

# Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant



## ANNUAL REPORT 2021



**ARMED FORCES  
COVENANT**

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## Cllr Sebastian Kindersley

I was very honoured to be appointed as Armed Forces Covenant Lead Elected Member for Cambridgeshire in August this year and taking on the responsibilities of this important role

has been made all the easier thanks to the excellent work that my predecessor, Cllr Mac McGuire, achieved during his tenure to shape and guide a well-supported, driven and focussed Armed Forces Covenant Board that has a broad membership and solid vision.

It was close to the time that I started in this role that the withdrawal of coalition troops from Afghanistan hit the headlines and highlighted the serious and very difficult situations that our Armed Forces personnel can find themselves facing. Understanding that trauma from conflicts, the effects of separation on personnel and their families, and the many difficulties that the Armed Forces Community face, even years after service, underlines why

our work supporting the Armed Forces Community is so important.

We live in uncertain times and the spectre of conflict is sadly ever present across the globe. The more work we do in Cambridgeshire to entrench a culture and mindset that our Armed Forces Community, past, present, and future may need and will be eligible for consideration and support will help us to provide vital support for the Armed Forces Community at County, City, District, Town, and Parish levels.

I am so impressed by the volume and quality of work that is ongoing in Cambridgeshire to uphold the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant and look forward to supporting the Board and Armed Forces Covenant Officer to continue providing great service and invaluable support to the Armed Forces Community into next year and beyond.

**Cllr Sebastian Kindersley**  
**Armed Forces Champion**  
**Cambridgeshire County Council**



## Cllr John Fox

2021 has presented several challenges with lockdowns and restrictions throughout a lot of the year and then with further and sometimes more transmissible variants of the Covid virus entering the UK. It has

been fantastic to see that, again, the UK Armed Forces, deployed on Operation Rescript, have stood shoulder to shoulder with the NHS providing logistical and clinical support for the vaccination programme and that some members from our local Army Reserve unit, 158 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps have supported in these and other efforts to help with the country's recovery from Covid-19 and maintain the Armed Forces' logistical effectiveness.

It was not until April this year that we regained a full-time Armed Forces Covenant Officer and Tommy Kelly, an Army veteran himself, has worked with me to reinvigorate the

Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board to continue to support the Armed Forces Community in and around Peterborough. Through the board's work we have engaged with and supported numerous organisations and initiatives, and highlights include presentations from the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA), How Are You? – Peterborough, and the North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust about the work they are doing to support members of the Armed Forces Community.

The Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board will continue into 2022 and we are very hopeful that physical meetings can restart, not just for the board but many of the Armed Forces Community support groups that could not fully function due to restrictions. We are also especially looking forward to shaping the support we offer to the Armed Forces Community by utilising the veteran data collected in this years' census.

**Cllr John Fox**  
**Armed Forces Champion**  
**Peterborough City Council**



## Cllr Mike Davey

Being asked to Chair the Cambridgeshire Armed Forces Covenant was the proudest moment of my political life which I was delighted to accept.

I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to Cllr Mac McGuire who stood down as Chair this year for his wisdom, support and advice. Without Mac the Covenant would not be in its current healthy and buoyant state. And on that note, I am delighted to introduce our Annual

Report which highlights the work of our partnership to support our Armed Services and their families, past and present.

Finally, my thanks go to Tommy Kelly, without whom, none of this would be possible.

**Cllr Mike Davey**

**Cambridgeshire Armed Forces Covenant Board Chair**  
**Cambridge City Council**



## 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.

**This year UK Armed Forces have continued to support the government to meet their Covid-19 vaccination targets. By working across the UK alongside the NHS, serving personnel have supported the rollout of the vaccine to the UK public.**

**Whilst the vaccination programme offered hope of normality in the fight against Covid-19 many restrictions remained in place meaning that the vital work our partner organisation carried out during 2021 to support isolated and vulnerable members of the Armed Forces Community was as important as ever.**





# Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Overview and project update

This year Cambridgeshire's and Peterborough's Armed Forces Covenant Boards continued with online meetings although the commitment and energy within the boards remains. We have welcomed new members and partners to the boards from: Outside the Wire, Public Health, SSAFA, MRTC Bassingbourn, RAF Benevolent Fund, RAF Families Federations and HMP Peterborough.

This year, Cllr Mac McGuire stood down as the Cambridgeshire Armed Forces Covenant Board Chair and lead Armed Forces Covenant Member for Cambridgeshire County Council after over a decade of great work to support the Armed Forces Community in Cambridgeshire.

As one of the influential members in highlighting and supporting the Armed Forces Community, Mac was instrumental in the formation of the board, leading the actions and driving the work forward. Under Mac's leadership and oversight and the successful award of a grant from the national covenant team, the Cambridgeshire Board gained a Development Officer. Other highlights include two annual conferences, Employer Recognition Awards for several partner organisations, including the Cambridgeshire County Council reaching gold level.

Cllr Mike Davey took up the reigns of the board chair after Mac's departure and swiftly brought the board together to continue the momentum of the work in the County to support the Armed Forces and Cllr

Sebastian Kindersley was appointed the lead Armed Forces Covenant Member for Cambridgeshire County Council. Cllr Kindersley has also taken on the role of Vice Chair for the Cambridgeshire Armed Forces Covenant Board.

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.

A new Armed Forces Covenant Officer came into role in April 2021. Tommy Kelly, himself, a British Army Veteran, had been caretaking the role part-time since Vikki Barr's departure in November 2020.

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

## Centre 33

Charlotte Currie presented to the Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board about a scheme that supports young carers. Centre 33 reached out to the board to demonstrate the support that young carers often need and through our partnership working Centre 33 have been introduced to and have engaged with numerous board partners

### Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance

Ian Razzell of the Veteran's Covenant Healthcare Alliance presented to the Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant Partnership board to explain the work that is going on within the NHS to support the Armed Forces Community. Ian Razzell's presentation included information on how the NHS are expanding on their understanding of the Armed Forces Community, commitments, and services to support to the Armed Forces Community and how Health inequalities are being assessed.

### The Census Engagement Team – ONS

The census this year included, for the first, time the "Service" question and Nicola Warnock, Census Engagement Manager, Peterborough presented to the board encourage engagement and raise awareness with local organisations and community groups to build positive relationships with community leaders to encourage and support people to take part. The census data should be available in 2022 and will help the boards understand that concentrations of veterans in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and

introduce suitable actions as required.

### Career Transition Partnership

The Career Transition Partnership are a partnering agreement between the MOD and Right Management and support service leavers with the transition to civilian life and provide support to thousands of organisations looking to employ ex-Service personnel. Trudy Reilly, Employer Relationship Manager, East of England, CTP presented both the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Boards this year and provided an insight into the support provided to the 14,000 service leavers per annum and the services for employers.

### Outside The Wire

Outside the Wire is a bespoke drug and alcohol service offering confidential advice and support to current and ex HM Forces personnel and their families. Wayne Copsey, Service Manager/Recovery Practitioner summarised the services that Outside the Wire provide and have been successfully funded to expand their support into Cambridgeshire.



# Raising Awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant with Town and Parish Councils

Wyton on the Hill Parish Council are close neighbours with RAF Wyton, a tri-service station in Huntingdonshire and signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2021. The council felt this was exceptionally important due to their association with RAF Wyton, to sign the Armed Forces Covenant, not only to support the work the council are currently undergoing, but also to protect their relationship for future projects and appointments.



Meeting with the new Station Commander at RAF Wyton, Chairman Samantha Sharp discussed their future projects and hopes for further partnerships whilst they both signed on the dotted line. Since signing the covenant the Council have

received positive comments regarding their support for the Armed Forces community.

At around the same time, further work was started to engage with other Parish & Town Councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to explain the Armed Forces Covenant and Community and how Parish and Town Councils could demonstrate their understanding and celebration of the Armed Forces Community. This was carried out with virtual and physical engagements and many delegates were surprised to learn how prevalent the Armed Forces Community is within their own Towns and Parishes.

The awareness presentations helped form an understanding of the disadvantages that can come with service life and the realisation of the opportunities to support the Armed Forces Community at Town and Parish level.

Several Town and Parish Councils have agreed to sign the Armed Forces Covenant in early 2022 and work will continue to highlight the Armed Forces Covenant to further councils into the new year.





# Housing and Homelessness

## Engagement with Housing Organisations

A project to engage with Social Housing providers in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough began this year and there was positive engagement with over half that were contacted. Working in Partnership with Cambridgeshire's and Peterborough's Armed Forces Covenant Officer many of those have adopted a suggested action plan to engage positively with the Armed Forces Community that may be resident in their properties, a member of staff or potential employees.

The action plan has been developed to be achievable without high resource demands on the Housing Organisation but balanced to produce a positive impact to Armed Forces Community residents.

This approach has supported the formation of good working relationships between the Armed Forces Covenant Officer and each Housing Organisation and includes the main actions below:

- Delivery of Armed Forces Covenant and Community Training to Resident Facing Staff
- Armed Forces Community awareness and support messaging on websites
- Promotion of Local and National Groups and Support Organisations to Armed Forces Community Residents
- Become a signatory of the Armed Forces Covenant
- Self-nominate for ERS and work through the awards
- Register with CTP/RFEA and Forces Family Jobs to recruits from the Armed Forces Community
- Create and internal staff network of Armed Forces Community members

As this project continues, momentum to support the Armed Forces Community grows and the challenges the Armed Forces Community can face are realised



meaning that more helpful and appropriate support is being offered on the ground.

An unplanned, although welcome, by-product of the engagements and training is that as numerous housing organisations areas of responsibility span over Cambridgeshire's border and engagement with Armed Forces Covenant Officers in other local authorities has been encouraged and facilitated from within Cambridgeshire.

## Kick Start Funding

### Shepreth Spitfires Under 7's Football Team

A funding grant of £1850.29 was awarded to the Shepreth Spitfires Under 7's football team in April and was used to fund flood lighting, grass seed and a hose pipe so that the organisers could provide an all-year-round training facility for the team.

The Spitfires are run by Lucy Smith and Sean Harper who are Veterans of the Regular and Reserve Army respectively and know how important it is to integrate Forces children and parents into the local community.

Lucy said, "We understand that friends outside of camp allow children to have alternative (sometimes less pressurised) social relationships and help adults to settle and feel a part of their local community as an alternative to the smaller camp community. It's great to have ties to come back to in the future or remain a part of if wives and husbands are from the local area. The Shepreth Spitfires Football Club provides integration as both children and parents of forces and civilian families become coaches, players, assistant coaches, referees, first aiders and fundraisers, working together to make grass roots football happen.



*We help with lifts to matches and to find lifts for parents on camp with multiple children when dad or mum is away. Currently 5 out of 9 of our volunteer coaches are forces or ex-forces all doing amazingly."*

*"One of the dads suffering from PTSD always spoke with Sean, he said it was good to talk to someone away from the army camp that has an understanding of the military. He was at Chicksands and would often referee for the children. His wife did all the paperwork for the football club to get Chartered Standard and both parents always mixed with the civvy parents, and their toddlers all played together."*

Lucy went on to explain how the club provided support after service was for those that need help, "Parents remain friends of the club as do the children when they leave to go to other postings. The children in particular chat online on their games with some of the boys that have gone back to Scotland and parents over WhatsApp etc. The club is a place that they all know that they can come and join in with again in any capacity at any time in the future."

One of the main objectives of the funding is to support the building of communities between Military/Civilian and Veteran Communities.

In response to this requirements Lucy added "Both Sean and I are veterans we never hesitate to bring military families into the club no matter the length of their stay and if they have tours and training coming up. Civilian assistant coaches take the teams when the military coaches of the team are away and behind the scenes Sean and I are working with everyone to do paperwork, get everyone on courses and to get everyone together at fundraising and outside of footie days. It is an eye opener for our civilian families

and children to understand how forces life works for their adult coaches and their teammates, everyone learns a lot about each other, children get a broad understanding at a young age of how other people's lives work which leads to greater appreciation of each other which is amazing to see happen."

The funding also required that the applicant demonstrates how their project supports the Armed Forces Community to engage in positive activity that is beneficial to their health and wellbeing. Lucy answered this,

"Football is great for health and wellbeing the children get all of the physical benefits while having a crazy time with their mates. This is like a snowball effect as the children go to each other's houses for more play time. The Civilian and Veterans' children get to go and play on the fields, playgrounds, and lakes at MRTC Bassingbourn while the Forces children get to go out in the village fields and other sporting places with their civvy teammates."

"Also, at the footie club we remember that each of the children come with their own little histories. It is our job to smooth the water when some of the children arrive with strong characters. We signed on a Forces child from MRTC Bassingbourn who had struggled settling at another club and had also been unsettled at school and was finding it hard to fit in to a civvy environment without being aggressive. We worked with him and his family for over three months to help him relax and focus his energy into football. He then thrived and it was wonderful to hear that he'd been on many play dates with his new friends. When he had to move on with his family all the team signed a shirt for him which he had framed and gave him some fantastic gifts. It was a very emotional moment, and we were very proud that during his time with the Spitfires we had helped him and his family."

"Another aspect of the roles that we and our volunteer coaches undertake is to support the quieter children gain confidence which comes on leaps and bounds over time. It is very heart-warming to see how far the children come, and we are always sad when they have to leave which is all part of being part of a Forces family. We are very proud to say that most of the time our little Spitfires have a stronger understanding of themselves, others and what it takes to be part of a team."

This project hit so many of the targets for the funding as it supports Regular, Veteran and Civilian families and children and with the funding it allowed the formation of the under 7's team to be able to train throughout the year with no changes to timings due to shorter days. This has impacted positively on the families who had found it difficult to manage schedules that were determined by differ day lengths throughout the seasons.

Another bonus to this project was the repurposing of a derelict bowling green that had fallen into poor state from lack of use. The Eternit Sports and Social Club, where the team is based, are very happy to support the team, which in turn provides revenue with training, games and tournaments providing significant added foot fall to the club.

### March Armed Forces Fair

A fund of £1500 has been earmarked an Armed Forces Fair that is scheduled to take place on the 4th of September 2022 in West End Park, March, Cambridgeshire. Event lead Lt Col "Spence" Spencer MBE has built the application 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 in March and the surrounding areas, 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 fair has had great interest from numerous Armed Forces organisations from Army Recruitments Teams to Bratwurst Stalls and Local Authority Support.

Crowds of 3000-5000 are expected and there is no charge to visit the fair.



# Partner News



## Cambridge City Council

In 2021, Cambridge City Council built on the work undertaken to reach the MOD ERS Bronze status to support an application in March 2022 for the MOD ERS Silver status by undertaking the following:

We have sought to understand who within our organisation is a former or current member of the armed forces (including reservists). This is an important starting point in ensuring that we are following the covenant aims internally as a responsible employer, especially if we are going to be promoting what we do externally.

- We keep our Armed Forces Covenant webpage updated to symbolise our commitment and to provide signposting information
- We mark and celebrate Armed Forces week each year
- We have ensured our leave and other policies adequately recognise and support reservists
- We held a corporate managers' briefing to promote our commitment to the covenant.
- We have actively sought ways to ask those with relevant backgrounds (including reservists) to share their experiences and wider learning to widen understanding of our commitment to the covenant.

In doing this, we have widened our cross service Armed Forces Covenant Group to better involve veterans. We have encouraged those veterans involved with the group to lead on ideas and initiative to support the wider AF community in the city, and they have brought forward some great ideas which have recently been implemented, such as the Armed Forces Breakfast Club. This is supported by a small subsidy and free use of one of our community centres. This is open to all with an armed forces connection, with food cooked by a veteran's Mum!

Other adaptations and improvements to support the AF Covenant:

- We now advertise roles on FFJ (Forces, Families, Jobs) website. We include a paragraph in our recruitment job packs to indicate our commitment to armed forces family members and to attract ex-military personnel to the organisation. We circulate our job opportunities/ potential work experience opportunities to other charities/ support agencies who are able to identify military candidates (e.g. Career Transition Partnership, Forces Employment Charity, Salute My Job). We seek to identify opportunities to attend events and jobs fairs (including online) to interact with military job seekers/ their families etc
- When dealing with potential commercial tenants who have a background in the Armed Forces, we now see if there can be more flexibility in terms of credit checks, references, amount of rent deposit etc.
- We promote the benefits that our Housing Lettings Policy offers i.e., around the local connection waiver and the additional priority offered to members of the armed forces.

Our organisation has embraced the Armed Forces Covenant, despite not being a tradition military town. Our staff have widened their understanding about the lives of serving and ex-military personnel and their families, and this has been of benefit to everyone.



## Fenland District Council

Fenland District Council signed the Community Covenant alongside Cambridgeshire County Council and all other District Councils in 2011 and achieved Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award in 2020.

During 2021, work to support the Armed Forces Community through the Covenant was increased and a small working group comprising of District Council Officers and Councillors with support from the Cambridgeshire Armed Forces Covenant Officer

started work on creating a District level action plan.

Within a matter of weeks and after a number of meetings the plan had evolved, and the initial core objectives are:

- Mapping of local and national Armed Forces Community support organisations for communication and signposting
- Promotion of the Armed Forces Covenant to Town and Parish Councils and explore opportunities to create a Parish and Town Council support forum to share knowledge and best practice
- Support the formation of an Armed Forces Community Hub/Drop-In in Fenland
- Work towards ERS Silver award
- Form an Armed Forces Covenant Support Working Group
- Engage with local businesses to understand and support the Armed Forces Community
- Embed AFC awareness through regular training including new starter induction training at Fenland District Council

The majority of the points of the action plan are underway as we head into 2022 and have already achieved encouraging responses from numerous Parish and Town Council Councils with several agreeing to sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

Fenland District Council are also looking forward to the March Armed Forces Fair which is scheduled for September 2022 and colleagues from FDC are supporting this event with their knowledge and expertise.

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

### **SSAFA Cambridgeshire & Bedfordshire AFC Report 2021**

On 24 March 2020, a nationwide lockdown was declared in the wake of the Covid-19 virus. This global pandemic saw life as we know it change, with the new normal being one of social distancing, face masks and limited or no contact with anyone outside of your own home or household bubble. SSAFA, the Armed Forces



charity continued to operate throughout the pandemic, but service delivery had to adapt to the government restrictions, with our beneficiaries and volunteer's safety and well-being paramount.

So, it was inevitable that the social restrictions related to COVID-19 would exacerbate the suffering of those who were already experiencing loneliness and/or social isolation, housing, and financial issues before the pandemic.

One year on, March 2021 and we were still seeing restrictions and lockdowns being imposed as SSAFA's volunteers continue to be faced with the challenge of adapting its service delivery. Despite this, the first half of 2021 saw our Cambridgeshire & Bedfordshire Branch continuing to provide support to those reaching out by means of virtual technology.

Since mid-July 2021, when we were allowed to start coming back out into the real world, as restrictions started to slowly be lifted, we have had over 120 contacts with 82 of them being given direct support via our Volunteer Caseworkers. Peterborough & Fens and Huntingdonshire & East Cambridgeshire Divisions proving to be fairly busy.

All this was achieved, due to the hard work and determination of our Volunteers to continue to go above and beyond because we all have one ethos, to provide Lifelong Support & Advice to those Serving, Veterans and their families.

What makes it all worth it for our Volunteers? Collaborating with other Partners such as Project Nova, The RAF Benevolent Fund (amongst others) and the positive feedback where we have made a difference. Most especially one instance where a huge

sense of accomplishment came to our Peterborough & Fens Division, when a client who was grateful for the help received, involving numerous runs back and forth, more so in the midst of a fuel crisis which was fed back to us from SSAFA Central Office.

Looking forward to the year ahead, we are keen to increase our profile in the Cambridgeshire & Bedfordshire region as well as to continue building our relationships with our AFC Partners to give a streamlined and robust support network.

As our Branch continue to build on our strengths, we

now have an office-based point of contact, making it easier to be contacted during normal office hours with an almost immediate response whether it be advice, signposting or raising the necessary actions to provide the support sought out and timely actioning of CRISIS requests. This sits alongside our Forcesline (0800 260 6767) which is also a free and confidential telephone helpline and email service.

T: 0800 9170 970 • M: 07721 261 544  
e-mail: [cambsandbeds.branch@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:cambsandbeds.branch@ssafa.org.uk)  
Forcesline: 0800 260 6767  
W: [www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk)



## 158 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps (RLC)

158 Regt RLC have had a busy year with several members of the regiment deployed as part of Op RESCRIPT including driving instructors supporting the Defence School of Transport, Leconfield as part of Project PHOENIX and the Commanding Officer as a Military Liaison Officer for the Department of Transport in London. Army Reservists have been mobilised to Cyprus to support Op TOSCA as well as Kenya and the Falkland Islands.

### 158 Regt RLC - 25th Anniversary Dinner

2021 was a very special year for all of us in 158 Regiment RLC which was formed 25 years ago when elements of The Royal Anglian Regiment were re-designated to 158 (Royal Anglian) Transport Regiment (The Royal Logistic Corps). This merged volunteers from two companies of the 5th Battalion, one company

of 6th Battalion, and one company of the 7th Battalion of The Royal Anglian Regiment.

The forming Squadrons of 158 Regiment have a rich history. The origins of 201 Squadron dates back to the Archibald Douglas Regiment formed in 1687 that later became the 16th of Foot in 1810. 202 and 203 Squadrons also date back to Foot Regiments formed in 1751 (the 12th and 17th respectively).

In 1996, when the Regiment changed roles from infantry to transport it retained the Royal Anglian affiliation in its title and continued to wear the infantry khaki beret. In July 2014, as a result of Army 2020 Refine (the implementation of the Government's Strategic Defence and Security Review - SDSR), the affiliation was dropped, the Regiment changed to the Royal Logistic Corps beret and re-subordinated under command of 102 Logistic Brigade.



Traditionally a Sgt from the Regiment is awarded the '158 Regiment RLC Steelback Sash' for the duration of the Dinner Night in recognition of the excellent work he or she has contributed over the previous 12 months. Sgt Bolden of 200 HQ Sqn was the winner this year.

### Driving Instructor Support to the Defence School of Transport

Sgt Jonathon Case is currently deployed with Project Phoenix, having been deployed on Op Rescript for some months prior and is supporting the Regular Army return to routine activities at the Defence School of Transport (DST).

As part of the Military Driver Training Squadron (MDTS) at the Defence School of Transport (DST),



Sgt Case's role has seen him teach Phase 2 students how to drive the MAN SV 6T GS and Land Rover TUM once they have passed the respective civilian driving tests. Whilst at DST, Sgt Case has also become involved in the Motocross Endurance Club even though never having ridden a motorbike before. 'I am now able to navigate the challenging off-road course and gain confidence with every lap I do' remarked Sgt Case.

### Falkland Islands Deployment

Pte Joel Barnett was mobilised to the Falkland Isles in March 2021 working with the RAF Motor Transport Section, 748 Troop and, as part of his duties, maintains an account for all vehicles as well conducting essential fuel resupply across the islands to pivotal ground-based assets on the Airfields.



To fulfil his job role, he passed the ADR Dangerous Goods qualification and trained to drive OSKOSH Fuel Tankers prior to deploying.

Pte Barnett's stand-out experience during the mobilisation was to witness a colony of Gentoo Penguins nesting with newly hatched chicks whilst tasked to drive to West Island to recover a Support Vehicle that had broken down.

Pte Barnett will return to the UK and his unit in mid-January having been deployed for over 10 months.

### Future for 158 Regt RLC

Following the Integrated Review, 158 Regt RLC will re-role and re-equip to become the sole Aviation Support Regiment within the RLC. This new role will see the Regiment supporting the UK's rotary winged aircrafts on exercises and operations throughout the world. The Regiment will gain new skills and qualifications to carry out their duties in support of the Aviation Brigade. All members of 158 Regiment RLC are looking forward to the exciting opportunities that lie ahead in delivering this unique operational capability.

### Transition Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS)

The NHS Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service has continued to operate at full capacity throughout the current financial year, we have refrained from the work from home model as it has been clear that after holding onto a trauma from service, we really need to be in the room with our Veterans. The service has continued to develop throughout the year, and we have been active in the Cambridge and Peterborough area in order to upskill existing staff within the local NHS mental health trust. We found on analysing last year's figures that our referral rates for the local are one of the lowest in East Anglia. A plan was launched to raise awareness of the service and to improve the skills and knowledge of the local mental health trust. Training with the Trust was undertaken during the summer. We are pleased to report they now also have an Armed Forces Champion highlighted, so welcome John Marham, John is an experienced clinician with a long history at Combat Stress.

Some very good news as we come to the end of the financial year is that as part of the Op Courage model, TILS will welcome in the new High Impact Service at

the end of January, the last part of England to do so. The High Impact Service will be a Veterans specific service that will target those with suicidal ideation and intensive emergency care and treatment if veterans are in Crisis. The referral pathway is currently through us at TILS and is still the single number on 0300 323 0137.

Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT) also achieved the old MOD Employers Recognition Scheme this year in recognition of our commitments to our employees with military commitments.

Nationally we have now seen over 18,000 individuals in the 4 years that we have been operational and will still endeavour to speak to individuals after referral within 10 days and will see face to face within 10 following on from that.

We have introduced an Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) clinic within the team in order to further enhance service provision. EMDR is a highly successful Trauma therapy in accordance with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidelines and all our clinicians are now trained or undergoing training. This again has reduced waiting times for longer term therapies.

Not a service to sit on its laurels, we have partnered with Anglia Ruskin University to undertake a piece of research into understanding how Women Veterans access or not the mental health care provisions that are on offer. This research will produce clear guidance to working with Female veterans and will develop best practice guidelines. See link for the health and Wellbeing of Female Veterans in the UK Report. We Also Served: The Health and Well-Being of Female Veterans in the UK - Veterans & Families Research Hub (vfrhub.com)

### RAF Wittering

2021 was a very busy year at RAF Wittering who were working with had 3 three funding streams from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust throughout the year

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

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





Wittering Families Centre. From left: Mark Davis MBE, Tommy Kelly, Jo Ward (Families' Centre Co-Manager), Wing Commander Jez Case, Kate Ringham-Ward (Families' Centre Co-Manager) and Rhys Thrower (Head Teacher Wittering Primary School).

This funding is 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 the village. They deliver a number of sessions 5 days a week for parent and child which includes Bumps & Babies, Ben Stay & Play, sensory sessions, baby massage, musical minis and also an opportunity to share parenting concerns whether you are a new mum, want to make new friends or learn new skills.



The Wittering Families' Centre - the first Stay & Play Session after re-opening.

Family Support is offered to families both within the setting, but also if needed to those with children attending school. The team work closely with SSAFA, health visitor, other health professionals and RAF Wittering Community Support Team.

The past two years has been a real challenge for

the Centre having to adapt to new ways of working during Covid as Centre was closed and then partly reopened in the summer to only meet parents/child in their outer area. However, as from September 2021, Centre has fully reopened.

### Tackling Loneliness Programme – Project Title – Something for everyone

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

This funding is to support service personnel and their families in tackling loneliness. RAF Wittering have identified a concern around, mental health issues, stress, and concerns around loneliness. Therefore, RAF Wittering have identified a number of projects that we hope will alleviate loneliness, bring people together, set up new projects and to ensure funding reaches as many parts of our Station and community as we can.

To date we have spent – £15,184.80



Mark Davis MBE, Tommy Kelly, and Wing Commander Jez Case with the RAF Wittering Station Cinema Team.

BSS Cinelink service – Station cinema. Needed funding to purchase Cinelink to enable Station Cinema to reopen. This has now reopened several nights a week and at weekends, enabling service personnel and their families to come together giving them an opportunity to get away from their room/block.

Twenty picnic benches, parasols, and plaques – this was identified as this allowed Station Personnel an opportunity to sit outside with others rather than in their room/block on their own. Station lacked outside seating space and now benches are located close to single living accommodation.



The Wittering Families' Centre – the first Stay & Play Session after re-opening.

We have also started a number of other projects across Station under “Tackling Loneliness programme”.

WITWELL (Wittering Wellbeing) Project – Once a month, a two-day walk and talk group around eight to 12 service personnel attend with our welfare team. It includes a walk to a local woodland trust site, camping, plus a chance to sit around a campfire to talk and offload in a safe environment. Participants are carefully selected via welfare and management squadron teams.



Allotment Project - Have identified a site on Station to bring personnel together. A chance to meet new people, brings individuals and squadrons together, learn new skills, share your knowledge with others. We have identified some land and project should commence early next year.

Wi-fi connection box for Community Learning Centre & Youth Drop In based in the village. This is to enable

families to come together to offer a wider range of courses and services. For our Youth Drop In again to widen what we already offer, increase the numbers attending clubs and encouraging more to come to our building to meet Youth team.

Staying in touch – Young people attending Wittering's Youth Drop In will be able to make use of the wi-fi box.

Planning a residential for young people next summer 2022. Carefully selected service family members who have had a tough time over the past 18 months. Working in partnership with Salvation Army at Hadleigh Farm.

### Deliver local Childminding training course

Amount Received £6,000 – commence 2019 – 1 year funding

Commenced to deliver childminding course in partnership with Peterborough City Council Early Years team. After a couple of false starts and then low uptake and the pandemic, course was shifted to online. The plan was to train 20 participants to enable them to qualify in childminding. To date we have spent £3,440

We are planning to run a new course in partnership with Peterborough City Council Early Years team from next year. We will offer the course to other Stations & units once a new date has been agreed.

### Supporters of Combat Stress

2021 has been a strange year for Supporters of Combat Stress. We managed to get up and running again and reaching out to those that we know that was on their own during the Pandemic, via phone, and social media.

The pandemic has taken its toll on a few Veterans and for them not to go out, was a major issue for some. For others it has been a major issue to get them back out of their homes and into some sort of 'normality'.

We have noticed a slow recovery of Veterans and their families joining us; however, it hasn't helped with the fact that we have had to change venue, due to our usual venue being used by the Law Courts and we are still looking for a suitable permanent venue moving forward.

Looking forward to 2022, we are hoping for a few trips out as well as a Celebration meal in June to mark the

Queens' Jubilee as well as our birthday. All Veterans/ Serving Personnel and their families are welcome to join us on the first Tuesday of the month from 10am - 12noon, at the City College Peterborough. We are also in the process of registering with the Charities Commission.

## Mission Ready Training Centre (MRTC) Bassingbourn

2021 was a busy year for Bassingbourn Barracks which is now the established home of the British Army's flagship training facility for personnel deploying on operations across the world.



MRTC, based at the barracks, in Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth Parish in South Cambridgeshire provides training and preparation to both units and individual personnel for operations with over 12,000 personnel attending some form of pre-deployment training every year.

MRTC combines the Mission Training and Mobilisation Centre previously based at Shorncliffe Barracks in Folkestone with the Mission Training and Mobilisation Centre (Individual) previously based at Chetwynd Barracks in Nottingham and the facility's role is to ensure that deploying personnel are fully trained to meet the many challenges they may face on operations, wherever across the world they may be.

MRTC has also mobilised and trained over 2,000 Army Reservists, both to support operations overseas and the UK's COVID-19 response through Operation RESCRIPT.

2021 saw a great deal of expansion, not only to the military facilities at MRTC, but also to the welfare provision within the barracks with,

- the restarting of Stay and Play sessions
- the appointment of a dedicated SSAFA Representative for the barracks
- the appointment a new Army Welfare Service Community Development Officer
- the formation of an Internal Welfare Committee
- links with a Parish-based Practical Solutions Group
- a new Welfare Office with 2 welfare rooms, 1 for younger children and families with a ball pit and toys and a second that provides a youth club 2-3 times a week and is also used by junior ranks to relax at other times.

Looking forward, MRTC, Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth Parish Council and the Cambridgeshire Armed Forces Covenant Officer for Cambridgeshire are looking at opportunities for collaborative projects between the local civilian community and serving personnel and their families.

## RAF Wyton

The Community Support Team continued to provide much needed engagement to the families at RAF Wyton, which is a Strategic Command Station and home to the Defence Intelligence Group and the National Centre for Geospatial Intelligence, which provide intelligence support to the Armed Forces deployed on operations around the globe, during 2021.

The Community Support Team applied for and was successful in achieving £10,000 funding for 'Bringing Wyton Community Together' project. With the easing



and then reintroduction of Covid-19 restrictions earlier in the year some activities had to be postponed meaning the Community Team had to continue to think about, and develop, activities under strict Covid-19 restrictions at times.

Armed Forces Covenant Funding that was earmarked for 2020 was carried over into 2021 as Covid-19 restrictions during 2020 had put so much work on hold. The funding was used during 2021 on a number of Community initiatives including a pantomime delivered at Wyton Primary School, Remembrance Day project, nesting box project, valentine picture book project, clay sculpting/ Christmas wreath making and various other innovative projects. A further £20,000 has been secured for 2021 -2022 in relation to a project called 'Reaching out to our Community'.

The Station's and Parish Council's relationship, although very positive, grew significantly stronger with the Parish Council signing the Armed Forces Covenant to demonstrate its understanding of, and commitment to the Armed Forces Community and the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Station Community Support Team continues to measure their impact on Wyton Families and gather feedback which helps shape the support required and provided.

## East Anglia Reserve Forces and Cadets Association

### Partnering with Defence: A Continuing Journey

Nationally, a record breaking 140 organisations received the Ministry of Defence's highest badge of honour: the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award during 2021.

The award celebrates those organisations that employ and support individuals who serve in the Armed Forces, veterans, and their families.

In Cambridgeshire, North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust received this truly outstanding accolade. The trust runs Peterborough City,

Hinchingbrooke and Stamford & Rutland, serving approximately 700,000 residents living in Cambridgeshire, South Lincolnshire, and the neighbouring counties.

North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust are a former Ministry of Defence Hospital Unit continuing to build from that experience and have become accomplished advocates for Defence People.

Employing an extremely large number of veterans, they have an established internal Armed Forces Network and have extensively supportive policies in place, going above and beyond by offering recently employed service leavers three days extra leave to maintain contact with the military community to assist with a smooth transition to the civilian workplace.

To win the award, organisations must provide ten extra paid days leave for Reservists and have supportive HR policies in place for veterans, Reserves, and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, as well as spouses and partners of those serving in the Armed Forces.



Pictured The Minister for Defence Procurement, Jeremy Quin MP presents the ERS Gold Award to Mr Robert Hughes, Chairman and Ms Louise Tibbert, Chief People Officer from North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust.

Organisations must also advocate the benefits of supporting those within the Armed Forces community by encouraging others to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and engage in the Employer Recognition Scheme.

Tremendous support for the Armed Forces community continued throughout 2021 with Anglia Ruskin University, Easy Resettlement Ltd, Forces Recruitment



Pictured 30 East Anglian employers attend ERS Silver Award 2021 at Madingley Hall hosted by H.M Lord-Lieutenant for Cambridgeshire, Julie Spence OBE and Commodore Rob Bellfield CBE, Commander – Naval Regional Command Eastern England.

Solutions Group Ltd, Lifting Equipment Engineers Association and Prima Electronic Services Ltd all based in Cambridgeshire receiving the ERS Silver Award.

Commenting on the 2021 awards, Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Leo Docherty said: *“I would like to thank all the organisations who have proven their support for the Defence community during such unprecedented and challenging times.*

*The vast range of those recognised this year demonstrates how employing the Armed Forces community makes a truly positive and beneficial impact for all employers, regardless of size, sector or location.”*

The East Anglia Reserve Forces and Cadets Association delivers employer engagement on behalf of the Ministry of Defence and welcomes any organisation to contact their Regional Employer Engagement Director to discover more about the benefits of partnering with Defence. Kristina Carrington can be contacted at [ea-empsp@rfca.mod.uk](mailto:ea-empsp@rfca.mod.uk)



# Forward Thinking & Conclusion

## Legislation

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All councils have already voluntarily signed the Armed Forces Covenant. The further enshrinement of the Covenant into law is an opportunity to build upon work councils 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.

The Covenant, in its current form, has been in operation for nearly ten years, during which time significant progress has been made to improve the lives of Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families. Since 2011, over 6,000 organisations and every local authority in Great Britain have made pledges to support the Armed Forces Community.

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

The legislation will impose 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

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

In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, we are engaging with the MOD, Local Government Association and Armed Forces Covenant Lead Officer from other Local Authorities to understand the new requirements. This will help 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.

## Action Plan

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The Action Plan for 2022 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 will also involve a lot of mapping work and involvement and support from members of the Armed Forces Community and support organisations.

This year saw a lot of this work with engagement from a 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 service are managed with an understanding of and consideration for the Armed Forces Community as part of everyday practice.



# Useful Links

**Cambridgeshire  
County Council**



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

**Peterborough  
City Council**



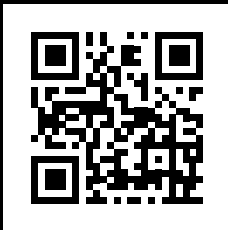
[www.peterborough.gov.uk](http://www.peterborough.gov.uk)

**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)



**ARMED FORCES  
COVENANT**



[covenant@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:covenant@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)