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| **MINUTES**  | **MEETING:** | Rotherham Armed Forces Community Covenant Group (AFCCG) |
| **DATE & TIME:** | Monday, 15th February 2021 (2.00 – 4.00pm) |
| **VENUE:** | Virtual via Microsoft Teams  |
| **CHAIR:** | Cllr Alan Buckley, Armed Forces Champion, Rotherham MBC |
| **MINUTES:** | Vicky Hartley, Executive Office Manager & Armed Forces Lead Officer, Rotherham MBC |
| **In Attendance**Cllr Alan Buckley (Armed Forces Champion, Rotherham MBC), Vicky Hartley (Executive Office Manager & Armed Forces lead officer Rotherham MBC), Craig Tyler (Head of Democratic Services, Rotherham MBC),Hayley Unwin (Member & Civic Support Team Leader, Rotherham MBC), Natasha Aucott (Homelessness Development Officer, Rotherham MBC), Jill Jones (Homelessness & Temporary Accommodation Placement Manager, Rotherham MBC), Major Adrian Hunt (Chairman, Rotherham MCVC & 102 Bn REME), Retired Major Charlie Helmn (Assistant Regimental Secretary, Yorkshire Regiment), Elaine Mason (Regional Co-ordinator for SY, Project Nova), Retired Colonel Jonathan Hunt (Regional Chairman, SSAFA), Captain Terry Reilly (PSAO, 146 Divisional Support Company, REME), John Topping (Secretary, Veterans Advisory & Pension Committee for Y&H), Ron Moffett (Royal British Legion & Rotherham MCVC), Samantha Mulholland (Wellbeing Practitioner, Sheffield Mind), Malcolm Blease (Chairman, RAF Rotherham), Captain David Tomlinson (102 Battalion REME), Sahfiq Hussain (Chief Executive, Voluntary Action Rotherham), Claire Duke (Station Manager, South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service).**Apologies Received** Andy Wallace (South Yorkshire Case Officer), Helen Wyatt (Patient & Public Engagement Manager, Rotherham CCG), Fiona Grayson (High Intensity Worker/Cognitive Behavioural Therapist, Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust), Andrew Denniff (Chief Executive, Barnsley, Rotherham Chamber of Commerce), Kevin Alsop (Personnel Recovery Unit North, Ministry of Defence). |
| **Item** | **Title**  | **Action**  |
| **1.****1.1** | **Welcome, Introductions and Apologies** Cllr Alan Buckley new Armed Forces Champion, Rotherham MBC welcomed all in attendance to the first virtual meeting. Individual introductions were given, and apologies noted as listed above. |  |
| **2.****2.1** | **Minutes of the last meeting, 24th February 2020 & Matters Arising** The minutes of the last meeting held on 24th February 2020 were agreed. Updates on progress of actions were picked up as part of the agenda for this meeting.  |  |
| **3.** **3.1****3.2****3.3****3.4** | **Local & Regional Action Plans** **Rotherham Armed Forces Community Covenant 5-Year Action Plan 2019-2024**Vicky Hartley (Executive Office Manager & Armed Forces lead officer, Rotherham MBC) ran through the Action Plan activity and progress of actions to date. One of the priority areas within the Action Plan is the Health and Well-being strand:* Increasing health and wellbeing for serving personnel and veterans.
* Mental Health - raising more awareness, early identification, intervention, signposting and promotion of available services.
* Suicide Prevention
* Tackling loneliness
* Encouraging more practices to work towards the Veteran’s Friendly GP Practice Accreditation Scheme, to ensure they comply with the Primary Care Armed Forces Covenant.
* Embedding provisions for the ex-service community within key policy / strategy documents such (Health & Wellbeing Strategy, Suicide Prevention Strategy and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment).

The next meeting would focus on these areas and appropriate leads (RDaSH, CCG and representatives from the Council i.e. Public Health Specialist for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention lead officer) would be invited to attend the May meeting.**South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan** Members noted the activity set out in the South Yorkshire-wide Armed Forces Community Covenant Action Plan which is due to be reviewed by the South Yorkshire Armed Forces Champions and lead officers in the coming weeks. Local Action Plans (Rotherham, Barnsley, Doncaster and Sheffield) will align to the South Yorkshire Plan. | Vicky Hartley, RMBC to liaise with partner and Council leads  |
| **4.****4.1****4.2****4.3****4.4** | **Veterans Mental Health Issues** John Topping, Secretary of the Veterans Advisory and Pension Committee for Yorkshire and Humber reported that there were approx. 70 veterans suicides last year and highlighted that he was not seeing much happening on the ground in local areas with regard to ATSD and Suicide Prevention. He also reported on delays in veterans being attended to by specialists.Members highlighted the need to receive data going forward to better understand the true picture in Rotherham. Elaine Mason, Regional Co-ordinator for South Yorkshire, Project Nova reported two new services established in Rotherham – Walking with the Wounded and a service through the NHS Veterans’ Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILs). She refers approximately two veterans per week which all receive the necessary support. A copy of the TILS Referral Form will be circulated to all Members outside the meeting.  | Vicky Hartley, RMBC to liaise with Council and partner leadsElaine Mason, Project Nova / Vicky Hartley, RMBC |
| **5.****5.1****5.2****5.3****5.4** | **Support to Homeless Veterans** Vicky Hartley (Executive Office Manager and Armed Forces lead officer, RMBC), Jill Jones (Homelessness & Temporary Accommodation Placement Manager, RMBC) and Natasha Aucott (Homelessness Development Officer, RMBC) updated on work taking place in Rotherham and across South Yorkshire to support homeless veterans. The four South Yorkshire Councils are working in partnership with the Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authority to deliver support to homeless members of the armed forces community as a result of funding made available by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (£90k) in late 2019. The three projects are as follows:1. **Development of a South Yorkshire E-learning Module (£15k)**

E-learning package, specifically about homeless ex-services personnel and their families developed and rolled out across all South Yorkshire Councils for homelessness officers, estate management and housing officers on the ‘front line’ and also been introduced to other key organisations and charities that deal with veterans and other partners within Community Covenant Groups. 1. **Development of Strategy & Good Practice (£20k).**

A strategic review of the approach taken by each Council’s Homelessness Team in relation to identifying and responding to veterans and their families. This has included identifying best practice in relation to supporting this cohort, applying relevant legislation and providing recommendations for improvement and working towards creating a consistent and excellent approach to responding to homeless veterans and their families across South Yorkshire. Homeless Link (a national homelessness organisation who specialise in undertaking review of homelessness services) and Stoll (leading provider of supported housing to vulnerable veterans) undertook this work and as part of the project delivered specialist veteran awareness training to each Council’s Homelessness Team. A copy of their final report included in the agenda pack for this meeting was noted by Members.The Armed Forces Officer leads and Homelessness / Housing leads from each of the South Yorkshire Councils are working together to review all the recommendations as outlined in the report to develop a South Yorkshire approach. 1. **Homeless Veterans’ Service Provision (£55k)**

Funding is in the process of being split between the four South Yorkshire Councils with Rotherham receiving £16,250.Jill Jones (Homelessness & Temporary Accommodation Placement Manager, RMBC) reported that lead officers in RMBC’s Homelessness Teams are currently liaising with Sheffield City Region regarding the funds (to be spent by 2022) which will be used to provide immediate support to veterans to provide appropriate accommodation and support if this is required. This will be in the form of a personalisation fund which may include bond and rent in advance to secure private rented accommodation, deposit for housing association tenancy and any associated set up costs for a new home, e.g. carpets, furniture, bedding and other household costs. In addition, bus passes or other financial support to find work or training may be considered, such as clothing.Members asked how this money could be accessed. More detail will be available through the Council’s Homelessness Team who will communicate to all Members once the funding has been allocated by Sheffield City Region to the Council so that appropriate referrals can be made to support veterans who may require support.It was confirmed that veterans would not have to repay anything back to the Council. | Jill Jones / Natasha Aucott, RMBC  |
| **6.****6.1****6.2****6.3** **6.4****6.5****6.6****6.7****6.8****6.9****6.10****6.11****6.12****6.13****6.14****6.15****6.16****6.17** | 1. **General Update**

Armed Forces Bill **It was noted the** [Armed Forces Bill](https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2822/publications), which was introduced in the House of Commons on 26 January 2021, includes proposals to consolidate the tenets of the Armed Forces Covenant; namely recognition of the unique obligations and sacrifices of serving personnel; the principle of no disadvantage as a result of this service; and recognition that special provision may be justified as a result of it. The legislation, which will focus on local and regional provision of Education, Housing, and Healthcare services can be accessed [**here**](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fu7061146.ct.sendgrid.net%2Fls%2Fclick%3Fupn%3D4tNED-2FM8iDZJQyQ53jATUSIOzDLc7dt7vqqTtpHBPu9vmoLNmRhaxikIg7Jnzyn6xmjPVdPZ8WCiLAabtTYzba2EG-2BZGwXqfS8ljVl927WlAzeNll5WuGou4pKX-2Fq8uujLVp7HpU2WQtByxVGGv-2FgA-3D-3DXA5e_I8B0La722FaheTZHi47R612UF7JsEtctKoGr3qzK8teB10C0qHW7fVWpI6wHGxDf0qUEzGXCGOV1MHc0lGAbR-2BdxpPhdBDBOzodaVwpAgGhjdEdz4p95X1LmTYb3nLQ-2FL7xCCJFfJZW2C-2FsJV3uOiFPTy7N7woKQLCKE9bcfe1BC28zV09ODP2LV8bZk74dljIIhtfuWx4nmR8MOmNkeNaMpMFLTavr4vZDfqUc-2Bq8BPT2TZOxDoBI8vsgMend4klFVoRi-2FtJKemVTvvPGcogL-2FfGe4vhpkGnHw8E0gvIqnbjCLmd-2B-2FZ2KOE8CHqyUy9iplcYfkeajqA7GdRKNWFD1tppK2U-2F0McbW-2Blb4BSET-2BVhMQI-2FeIYiFm66gj7Yhob&data=04%7C01%7CVicky.Hartley%40rotherham.gov.uk%7C09348e0618f148b387b308d8c48b7794%7C46fbe6fd78ae47699c1dbcea97378af6%7C0%7C0%7C637475450589942135%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=Jah0MxG8VPqZsA7x3Q6hE%2BAYPUnw6%2FpkYTmRCrW77eo%3D&reserved=0), and the relevant explanatory notes are available [**here**](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fu7061146.ct.sendgrid.net%2Fls%2Fclick%3Fupn%3D4tNED-2FM8iDZJQyQ53jATUSIOzDLc7dt7vqqTtpHBPu9vmoLNmRhaxikIg7Jnzyn6xmjPVdPZ8WCiLAabtTYzbXYJRkKOyC15IagIjvewLK-2BtuWMh8Fmapw9yZM0U5Sc0k-2BenIKp6w2-2BNUCrn-2FdGNXw-3D-3Dd3wL_I8B0La722FaheTZHi47R612UF7JsEtctKoGr3qzK8teB10C0qHW7fVWpI6wHGxDf0qUEzGXCGOV1MHc0lGAbR-2BdxpPhdBDBOzodaVwpAgGhjdEdz4p95X1LmTYb3nLQ-2FL7xCCJFfJZW2C-2FsJV3uOiFPTy7N7woKQLCKE9bcfe1BC28zV09ODP2LV8bZk74dljIIhtfuWx4nmR8MOmNkeNXXWy-2BcLiCAmsWUFqod-2BgJb2rDPQqLN0aqiSxtp9gpqLk02jZ6BEMjIqBVN1rZZZHJVJoEaO9ZoN85Vl2-2BpABjmPYiab3tTJbyvrZrVxJKWNOxre0VpD3Ja7sT9GUG1D0lHma9V3czCJZtBHoZSvrVs4CzRbSLlXSwzeUyN6nTJr&data=04%7C01%7CVicky.Hartley%40rotherham.gov.uk%7C09348e0618f148b387b308d8c48b7794%7C46fbe6fd78ae47699c1dbcea97378af6%7C0%7C0%7C637475450589942135%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=KBQDuBjitqpS22crqm86ik6Oybf5MmiauhmexnU%2BsYg%3D&reserved=0). The Government’s aim is to complete the passage of the Armed Forces Bill through both Houses, and the Committee phase, by the autumn. The Bill had a Second Reading on 8 February 2021.Covid / Department of Health Lateral Flow Testing programme in Rotherham It was noted that the Department of Health Lateral Flow Testing programme is now underway at Rotherham Council’s Riverside House Café in the town centre thanks to the tireless work of Council staff and support from the Royal Navy. Lt James Dennis from the Royal Navy (Submariner Engineer based in Bristol) who had been seconded to the Council to assist with the set-up of the new rapid testing programme for asymptomatic frontline workers has played a key role in the establishment of this programme and Members of the Covenant Group recorded their thanks alongside the Mayor of Rotherham.1. **Covenant Group Member Updates**

Sheffield Mind Samantha Mulholland, Keeping Families in Mind Coordinator, Sheffield Mind informed Members that there has been a significant increase in referrals over the last few months and updated Members on support available for families of serving personnel and veterans as follows:* Movement & Mood Group – commenced 9th February running for a 6 week period.
* PTSD Course commenced in December and is being re-run in March to accommodate those who were unable to make the first tranche of sessions (3 days over a 3 week programme).
* Book club due to start in April.

Yorkshire Regiment Major (Ret’d) Charlie Helmn, Yorkshire Regiment updated Members on preparations with regard to Capt Sir Tom Moore’s funeral, 1st, 2nd and 4th Battalion activity events and engagement with veterans in relation to their work with the NHS on testing sites across Yorkshire. The 6th June 2021 is a key date which will see the 15th birthday of the founding of The Yorkshire Regiment and the official opening of the British Normandy Memorial. The Regiment are planning on representing the County at the unveiling in France (subject to COVID pandemic restrictions).Major Helmn also highlighted there has been a significant drop in the number of Benevolent Fund applications or request for welfare support, something reported on by most service charities. Procedures are in place to rapidly get support to any veterans or their families once they are identified.Royal British Legion Ron Moffett, RBL reported that the Legion had re-banded itself in the last month. Support is still being provided which is mainly home based (online and by telephone). The Leeds Headquarters building is currently closed due to COVID.A ‘*Facing Loneliness Together*’ event is being held on 23rd February (11am -12pm) organised by RBL to raise awareness and reduce the stigma of loneliness and social isolation amongst members of the Armed Forces, veterans, their families, and carers.Project NovaElaine Maison, Regional Co-ordinator for South Yorkshire, Project Nova updated on the expanding work of Project Nova and on the number of cases they are currently dealing with in relation to working with veterans who are about to leave prison, with many cases more complex.SSAFAMajor Adrian Hunt, Branch Secretary, SSAFA informed Members that Rotherham is currently down 50% on case management though still active and can be contacted though the usual channels. Rotherham MCVCRotherham MCVC are still in contact with a significant number of veterans due to being able to hold virtual Zoom meetings as a result of being in a position whereby devices have been made available to veterans. It was also reported that sadly, a Rotherham veteran had lost their life due to Covid.1. **Veterans Outreach Connection Project**

[www.rotherhammcvc.org.uk/projects/veterans-outreach-connection/](http://www.rotherhammcvc.org.uk/projects/veterans-outreach-connection/)Members were presented with a final report of the ‘*Strengthening Local Government Delivery of the Covenant – South Yorkshire Veterans Outreach Connection Project*’ which had a restricted grant of £101,050 for a 2 year term (2018 – 2020) and came to an end on 26th July 2020. The report detailing the milestones, outcomes, data capture and costs was noted by Members.Vicky Hartley, RMBC reported that due to COVID, the South Yorkshire Councils are currently of the view that it is logical at this time to de-commission the service given there are no events and Council’s would not be encouraging gatherings of any kind. To have any longer lasting impact, future governance arrangements would need to be agreed and put in place with appropriate funding and resources available to facilitate this objective and discussions are ongoing with the South Yorkshire Councils regarding a number of future options. Further discussions will take place between the South Yorkshire Councils and Rotherham MCVC in May 2021 and Members will be kept informed of progress. | All Members are encouraged to send social media greetings to show supportVicky Hartley, RMBC / Major Adrian Hunt, MCVC  |
| **7.**  | **Next Meeting & Future Dates*** Monday, 24th May 2021 (2.00 – 4.00pm)
* Monday, 6th September 2021 (2.00 – 4.00pm)
* Monday, 13th December 2021 (2.00 – 4.00pm)
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