

# Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant



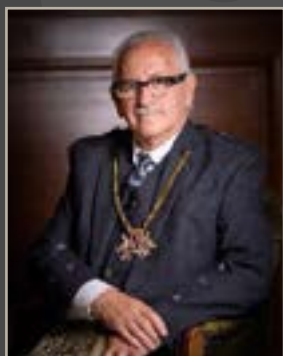
## ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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# Forewords



## Cllr Mac McGuire

Later this year we will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant here in the County of Cambridgeshire. The current pandemic which is sweeping the world has not made this the most memorable year in our history - at least not in a very positive way!

Last year we saw the ending of the time-limited Covenant Grant Funding for the Development Officer role - a role that we shared with the Peterborough Covenant Board. Many of you will have known and worked with Vikki Barr who filled this role but who sadly decided to move onto a new position closer to home. Fortunately though and thanks to funding from Cambridgeshire County Council, Tommy Kelly joined us and has now taken over much of the work carried out by Vikki and I'm sure our Board members will want to join me in welcoming Tommy.

Cllr Mac McGuire  
Armed Forces Champion,  
Cambridgeshire County Council



## Cllr John Fox

It has been a very tough year for us all and I have been very pleased that during the Covid-19 lockdowns the Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board has still managed to meet to share knowledge and network with people who all share a common aim, the welfare of our serving personnel, veterans and their families albeit remotely. Sadly, our Covenant Development Officer departed her role at the end of 2020 but the Council's commitment to our Armed Forces family means that a new Covenant Officer will be in post in early 2021.

It has been with great pride that I have watched British Service personnel work alongside the NHS for the common goal of beating Covid-19 and it goes to show that our men and women in the British Armed Forces can adapt to peace-time challenges as well as they do for military operations.

The Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board will continue into 2021 and I look forward to hopefully sitting down in the same room as all members in the not too distant future.

Cllr John Fox  
Armed Forces Champion  
Peterborough City Council

# 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

This year has been a completely different year than anyone expected. This report couldn't be written without mention of Covid-19 and its effect on the whole country, which have also impacted our military community. Work has continued throughout lockdown with council staff redeployed to covid support hubs.

The amazing work of all our partner organisations to support our military community has been nothing short of phenomenal and a huge thankyou is due to everyone who has pulled together in times of need and continue to do so as this pandemic continues.





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## Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Overview and project update

This year the partnership boards have had to meet virtually but that hasn't stopped the work continuing. We have welcomed in partners from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, Blind Veterans UK and Headway. Last year's annual report was launched in March and the board has continued to act on their action plan throughout the year.

The boards have seen detailed presentations from the Veterans and Families Research Hub run by Anglia Ruskin University and hosted the Future Accommodation Team who are operating a pilot project at RAF Wittering. The networks the boards provide allow partners to build essential relationships that ensure organisations work together on individual cases and on wider strategic objectives to improve the lives of our military community.

The covenant grant funded project has now ended and achieved all of its objectives with some still continuing beyond the project due to effects of Covid-19.

Key activities completed in the project:

- **Recruitment of Covenant Development Officer**
- **Review of partner policies & practices relating to the Covenant**
- **40 Covenant promotional activities / workshops** – this ended up being 35 activities but with over 1000 people trained.
- **Recruitment of Covenant volunteers / champions** – This has not been fully achieved but will be complete once the Kick Start Fund projects (see below) are completed in regard to volunteers. Champions/lead officers in Adult social services, Education, Voluntary sector, and Early Help have been recruited along with leads in housing and our business partners. We have also welcomed new partners on to the board including the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.
- **Publication of the first quarterly newsletter** – this milestone was adjusted at the start of the project due to capacity once the development officer had left post and instead of a quarterly newsletter it was agreed an annual report would be produced.

The 2019 report is available on the County Council website along with this year's report.

- **Social media Launch** – Comms have been key in our advocacy throughout the project and as such both Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council achieved Gold recognition awards from the MOD Defence Relationship management Employer recognition awards.
- **Web page relaunch** – Our website has been updated on both city and county pages and content also promoted across our partner local authorities' webpages. It was decided not to have signposting on the website itself and instead we launched the Forces Connect App for Cambridgeshire managed by our partners in the South East.
- **Annual conference** – We held the annual conference in 2019. Unfortunately plans for 2020 have been delayed due to Covid-19 but resource will be directed to a 2021 conference.
- **Identify relevant policies & practices and review identifying inconsistencies, gaps and make recommendations**

This is under continuous review and continued even beyond the project and into the Housing project. Examples of such changes are amendments to HR policies in relation to maternity pay for military spouses, addition of the armed forces question on our Liquid Logics system for our early help services and review of our education work across admissions, attendance, and SEN. This has resulted in leads in the education areas and publication of the Service Children's guide for Cambs/Pboro schools (more details below).

Gaps were identified within our housing team and across our housing partners and issues around homelessness. This resulted in funding being obtained from the Combined Authority through a Ministry grant and our Housing Outreach project and officer being put in place. This project will continue into 2021.

- **Work with relevant organisations to take forward recommendations and implement changes** – this is a vital part of the board work and supported by the board's action plan and in advocacy and recruitment of more partners to the covenant board. The project has enabled the work to grow and for partners to have an SME to hand during the project to help develop. To that end all but one of our Local Authority partners have achieved their bronze recognition awards this year.

The Kick Start fund was delayed by Covid-19 restrictions but will continue under the management of the Covenant Housing Officer and is open to applications from community groups that have a new project aimed at supporting the armed forces community.

It is a limited fund looking to support 5-10 community projects. Grants for community groups or organisations of up to £1000 (£2000 can be approved by the board in exceptional cases) for projects that;

- Develop and focus on community integration and resilience building for the armed forces community, past and/or present.
- Provide additional support after service for those that need help.
- Focus on housing related needs.
- Help dispersed serving families develop their own initiatives and by doing so contribute to community integration and building resilience.
- Develop opportunities for the armed forces community to engage in positive activity that is beneficial to their health and wellbeing.

There are some projects currently going through the application stage but there is still funding available.

**If you would like an application form or further information about the fund please contact [covenant@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:covenant@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)**



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## Education, Families and Young People

**This year, restrictions limiting community aspects of the project have provided time to concentrate on our education and family's teams.**

There has been detailed, focused training with our early help and Families teams to ensure that they have the knowledge to support our military and veteran families in an effective way. The passion our staff show to increase their knowledge in this area is brilliant and will help to support the covenant agenda long term and in turn ensure the unique nature of our military families lifestyle is considered when the council offers support. Utilising support from various partners allows our families and early help teams to provide holistic support to families and access services that couldn't normally be accessed by civilians.

At the start of 2020 our liquid logics system was amended to add the armed forces question, this helps ensure we are considering the families background but also that we identify early on if the family has armed forces connections so that we can ensure the right support is put in place. With a year's worth of data, we are now able to run queries and analysis to produce useful and meaningful reports. This means that we can identify the issues our families are encountering and investigate whether these are caused by disadvantage from the military lifestyle. Once this data has been fully reviewed, policies and practices can be tailored accordingly.

A key piece of work this year is the Service Children's Guide for Schools. This guide can be found on our website - <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/Service-Childrens-Education-Guide.pdf>

The guide provides details of support for schools with service children, how to manage service pupil premium funding, details of the council's services to support service children and advice from our national education partners. Links are provided to all support organisations and best practice examples from some of our local schools.

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## Raising Awareness and Engagement

**Our normal community events have been curtailed due to Covid-19. However we have managed to continue to run training events internally and awareness raising sessions with partners via virtual means.**

We were targeted on 40 sessions but completed 35 sessions and considering the pandemic and redeployment of the covenant officer to covid related work for 12 weeks this was a great achievement. We have now trained over 1000 individuals across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and have created training resources that will continue beyond the project. The housing outreach project continues to train/raise awareness across our Housing Association partners and our housing authority staff.



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## Housing (housing project)

With funding from the Ministry of Housing, CCC & PCC created a temporary post of Armed Forces Housing Outreach Officer (HOO) who is a key part of the CCC & PCC Armed Forces Covenant Housing Project and works with housing staff to understand the guidance around the Armed Forces Covenant and ensure that they appreciate the differences between service and civilian life.

The HOO is also responsible for promotion, awareness and understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant and how it can help our serving personnel, veterans and their families get fair access to public services.

The majority of the HOO's work has been managed remotely due to Covid-19 restrictions and by utilising online platforms the HOO has engaged with all District and City Council Housing Teams as well as Peterborough and Cambridge City Homeless Outreach Teams. Liaison with external partners such as Project Nova and DMWS has helped form good working relationships and networking amongst previously unconnected organisations and personnel which has created some case work and signposting for the HOO.

Armed Forces Covenant training and awareness for County, City and District council staff continued this year and the training will be extended to Registered Social Landlord and Housing Association partners in 2021. Many of these organisations have staff on the housing frontline and it is essential that they understand the Armed Forces Covenant and the challenges that veterans and service leavers may have with understanding their housing options.

Another element of the Housing Project is to support local community projects with Kick Start Funding. The HOO has been working with a number of applicants, both within veteran and current serving communities, to look at how their applications will assist in the creation of new grass roots community groups with the aim of including members of the Armed Forces family that may be isolated or unengaged and ensure that each project has resilience to continue after the funding is used.



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## Health, Wellbeing and Welfare

**Our NHS partners have done amazing work this year with the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and as a consequence there was not as much armed forces related work. However, the commissioned services specifically for the armed forces were tailored to support more people that were having additional complications due to the pandemic. The veteran's mental health transition, intervention and liaison service continued to operate throughout the pandemic supporting veterans in need.**

The NHS Armed Forces team have also launched a survey and focus group research project to find out about service families' experience relating to mobility caused by service and access to healthcare.

Cambridge City Council identified early into the pandemic that the older veteran population were harder to engage with and initiated specific comms out to their local veterans through targeted leaflet drops and used military charity partners to help engagement. This was a successful activity for their communities team and meant older veterans were supported effectively and that is work that they continue to build on.

# Employment and Transition and Partnering with Defence

This year district and city councils of Fenland, Cambridge City, Huntingdonshire, and South Cambridgeshire all achieved their bronze awards. Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council both achieved their golds. This was only achieved by the advocacy and awareness raising done by the councils and HR policies specifically written to support armed forces staff.

The MOD saw 127 organisations across the country being awarded Gold with an additional 266 Silver awards. Across the East 8 received Gold and 30 Silver.

Internally at Cambridgeshire County and Peterborough City we have created our internal Armed Forces Staff network on a Yammer platform. This is an online platform that allows our staff to talk, share stories, get involved in armed forces events and raise issues that affect them.

It is hoped that this virtual means of communication will ensure our Armed Forces staff have support and a peer network and any new employees can find mentors within the existing armed forces staff community. This will help ease and support transition and also to ensure that we are committing to our own staff not just the wider community across the county.



## Partner news

### Cambridge City Council

Cambridge City Council established a cross-organization group of officers to support the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, incorporating a range of services from HR to housing, and property to community. An action plan was published, and the Council was awarded Bronze Accreditation in 2019. Some of the actions we have undertaken are listed below:

### Veterans Housing

We work closely with the Armed Forces Housing

Outreach officer and promote the benefit within our Lettings Policy of the local connection waiver.

### Personalized Housing Plans

We offer training to our Housing Advisors to ensure they are aware of the support on offer to members/former members of the Armed Forces.

### Promotion

We have updated our webpages to better symbolise our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

### Supporting business

Commitment to a flexible approach to working with and supporting potential tenants who have a background in the Armed Forces.

## Benefits

We provide training to our customer services staff so that they are aware of the circumstances members/former members of the Armed Forces may have.

## Jobs

We advertise vacancies on the Forces families Jobs website and circulate opportunities to charities and support agencies who are able to identify military candidates. Our Jobs Opportunity Bulletin makes clear our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

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# RAF Families Federation

**The RAF Families Federation provides an independent voice for all Regular and Reserve personnel and families. We work to improve quality of life around the world - at work or at home, whether personnel are single or have partners and children.**

This could include resolving problems with accommodation or finances; access to education or healthcare for families, or helping military partners find meaningful employment – all issues that arise from having a mobile lifestyle.

We work closely with Local Authority partners to deliver the above and are pleased to have a healthy working relationship with Cambridgeshire - especially considering the number of personnel and families we have living and working in the county.

As well as delivering additional support and advice brought about by the increased tempo and increased stresses caused by Covid-19, we have also been focusing heavily on supporting the development of the revised Families Strategy being devised by the MOD.

The delivery of this strategy and the review of the Selous Report (Living in our Shoes) which was published at the end of 2020 is a step change for how our families are viewed and supported and we look forward to seeing it have a positive impact on our serving personnel and their families in Cambridgeshire and beyond, wherever they are posted.

Our focus for 2021 is to continue to raise awareness to our families of the wide ranging support available to them if they are facing challenges in education, accommodation, finances, healthcare or spousal employment whilst also gathering evidence of issues they may face to assist policy makers in decision making.

We are grateful to the many stakeholders we work with for their assistance in this and we congratulate the board for their ongoing work to ensure Cambridgeshire is a positive place to work and live for our personnel and their families.

**Please visit our website to learn more about how our work has helped influence change to improve life in the RAF.**

**You can also sign up for our free Envoy magazine and e-bulletins here:**  
[www.raf-ff.org.uk/federation/case-studies/](http://www.raf-ff.org.uk/federation/case-studies/)



# DMWS Medical Welfare Voluntary Services Coordinator

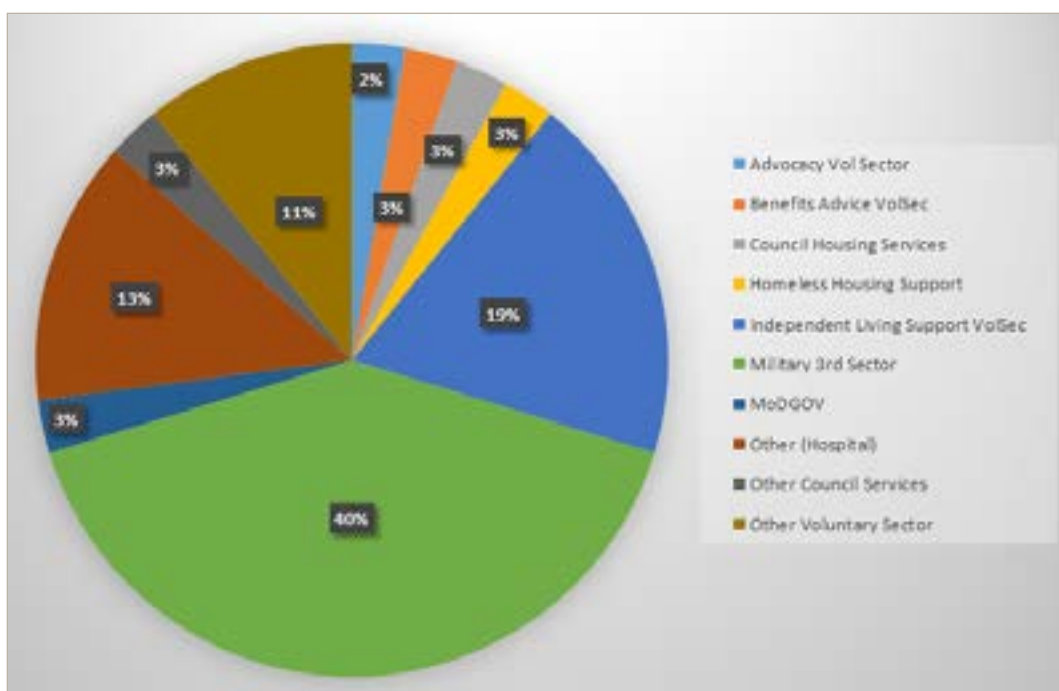
The local Medical Welfare Coordinator based within Cambridge University Hospital NHS Trust has continued to support patients throughout the year.

DMWS provide solutions to patients, 75 years and over, addressing barriers to recovery and finding solutions for them on discharge to help them live independently. We do this by being a friendly face to

speak to when they are in hospital and keeping them in touch with their family.

In preparation for discharge we work collaboratively with both the voluntary and statutory sectors to ensure a patient's smooth transition home. We connect the Veterans and their family with services that are available for them that they may not be aware of.

During the year we have supported 210 Beneficiaries, we have worked with many organisations to effect positive outcomes, 40% of our patient referrals were to local Military Charities. We look forward to continuing our work throughout 2021.



## Change, Grow, Live

CGL, Change, Grow, Live is a fully integrated substance misuse service including clinical support, recovery service and Criminal Justice, a service that is tailored to meet the needs of each individual leading to a better quality of life. CGL have three centres: Cambridge, Huntingdon and Wisbech and currently has over 2000 service users. CGL also screen for BBV and treat accordingly. CGL's Wisbech Centre operates an outreach programme covering March, Chatteris and Whittlesey.

Adrian Bell, Recovery/Harm Reduction Co-ordinator

at CGL served 7 years in the Royal Engineers with postings and tours in UK, BAOR, Falklands and Northern Ireland. On discharge from the Army Adrian trained in counselling and is a Licensed NLP Practitioner, registered life coach and has qualifications in Behaviour Analysis. Skills that allow him to effectively communicate with service users, to ensure needs are understood.

Prior to Covid-19 the Wisbech Centre was delivering face to face support groups in-house which were very popular and had high attendances. Not long after the lockdown in March 2020 it became apparent that service users were beginning to feel disconnected.

They were losing the contact and support the groups offered, which CGL deemed high risk.

CGL offered a large number of support groups including groups for men, women, Foundations of change, Relapse prevention, Non-opiate & Alcohol - Retrain Ya Brain. Adrian identified that there was no specific support provision for veterans of the Armed Forces and being a veteran himself understood the importance of the bond that only comes with military service. Adrian worked with his CGL recovery worker colleagues to identify service users that had served in the British Forces. Armed with this list he created “NAAFI Break” which is veteran-only peer-to-peer, digital support network.

Using Zoom technology provided the benefit of removing the geographical barriers that traditional support groups can encounter and has also empowered many of the service users in gaining the IT skill required to enable them to connect to the group and be more confident using technology. Some of the more mature and less “tech” savvy service users have embraced the technology and fully enjoy the experience and benefit a lot from being able to be part of it.

The “NAAFI Break” zoom session which Adrian regularly runs have encouraged openness about PTSD, survivor’s guilt and separation issues, in a setting that the members are comfortable with. Regardless of duration of service, when served and in which arm, all veterans have an understanding, respect for each other and humour that many of their civilian counterparts do not. This is why the NAAFI Break sessions are so important and effective.

Adrian plans to continue the NAAFI Break Zoom groups into the future and despite the current group being of modest size, CGL centres at Huntingdon and Cambridge are interested in the NAAFI Break sessions and helping the scheme expand with advertising and promotion of the service in their areas.

All CGL service users are asked if they have served in the British Armed Forces as a matter of policy.

Any that identify themselves as having done so are invited to join NAAFI Break and given support to get “connected”.

It is hoped that all CGL service users that have a military past will engage with the NAAFI Break sessions as the camaraderie, community, and positivity that the sessions provide benefit all users greatly.

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## Project Nova

**The Cambridgeshire Project Nova Coordinator has continued to support veterans of the British Armed Forces that are in the Criminal Justice System as well as vulnerable veterans throughout Covid-19 working collaboratively with other agencies and professionals.**

The majority of Project Nova’s work has been carried out over the telephone and with online meetings which appears to continue to offer the support required to service users. This method of support still allows coordinators to identify issues service users may be experiencing and provide the appropriate signposting for support.

Due to Covid-19 and lockdown restrictions it was noted that some service users’ mental health and wellbeing was suffering and Project Nova became their lifeline for support. Where service users have expressed feelings of social isolation coordinators have utilised their partnership networks and put them in touch with local Veteran Hubs and other agencies and activities whilst maintaining Covid-19 checks are in place.

In emergency circumstances and where risk assessments which cannot be managed remotely are required, coordinators will meet in person and also attend Court.

This process will continue throughout 2021, until Covid-19 restrictions are eased and the Cambridgeshire Project Nova Coordinator hopes to be able to support Cambridgeshire Fund Raising Events and make them a success.

# RAF Benevolent Fund review - 2020



The past year was dominated by Covid-19 with the RAF Benevolent Fund's initial response being 'all hands to the pumps' to engage with beneficiaries from over the previous two years who might be in need of support during lockdown.

A 'Check & Chat' call was established to provide regular social contact for beneficiaries along with doubling of the number of RAF Telephone Friendship Groups (run in partnership with Silverline) to 20. All these calls were hosted by Fund staff often working outside their normal roles and sadly in many cases was the only social contact beneficiaries received. Check & Chat has proved so beneficial it will be continuing post lockdown.

Within Cambridgeshire Matt Rowe, the Fund's

Community Engagement Worker (CEW) continued to receive referrals from partner agencies for socially isolated veterans and their partners whilst supporting those already on the radar. As a community based role the year proved a challenge by having to switch to a remote setting working from home.

Two particular successes in the county have been a Zoom group for carers which provided an opportunity for 'peer support' and a local veteran telephone group, working in partnership with CIVIC which aims to transfer it to physical group post lockdown linked to local library.

The Fund constantly reviewed its support over the year. An increase in the emotional needs of the RAF family were met by enhancing the package of Listening and Counselling support with on-line counselling being provided alongside our traditional counselling service. Additionally a 24 hour counselling line began to provide more flexible support whenever needed and in order to meet the needs of younger families counselling provision has been increased to support children from 5-18 years.





Prior to the increased lockdown before Christmas Matt was able to deliver a gift in person to all our beneficiaries across Cambridgeshire. The doorstep visits and delivery of an RAF themed tin of shortbread was a huge success and a lovely opportunity for Matt to re-engage with the community (even if the weather was a little difficult at times).

The CEW pilot project came to an end during the year. However the role has proved its worth and has been extended for a further four years enabling continued support to the RAF family in the county.

**In all, 2020 presented challenges which the RAF Benevolent Fund met head-on and resulted in a rewarding opportunity to provide support to our RAF family during a very difficult year.**

**All of these services can be requested by calling; 0300 102 1919 or by visiting our website <https://www.rafbf.org/>**

Due to the restrictions on being able to process casework the Fund created an on-line self-referral option for financial support up to £750 providing a more rapid turnround for beneficiaries.

As well as our established benefits advice service we added a Legal Advice Line offering telephone advice on employment, consumer, wills/probate, landlord & tenancy and family law.



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# Garden House

Since March 2020 and the first lockdown the team at Light Project Peterborough have worked tirelessly to ensure everyone who is sleeping on the streets and those new to accommodation have support and care.



At the height of the pandemic our teams were supporting and caring for people formerly on the streets in three hotels and this now continues in one hotel in Peterborough. This has included overseeing the provision of three meals a day week in, week out. In total 10's of 1000's of meals and not at any stage has anyone gone hungry, or not been provided for.

At the Garden House, every week the team has seen some of the most traumatised people coming through the doors including military veterans and support ranges from providing food and support obtaining accommodation to access to onsite alcohol and drug services, a professional counsellor, health professionals, (including a visiting GP and nurse) and a job club as well as opportunities to address the spiritual needs of our Guests. We look forward to the day when all these services can return in full so we can provide our Guests with a holistic body, mind and spirit approach to services.

We had to withdraw our open gate policy in March 2020 and since then have operated on only being

able to have a total of 6 Guests on site at any one time. But as a service we have remained open throughout lockdown and tiers, seeing people face to face when the vast majority of services traditionally supporting our Guests either haven't, or have moved to home working. To date we haven't even had a Covid-19 scare. We have been able to offer a Covid-19 Swab Test to anyone concerned they had been infected with results normally coming back to us in 48 hours at most.

We have continued to work with military charities to support people like Al G who following a domestic incident found himself sleeping in a tent. In a very short period of time he was helped to secure private rented accommodation and work. He is also reconnecting with his estranged children which he says he was only able to do because we arranged a referral to TILS, which helped him to address some PTSD related behaviours.

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# East Anglia Reserve Forces and Cadets Association

## Keeping the Cadet Flame Alive

With over 13,000 Sea, Army and Air cadets, East Anglia has one of the highest cadet populations in the UK. Supporting them, is East Anglia RFCA; an organisation widely recognised by its target audiences as the most valuable, knowledgeable and authoritative body in support of Reserve Forces and Cadet Organisations across the region.





Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the RFCA have continued to support all of the region's cadets, in particular the Army Cadet Force for whom they provide permanent staff support. In line with government guidance, face-to-face cadet activity was suspended for the majority of the year and the challenge was to keep teenagers, their parents and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers excited about being a part of this brilliant youth organisation.

The basis of cadet training and engagement this year has been via online platforms such as Zoom or MS Teams. Cadet Force Adult Volunteers have seamlessly switched their focus from familiar face-to-face training, to one that was unfamiliar and required a completely different approach. Adult Volunteers in all the Cadet organisations demonstrated their true colours in the time of need, and stepped up to the plate and the challenges to 'Keep the Flame Alive'. It is no mean feat to keep young people's attention with so many distractions and the pressures of home learning.



There have been a multitude of significant achievements by individuals, highlighted and showcased across numerous media platforms, especially on social media. It has been an honour for East Anglia RFCA to champion so many individuals that have worked in support of others at such a difficult time. From receiving National Honours, to supplying kit to help the NHS, to delivering support in local communities, to raising thousands of pounds for charities, the cadet forces have truly displayed the positive societal impact they have.

One such cadet was the Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire's Cadet, Sgt Rhyder Cameron-Wickes.

As part of the volunteering aspect of his Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award, he made sleeping bags from empty crisp packets to help homeless people.

The packets are melted together with an iron, on low heat, to form large sheets. These are then covered with plastic sheeting, also ironed on, and then joined to form sleeping bags which are then distributed by a local charity.

150 packets are needed to make one bag. He said: "there is no target for how many I want to make, but I'm aiming to continue making them until the end of 2021."

**For more information on Reserves and Cadets in your area visit <http://www.earfca.org.uk>**

## Cambridgeshire Businesses champion the Defence Community

On behalf of the Ministry of Defence, East Anglia Reserve Forces and Cadets Association offers very many congratulations to Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council for receiving an Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award 2020. The Ministry of Defence's high badge of honour was awarded to these two local authorities for their continued commitment and advocacy across the entire spectrum of Defence people.

Johnny Mercer, Minister for Defence People



and Veterans said, "The breadth and diversity of the winners shows how business support for the Armed Forces continues to grow no matter the sector, company size or location. I am grateful for the positive attitude and flexible policies these

organisations have adapted towards the defence community, which is testament to the fantastic contribution our serving personnel, veterans and their families can make to any organisation. I am delighted that so many companies are supporting our people and that, through this scheme, we can give them the public recognition they deserve.”

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.

Supporting Defence begins with signing 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 date, 60 organisations across Cambridgeshire have already done so.

Congratulations are also extended to Avonline

Networks, Magdalene, Morrison Telecom Services, North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust and Road Haulage Association across Cambridgeshire for achieving an ERS Silver Award 2020.

Kristina Carrington, Regional Employer Engagement Director said, “Despite all of its challenges, 2020 was a phenomenal year for us in terms of employer engagement. I would like to offer my sincerest thanks and congratulations to all of our Cambridgeshire employers for their continued support and for going above and beyond in terms of support to Defence people throughout a global pandemic.”

The Employer engagement team at East Anglia RFCA welcome new employers to join the Ministry of Defence’s employer engagement groups and 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](mailto:ea-empsp@rfca.mod.uk)**



# Useful Links

Cambridgeshire  
County Council



[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Peterborough  
City Council



[www.peterborough.gov.uk](http://www.peterborough.gov.uk)

Cambridge  
City Council



[www.cambridge.gov.uk](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk)

Defence Medical  
Welfare Service



[www.dmws.org.uk](http://www.dmws.org.uk)

Change,  
Grow Live



[www.changegrowlive.org](http://www.changegrowlive.org)

Project  
Nova



[www.rfea.org.uk](http://www.rfea.org.uk)

RAF Benevolent  
Fund



[www.rafbf.org](http://www.rafbf.org)

Garden  
House



[www.lightprojectpeterborough.org.uk](http://www.lightprojectpeterborough.org.uk)

East Anglia Reserve Forces  
and Cadets Association



[www.earfca.org.uk](http://www.earfca.org.uk)



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