. The data from the app will also feed into the Cambridgeshire Directories and the same data used to compile the Cambridgeshire aspect of the app will be shared with the Veterans Gateway and Map of Need projects.



COVENANT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

This report details the work that has been undertaken over the year by the Covenant Board and its partners. Below is a summary of the achievements of the covenant development project in 2019.

- Development and launch of the Forces Connect App
- Delivery of Training to frontline staff and public engagement events across the county creating increased awareness across the county services.
- Organising and delivery of the Service Children's Conference
- Organising and delivery of the Cambridgeshire Covenant Annual Conference
- Coordination and Partnership working on smaller projects and events
- Partnership working on individual cases, advising practitioners about additional services and military lifestyle to assist them with supporting the armed forces community.



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- Increased membership of the board—bringing on board new health and voluntary sector members as well as representation from Public Health and Communications team.
- Development of new action plan and work-streams document to progress the strategy of the boards.
- Participating in regional and national networks and cross county partnerships ensuring that we are learning and working with our neighbours.
- Securing additional funding from the Ministry of Housing and coordination of a new Housing project to tackle veteran homelessness. Includes recruitment of new Housing outreach officer for the Armed Forces in the County.
- Older veteran's coffee mornings and care home engagement.
- Referrals to the regional employer engagement director for new corporate sign ups and progressing Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council towards their Gold Employer Recognition Awards
- Internal changes to HR policy to better support staff from the armed forces community.
- Facilitating access for the Serving units to wider services, such as Cambridgeshire skills to provide courses to military spouses.
- Supporting Bassingbourn barracks with its reopening and ensuring the right services are in place for the families and staff working and living there. Being a liaison on specific welfare cases.
- Addition of the armed forces question on to the new social services system, to ensure we are identifying those families/individuals in need and ensuring staff working those cases are considering military lifestyle and how best to support them.





RAISING AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

2019 has seen various training and awareness sessions delivered across the county by the Armed Forces Covenant Development Officer as part of the development project. Training over 759 members of staff across many different teams and partners.

The formal training kicked off in May with Forces Connect South East attending Cambridgeshire with their national covenant Roadshow which featured training sessions for Councillors and frontline staff. Attendance from frontline staff was good but it highlighted improvements needed for member engagement and it was likely the local elections impacted on attendance at this event.

Subsequently, we have welcomed new Councillors into the role of Armed Forces Champion and the covenant development officer

has met with them separately to brief them on their role and requirements for their own authority.

Awareness raising with the public and external partners has been conducted through a series of community events with many more planned.

Our annual conference held on 5th November hosted some great speakers from our National and local partners. With the Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff in attendance alongside our board partners and councillor champions.

The Service Children's Conference, hosted by RAF Wyton in October, welcomed speakers from the MOD and Education specialists across the service children's sector. The conference ensured our teachers, schools and education teams received valuable information about how to support our military children in the county.

Online training modules are part of the national covenant agenda and were developed in Warwickshire. The housing module was piloted with our Fenland Housing colleagues and it proved very useful. The board will work towards the covenant and housing online training modules being undertaken by relevant frontline staff across the organisations.



EDUCATION, FAMILIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The families of our serving personnel and veterans are a very important part of the Armed Forces community and are recognised by the covenant. Spouses and Children are under immense pressure in military life, dealing with regular separation, high mobility and deployment.

In Cambridgeshire, we have three large regular military bases, a number of large reservist units and many families that choose to live away from their place of posting in their own properties. Families from all three services are based here in the county and are supported by a variety of military support services. In addition to the military support, the majority of these families are accessing civilian healthcare, schools and local services and therefore it is essential that as local services we ensure we have an understanding of how military life effects a family

and where we can help support with that alongside our military partners.

Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council Early Help and Children's Services have amended their IT system to ensure that callers are asked if they are from a military family and if so that their circumstances are considered and they are supported and signposted in an accurate way. This change will go live in the January 2020.

There is regular engagement from our Covenant Development Officer with the early help services and Children and Families Teams from across the county.

The Service Children's Conference was great platform to raise awareness of the unique issues faced by military children in our schools and further work is being undertaken by our





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Education teams to look at ways that we can improve our statutory service for military families.

Our military partners at RAF Wittering, RAF Wyton and Bassingbourn Barracks continue to provide great facilities for their families on site, some of which have been funded through Covenant Fund grants. Cambridgeshire Skills are supporting military spouses with specific education courses that they can access in their areas. Their relationships with the local schools is key to successful support. RAF Wittering children produced this lovely outwork piece based around deployment and mobility and is featured within their school.

The partnership will be working closely with RAF Wittering as the pilot for the Future Accommodation model is due to commence May 2020. This will mean that a closer look on how we support dispersed military families, and ensure we work together to understand their needs.

This year has also seen the launch of the Forces Families Jobs platform that provides employment support and Jobs board for military spouses. Cambridgeshire County Council are active users of this platform and recognise the unique skills military spouses can bring to the organisation. Partners Organisations will also be encouraged to utilise this resource.

HOUSING

One of the biggest issues facing service personnel as they leave the forces is housing. Whilst serving, housing is provided by the MOD but this entitlement ends when service ends so it is vital that service personnel understand what is out there in civvy street for them to access. The Joint Services Housing Advisory Office can advise service personnel on their options which can include purchasing their own property and using schemes like Forces Help to Buy, private rental or social housing.

The Armed Forces Covenant brought in legislation in 2015 that meant that serving personnel and their families do not need to satisfy the local connection criteria for social housing for up to five years after leaving, something they often can't do having moved around so many postings. However, knowledge about this and where families can access specialist support for things such as rent deposits and welfare services was lacking within the local authority housing teams.

Work has been done this year through the training program to provide that knowledge, giving the local officers more expertise to support military families/individuals.

We need to understand better the barriers faced by those transitioning and what they are facing once they are accepted onto the housing register. Data is being gathered across the county and close working across the partnership to assess the needs.





It is widely publicised by the media about Veteran homelessness/rough sleeping and it is an area that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government aim to tackle. As such, the County, through the combined authority, was provided with a small amount of funding for a project to specifically focus on homelessness in our veteran population. A Housing Outreach Officer specifically for the Armed Forces community will start in post beginning 2020. Working alongside our rough sleeping support organisations and the local/national military charities to improve the lives of those most vulnerable.

As a partnership we are engaged fully with the #nohomelessveterans campaign being ran by STOLL, the veterans housing charity, and will continue to work with them going forward.

Following a government consultation last year on Armed Forces and Social Housing, we are aware that this is being looked at across the country. Once the results of that consultation are published we will ensure that we work on implementing it at a local level. Particular issues that we see in areas of Cambridgeshire such as properties under a section 106 condition which currently does not make specifications for those in the military community and is not covered under the covenant exemptions on local connection. South Cambridgeshire District Council are looking at this issue with planners and legal team to develop the policy around the local connection issue.

HEALTH, WELLBEING AND WELFARE

Health and Wellbeing is vital for every individual and even more so for those in our military. Moving around so much can impact your health and with families accessing normal NHS services it is vital these services have an understanding of military life.

For veterans and reservists who also access NHS treatment and other health services, the services should understand the complexities of military life and how that can effect a service person both mentally and physically.

The NHS has written the covenant into its constitution and provides veteran care training to all trainee GP's, in addition to online learning modules for all health professionals. Services such as the Veterans Mental Health service, Complex treatment service and personalised care services for those armed forces personnel that have suffered long term physical injuries, are now provided nationally.

Alongside, these additional services offered, NHS England in conjunction with the Royal College of General Practitioners have also launched the GP accreditation scheme for Veteran friendly practices. Currently in Cambridgeshire there are only two GP practices accredited. Partly due to the roll out not reaching here as yet and partly to do with lack of engagement. Moving forward in 2020 this will be a key item for the covenant board to progress.

In contrast to this, all of our hospitals in the county are veterans aware accredited and are doing well with their armed forces covenant engagement. All have a good presence on the covenant boards and are working to ensure they support their own armed forces workforce and provide improved services to our armed forces community.

Octagon Medical Practice, a merger of Practices in the Peterborough, Wisbech, March and Huntingdon area, are improving their services.

'We are working towards our Veterans Friendly accreditation. Recording all relevant patients as Armed Forces, Veterans or family member of. Providing details to our staff about the additional services and support our armed forces community patients can access and ensuring our Patient Participation groups have an Armed Forces Veteran representative. As a company we have one of the two already accredited practices now joining us and we are working closely with the covenant boards and the RCGP to improve our services both to our own armed forces employees and our armed forces patients.'

Lynnette Brennan

Patient Liaison Officer at Octagon

Health and wellbeing isn't just about clinical care but also about social support and preventing social isolation. Across the county we have a large number of veteran support groups and military family support. Details of which can be found on the Forces Connect App.

Family support groups specifically for military families are located at the military units and details can be found through the Hives. Military families are also welcome to access the civilian groups from Mums and Tots groups to more specific support such as AI-Anon family support for those living with family members that struggle with alcoholism.

Veteran support groups come in many forms from the drop in sessions that offer advice and information to the Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast clubs and the Supporting Peterborough Veterans Lunches which are informal and fun way to meet other veterans in the area and enjoy good food together. Specialist mental health support meetings such as the Combat Stress Peer Support meetings in Cambridge and the Supporters of combat stress

support group in Peterborough, which has been running for over ten years at the Peterborough cathedral and welcomes veterans and their families from across the region for a coffee and a chat with professional practitioners from a variety of organisations on hand to offer advice and support if needed.

The covenant project this year has also established veterans coffee mornings in some of our residential homes. We have a large population of elderly veterans, some of which cannot easily access community facilities outside the home. Anchor Hannover homes have instead opened up their facilities to welcome older veterans from the community to come and meet with their resident veterans for a coffee and a cake.

They welcome our partner organisations such as the RAF Benevolent Fund, SSAFA and The Royal British Legion to attend alongside serving personnel from local units who kindly give up time to come and talk to the veterans.

A further case study on one of these groups is further on in this report. Although, these sessions need further development in terms of activities for those attending they are so far helping to tackle social isolation and provide community integration.

The mix of older veterans with the current serving staff is heart-warming to see and makes a huge difference to the older veterans who often haven't spoken about their military experiences for 10-20 years.



EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSITION

The newly formed Defence Transition Service launched end of 2019 to support those leaving military service and their families. They will work with those that most need support and work holistically to support them with all aspects of transition. Locally we will work with the caseworkers and the veteran's welfare service to ensure individuals and families achieve a successful transition into the County. Whether that be with statutory support services or community based support or simply providing signposting, information and advice to the caseworkers on what we have locally. Employment is a key element of transition.

There have been many business sign up to the covenant this year and many employer recognition awards provided to those employers that go above and beyond for our military community. As a partnership board we are working towards our members progressing through the awards process with both Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council being Silver awarded and progressing towards a gold award.

Cambridge City Council and Huntingdonshire District council received their bronze awards in 2019 and Fenland and South Cambridgeshire District councils are in the application process for theirs.

Internally, Cambridgeshire County Council has been reviewing its HR policies to see how we can better support our armed forces staff. A generous package for reservists already exists and amendments to our maternity and adoption policies that better support our military spouses were made this year. An article on this was ran by the Army Families Federation in their magazine.

Across Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council our Human Resources teams and Covenant Development Officer are working on an internal network for our armed forces staff to have a forum to meet each other, support each other and any new veterans, reservists or spouses coming into the organisations, alongside being able to communicate to HR any issues that arise from military life.

We are working with the Career Transition Partnership to offer work experience for service leavers and relevant jobs at both authorities and will be advertised through the Forces Families Jobs platform, specifically for military spouses.

Working closely with the Employer Engagement team we advocate to businesses the benefits of employing those from the military community and we will continue to do this over the coming years.

The Covenant Development Officer promotes the benefits of employing from the armed forces community and has presented to a number of employment support and economic organisations in the county. This advocacy of the covenant is key to achieving our Gold award but more importantly brings coordination of work across the county from private and public sector to better improve the lives of our armed forces community.





THE BENEFITS OF PARTNERING WITH DEFENCE

There are many ways in which supporting Defence can help your organisation become stronger and more successful. If you need skilled and talented people, then look no further.

As employees, Reservists and Service leavers possess a wealth of world-class transferrable accredited skills. Military trained personnel are fit, focused and positive with a can-do attitude. Many have operated in locations and situations that require sound judgement, adaptability, respect for others, good communication skills, loyalty, integrity and courage.

More than 40 businesses in Cambridgeshire have signed the Armed Forces Covenant; a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families are treated fairly.

To reward and acknowledge the outstanding support employers offer to the Defence Community, the Prime Minister launched the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) in 2014 encompassing 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.

Buffalod Logistics Ltd was one of three Cambridgeshire based businesses to receive the Silver Award 2019. Lesa Nicholson, Head of People said; "We are very pleased to receive the Silver Award for our commitment to the Armed Forces community. We believe that Buffalod Logistics benefits from the notable skills and qualities that Veterans bring to the workplace, and we fully support the valuable contribution of Reservists. It is lovely to have our efforts recognised with this award, and we are proud to have contributed to the Armed Forces Covenant pledge to support those who serve or have served to protect our Country."

Upon receiving an ERS Gold Award during 2019, Peter Simpson, Chief Executive, Anglian Water



PCC and CCC receiving their Silver ERS award

commented, "I was delighted that Anglian Water received a Gold Award under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. This reflects years of working ever more closely to support the armed forces community and align values with the Armed Forces Covenant. We have many ex Forces employees working for Anglian Water and I have seen first-hand just how transferrable their skills are. Equally the Reserves within our business not only help with our Defence but also bring back into our business invaluable skills and experience. I'm a strong advocate of the positive role that business can play in society and this is a great example."

Throughout 2019, Cambridgeshire employers involved with the scheme have enjoyed a range of Defence networking opportunities ranging from attending Reservist training nights and Regimental cocktail evenings to accessing military leadership courses and county based employer engagement groups.

Employers are most welcome to join the Ministry of Defence's employer engagement groups to help shape and raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant in Cambridgeshire.

To find out more about the Armed Forces Covenant and the Employer Recognition Scheme, begin your journey by emailing Kristina Carrington, Regional Employer Engagement Director ea-empsp@rfca.mod.uk



REMEMBRANCE AND ARMED FORCES DAY

Across the county many events take place to celebrate and remember our military community. Remembrance Day in November is marked in villages, towns and cities across Cambridgeshire some with small services and laying of wreaths to larger services and parades. ANZAC day, VE day and VJ day are just a few.

Armed Forces Day has its largest celebration in Peterborough city but with many more events across the county such as St Neots gala day.

It is vital that we remember and recognise our military community so as not to forget their sacrifices and to bring the community together to respect our current serving community that do so much to defend our country. It is not just these two days a year that we must remember and recognise but it is vital that we promote these days and the other events that occur across the county.

Additional events such as RAF Wittering Freedom Parade in Peterborough City and Royal Anglican Association Fundraising events in Cambridge show the strong connections in the county to our military community and act as a public reminder of their presence.



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PARTNER SUCCESSES

RAF Families Federation



During 2019 the RAF Families Federation has engaged with RAF Serving Personnel and families throughout the UK and Europe to gather evidence from personnel and families on a whole range of current issues impacting on their quality of life – infrastructure; accommodation; mobility for families with children with SEN; experiences of personnel and families overseas, and accessing bases. This evidence has been influential in a range of ways – for example, in establishing new requirements for housing

maintenance that contractors will need to abide by in future. We have advocated for personnel and families through both an appearance before, and submissions to, the House of Commons Defence Select Committee and the Armed Forces Pay Review Body. In addition, we have also submitted evidence to the Department of Education on the particular problems of families who have children with additional needs.

Do visit our website to learn more about how our work has helped influence change to improve life in the RAF: <https://www.raf-ff.org.uk/federation/case-studies/>.

We have been pleased to be heavily involved in the development and launch of Forces Families Jobs and are delighted that Cambridgeshire are actively using this service to promote employment to our military spouses.

We are pleased to maintain a positive and active working relationship with Cambridgeshire and we congratulate the Board for the ongoing support they offer our Serving personnel and families working and living in the area.

RAF Families Federation

The Garden House by the Light Project Peterborough

The Garden House opened in October 2018 and has developed as an integral part of services that support people to move off the streets in the Peterborough area. We have recognised and embraced the need to become a hub for any and all veterans that may have fallen on hard times and are homeless.

Working closely with the Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant board and Development Officer, the services offered at the Garden House have responded to guidance on need. A staff member is a dedicated lead on veterans work, volunteers have all been trained on how

to respond to and support ex forces personnel as they come through the doors and other organisations who operate in this sector undertake one to one support meetings on site.

We at Light Project Peterborough are honoured to be part of this important work and have seen a number of people's lives really changed. It is our hope that we will continue to grow and sustain our support and that any veteran that is sleeping on the streets will be able to feel welcome to receive our support.

Steven Pettican

CEO, Light Project Peterborough

Introducing East Anglia Reserve Forces and Cadets Association

Since 1908, East Anglia Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (EA RFCA) has been recognised by its target audiences as the most valuable, knowledgeable and authoritative body in support of Reserve Forces and Cadet Organisations throughout East Anglia.

Across Cambridgeshire, EA RFCA manage and maintain three Army Reserve Centres, a Cadet Weekend Training Centre and 31 Army and Air Cadet sites. During 2019, Cambridge University Royal Naval Unit took up residence alongside Cambridge University Officers Training Corps (Army) at the Reserve Centre in Coldhams Lane and 254 Medical Regiment continued to grow their strength in Cherry Hinton. Further north, 158 Regiment Royal Logistical Corps call Peterborough home and recently benefitted from EA RFCA investing £300K into the local Army Reserve Centre. EA RFCA are dedicated to providing Reservists with the best space in which to work and train.

Operating as an arms-length body to the Ministry of Defence, EA RFCA assist the civil community, employers and local authorities with understanding the needs of Defence people and developing appropriate support and services across the region.

One of the key ways in which they deliver this is by championing the Armed Forces Covenant; a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families are treated fairly. The Covenant is enshrined in law, and the Government is committed to delivering the best possible outcomes for the Armed Forces community by working with a range of delivery partners who are signatories of the Covenant. Signatories include local authorities, charities, community organisations and businesses. ►





► Once organisations have signed the Covenant, they are encouraged and supported by EA RFCA to join the Ministry of Defence’s Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) which was launched by the Prime Minister in 2014 to recognise employer support for the wider principles of the Armed Forces Covenant. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employers that pledge, demonstrate and advocate support to Defence and the Armed Forces community. Cambridgeshire currently has 17 ERS Silver Award winners and during 2019, Anglian Water and HMP Whitemoor joined 2018

winner East of England Ambulance Trust in receiving the highest badge of honour; the ERS Gold Award.

With over 13,500 Sea, Army and Air cadets, East Anglia has one of the highest cadet populations in the UK. The cadet forces are consistently being recognised for the positive social impact they have on their local communities; for instance Cambridgeshire Army Cadets from Ramsey were given “freedom of the town” in 2018 to acknowledge their outstanding contribution to the local residents.

For more information on Reserves and Cadets in your area visit www.earfca.org.uk

CASE STUDY

Clayburn Court Veterans coffee morning

Matt Rowe has been in post as a Community Engagement Worker (CEW) for the RAF Benevolent Fund since January 2019. The Community Engagement Role aims to engage with member of the RAF family experiencing social isolation and support them to engage in activities locally.

In this role Matt has liaised extensively with Vikki Barr over the past year finding their roles complimentary in identifying, creating or supporting veteran activities.

Matt received a referral for Mrs Pat Taylor following her daughter receiving a briefing on the CEW role.

Pat is a lady in her 80's who reported feeling socially isolated due to not knowing anyone other than family in her local area. Pat had made friends with a group she met whilst supporting her Mother who was resident in a Care Home but following her Mother death, and some health issues, she now struggled to maintain this contact on a regular basis.

Matt engaged with Pat and established that she had grown up within an RAF family before marrying her husband who was serving, and went on to complete a long service, in the RAF. Due to her background Pat expressed having a fond regard for her time around the RAF a desire to attend veteran activities.

When the opportunity for a veteran's coffee morning was offered by Clayburn Court care home in Peterborough Pat seemed a perfect fit.

Pat has attended all but one coffee morning and has expressed that it is now a regular in her diary. Pat has expressed enjoying meeting with serving personnel invited along by Matt or Vikki and has made friends with staff, residents and relatives who attend. She is valuable in maintaining the discussion within the group.

There are plans to discuss how to sustain the group and make it as functional as possible in the future. Pat has been invited to offer her views as a valued member of the group and Matt has suggested that she develop a role as the groups 'Greeter'. Providing new attendees a point of contact and a friendly face when new to the group.

This case study demonstrates how collaborative working between 3rd sector, local authority and a private care company can lead to facilitating a group that is supportive of members of the Armed Forces community whether veterans who are residents, community members and provide links with serving personnel. For Pat the group has enabled her to develop friendships with people who understand her past and the issue service life can bring as well as provide her with a sense of belonging again.

RAF Benevolent Fund



CASE STUDY

Tony Barker

I joined the army in 2008 at the age of 16. I was an Army Commando attached to 3 commando and served a tour of Afghan on Op Herrick in 2011.

Whilst on operations, I was working with 42 Lima Company, Royal Marines. We were out on patrol and I had taken the lead man position as we went into the building. There were three bails of mud and rubbish. One had an IED inside. 3 secs from taking position the IED went off and I was thrown backwards into a wall. I sustained lacerations to arms and face and significant damage to my ears. An attack ensued and we fell back to position, after some fighting we made it back to safely and a few hours later got back CP Zarawar. However the shock set in and I broke down. A Naval medic gave me some medication for my ears and treated my lacerations and I was put back out in the field. My balance was out and I did not feel well but whilst out on patrol the unit were ambushed and we took heavy fire: this battle was known as the battle of compound 62.

I did not do well after this and on the fourth day was sent back to Bastian to see the medical team. I remained in Bastian for a further 21 days before heading back to the UK.

After my 7 month tour, I was seen as weak. I was given basic TRIM counselling but no formal mental health support was in place. Things got worse and I felt bullied by my colleagues.

Once back in UK, my injury effected my mental health and physical health and couldn't cope with it anymore. They put me on suicide watch for some time but I wasn't suicidal it was reoccurring dreams about the things I had seen on tour that was causing the problem.

I couldn't cope anymore and I signed off in 2014. I had planned to travel through Australia for a year but ended up only being one week as my girlfriend fell pregnant. This relationship broke up and although I am always there for my daughter I found myself homeless and in a really bad place.

I went to various organisations, military and civilian, for work and housing support but didn't get anywhere, I felt that the system had let me down and I couldn't get out of the situation I was in. This made my PTSD worse. I found it hard to trust people and had ongoing issues with the CSA which lead to financial problems.

I fell through the cracks and felt completely let down, as my PTSD was not diagnosed formally I haven't got access to military medical pension despite my injuries. I feel that my military career hasn't been worth anything and I was let down by my unit. I wanted to fulfil a full military career but lack of support in service and lack of support after service really affected me. It still upsets me now and have impacted personal relationships too.

I came back to Peterborough in Dec 2018 until July 2019. I applied for housing but had a bad interview with the council and felt awful after so walked out of the meeting.

I went to Garden House where I got excellent support from James and the team. The garden house is a supportive environment and they worked with me and the council to get me into a hostel. At the time I was having issues with my employer and they raised the issue of my PTSD against me but they have now apologised for the way they treated me and have provided me with compensation. I had lost faith in everything but James helped me stay on track and got me referred into the Veterans Mental Health Service, they came to assess me and diagnose my PTSD. I was referred to the Complex Treatment Service and am still under their care at the moment.

As I stayed in employment and with the help of James at the Garden House, I managed to secure a private rental and that allowed me to be confident and able to apply for new jobs.

I now work for Instalcom Ltd, working mainly in London. Their staff are 40% from a military background so they really understand. They are very supportive and helping me through my PTSD treatment. I am back at gym and feeling more positive now. I still need further treatment for my PTSD and clinical diagnosis that can help me claim my war pension/compensation that I am entitled too but things are much better now and I am looking forward to a much better future for myself and for my daughter.

Tony Barker

CASE STUDY

Supporters of Combat Stress Support Group, Peterborough

2019 saw SOCS 10th Anniversary in Peterborough, a lot has happened over the past 10 years. Initially set up to help my father, who suffered with PTSD whilst being in the Army, and the tour of NI. We as a family, knew of the need in Peterborough to help and support fellow Veterans and their families, who were experiencing the same mental illness as my father.

Over the years we have built up a network of professional Reps from various Charities connected to all areas of the Armed Forces. We have approx. 20 Veterans that come along every month, for help and support in various areas of their lives. But we have helped and supported more over the 10 years. 2019 sadly saw the death of my father, but the lasting legacy of him will be that we will continue and grow and be sustainable for the future, and we are in the process of registering with the Charities Commission to become a CIO.

Elaine Danaher
Chair of SOCS

FORWARD THINKING AND CONCLUSION

This report demonstrates what a busy year it has been for the covenant. 2020 will see continued effort to grow and develop this work.

Specific focus will be on Housing, with the new Armed Forces Housing officer coming into post in February 2020. This project will aim to tackle veteran's homelessness and rough sleeping alongside research into military families and their access to social housing.

Work on access to health for serving families and promotion of the NHS England commissioned services for the military community will continue, with more emphasis on getting GP surgeries to sign up to the Veterans Friendly accreditation scheme and raising awareness of the covenant throughout healthcare in the county.

Community events will also be organised to bring the military and civilian community together. The kickstart funding process is in development and will be launched this year to the benefit of those community projects/groups supporting our armed forces through covenant activities.

Training sessions will continue throughout the council and across the partners and the covenant online module will be made accessible for everyone to access with work being carried out to make this mandatory for frontline staff.

The Covenant Partnership is all about collaboration and if there are organisations out there that wish to get involved please contact covenant@cambridgeshire.gov.uk



my
Daddy
is a
HERO





**ARMED FORCES
COVENANT**

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