



**PROUDLY  
SUPPORTING  
THOSE WHO  
SERVE.**

## Minutes

Rotherham Armed Forces Community Covenant Group (AFCCG) – 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023

### IN ATTENDANCE

Cllr Eve Rose Keenan (Chair)	Armed Forces Champion, Rotherham MBC
Vicky Hartley	Member & Civic Support Manager & Armed Forces lead officer, Rotherham MBC
Emma Colley	Member & Civic Support Officer, Rotherham MBC
Kim Firth	Homelessness & Temporary Accommodation Manager, Rotherham MBC
Ron Moffett	Member, Royal British Legion (Rotherham)
Elaine Mason	OP Nova Case Worker, Op Nova / Forces Employment Charity
Amanda Naylor	Service Manager, OpCourage North
Danella Senior	Clinical Team Manager, OpCourage North
Hannah Hall	Engagement & Inclusion Lead, Patient Experience, Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust
Maj MP Lynch	The Royal Yorkshire Regiment
Jonathan Hunt	Regional Chairman, SSAFA
Malcolm Blease	Chairman, Royal Airforce Association (Rotherham)
Pauline King	Regional Employer Engagement Director, Reserves' Forces & Cadets' Forces Association for Yorkshire and Humber
Cllr Ian Jones	Executive Group Chairman, Rotherham Military Community Veterans Centre

### APOLOGIES RECEIVED

Major Adrian Hunt	Veterans Advisory Pensions Committee (VAPC) Member & SSAFA
Lt Col RA McPherson	Veteran and former High Sherriff of South Yorkshire
Helen Wyatt	Engagement Manager (Rotherham), NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board
Steve Lowe	Regional Manager, Op Nova / Forces Employment Charity
Sandra Tolley	Head of Housing Options, Rotherham MBC
Steve Bentham-Bates	Chief Executive Officer, Help 4 Homeless Veterans
Neil Halsey	Armed Forces Champion, Department for Work and Pensions
Chris Bradley	Project Co-ordinator, Hidden Faces (Rotherham MCVC)

Item	Title	Action
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome, Introduction and Apologies</b>	
<b>1.1</b>	Cllr Eve Keenan, Rotherham's Armed Forces Champion & Chair of the Rotherham Armed Forces Community Covenant Group welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of the last meeting, 7<sup>th</sup> August 2023 and Matters Arising</b>	
<b>2.1</b>	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record with items to be updated on covered on the agenda for this meeting.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Homelessness Prevention and Housing Support</b>	
<b>3.1</b>	<p>Kim Firth (Homelessness &amp; Temporary Accommodation Manager, Rotherham Council) updated on actions the Council is taking to look at immediately addressing the barrier recently identified in the Council's Housing Allocations Policy. She confirmed that the Council's Head of Housing Options is in the process of undertaking a light touch review and will be proposing to amend the Council's current policy which will remove the 5-year ruling in the policy. A Council Officer Decision Notice has been prepared and Members of the Covenant Group will be notified when this has been approved and the change to policy is implemented.</p> <p><i>Post Meeting update: A Council Officer Decision Notice has now been approved and Policy updated in November 2023.</i></p>	Vicky Hartley

<p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p>	<p>Kim also highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 3 bands within the housing register – those protected by the Armed Forces Covenant get band 1 or band 2 priority, but emphasised the priority given it is still based on need across the borough.</li> <li>• The Council's Homelessness Team carry out a weekly rough sleepers walk, every Wednesday at 6am – to date on these walks there has been no member of the Armed Forces Community presenting as homeless.</li> <li>• The Homelessness Prevention Grant is still available and can assist with rent in advance and bond for those who qualify.</li> </ul> <p>A summary on the latest position of available accommodation / housing stock in Rotherham was also provided and confirmed there were 722 voids relet between April – September, 87 households secured a direct let; of the cases presenting as homeless, 179 secured a Council house, 24 Housing Association, 44 into supported living and 122 went into private rent.</p> <p>Kim also reported on the recent Catcliffe floods and support the Council is providing to residents. Vicky Hartley confirmed that colleagues in the Council who are out on the ground supporting communities are asking the question to identify if there are any members of the Armed Forces community affected and to date no one has identified.</p> <p><i>Post Meeting Update: Help4Homeless Veterans Charity confirmed they would be providing small grants of £300 to any members of the armed forces community impacted by the floods.</i></p>	
<p>4.</p> <p>a)</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p> <p>b)</p> <p>4.4</p>	<p><b>Rotherham's Armed Forces Community Covenant Group Action Plan</b></p> <p><b>Updates against activity set out in the Action Plan</b></p> <p>Vicky Hartley reported that delivery timescales had now been included for activity set out in the Action Plan as requested at the last Covenant Group meeting.</p> <p>She also reported that a new Armed Forces Strategic Group had been established in the Council which consists of senior management from all lead service areas across the Council (Adult Social Care, Public Health, Housing, Education, HR, Customer Services, Neighbourhoods etc). The Group is chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive and will have oversight for ensuring the Council's support for the armed forces and requirements in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant Duty is fully embedded into all mainstream services.</p> <p>The main area where significant progress has been made in relation to the Action Plan was in relation to Housing as reported earlier in the meeting (item 3).</p> <p><b>Loneliness – engaging with the armed forces community</b></p> <p>Vicky Hartley presented a paper on behalf of Ruth Fletcher-Brown, the Council's Public Health Specialist who was unable to attend the meeting. The paper set out the Council's Loneliness Action Plan which has been signed up to by all Health and Well-being Board partners and identifies one of the actions within the Plan to understand the needs of specific groups / communities who are more at risk of loneliness. Given the Armed Forces Community is identified as a group that is more at risk of loneliness, Rotherham Public Health want to engage with the local Armed Forces Community and run some Focus Groups with the intention of the findings to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate into a Loneliness Chapter in the JSNA (Rotherham Health Data Hub).</li> <li>• Used to help inform Commissioners and Providers about the needs of these communities.</li> <li>• Incorporated into Making Every Contact Count Loneliness training for staff and volunteers across Place.</li> <li>• Develop specific actions to address this.</li> </ul> <p>Covenant Members were very supportive of this approach and Public Health conducting this piece of work.</p>	

4.5	<p>Vicky Hartley will assist Public Health Officers with making contact with the Armed Forces Community in Rotherham through representatives on the Covenant Group and keep the Covenant Group updated on progress of this work.</p> <p><i>Post Meeting Update: Ruth Fletcher-Brown and colleagues scheduled to meet with veterans at Rotherham MCV on 16<sup>th</sup> February and will feedback on outcome at the next Covenant Group meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> February.</i></p>	Vicky Hartley / Ruth Fletcher-Brown
5.	<p><b>South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Activity</b></p> <p>5.1 Vicky Hartley reported that the South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Group has reconvened quarterly meetings and recently refreshed it's Action Plan which was shared with Members of the Covenant Group.</p> <p>5.2 At their last meeting in September, it was proposed to have an Annual Conference with all Covenant Group members invited across South Yorkshire (Sheffield, Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham). Further details would be provided next year.</p> <p><i>Post Meeting Update: Email sent on 31<sup>st</sup> October to all Covenant Group members providing details of the South Yorkshire Covenant Board event on 19<sup>th</sup> November.</i></p>	
6.	<p><b>South Yorkshire Veterans Seminar, 2<sup>nd</sup> October</b></p> <p>6.1 Ron Moffett, Royal British Legion confirmed that the seminar took place hosted at Rotherham Town Hall on 2<sup>nd</sup> October and very well attended with over 50 people turning out on the day. Op Nova, Op Restore, Op Courage and the Department for Work and Pensions all gave valuable updates on the work they were doing for our veterans.</p> <p>6.2 Ron had received positive feedback, both about the seminar and the venue and asked if the timings for the next seminar could be extended. Ron reported that he was disappointed to note that there was lack of representation from veterans charities despite being invited, however overall the seminar was a great success.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Covenant Group Member Updates</b></p> <p>7.1 <b>Steve Bentham- Bates, Help for Homeless Veterans</b>  There was no representation from the charity at this meeting, but a short summary report was read out by Emma Colley, Member and Civic Support Officer at Rotherham Council on behalf of Steve Bentham Bates.</p> <p>Since the last meeting in August 2023, Help for Homeless Veterans has helped 11 Veterans (5 of which had links to Rotherham). The financial support includes: emergency B&amp;B, rent payments, food and furniture. An application has been submitted for the grant to continue the free veterans visits to the Veterans Therapy Farm in 2024 and is currently awaiting a decision.</p> <p>7.2 <b>Hannah Hall, Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust</b>  Funding has been successful for a full-time post (Armed Forces Welfare Advisor) and all being well recruitment will start within the month with a view to the role commencing in January 2024.</p> <p>Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust has been invited to input on the Forces Connect App which is an app that anyone can get on their phone, device or computer to tell them about the support services available locally for the armed forces community. Information: <a href="https://www.armedforcesnetwork.org/resources/forces-connect-app/">https://www.armedforcesnetwork.org/resources/forces-connect-app/</a> Although current locations on the App are more focused in the South, they have invited Rotherham to create their own area of support information, however this can always be expanded to a South Yorkshire-wide resource at a later date.</p> <p>Hannah circulated information on the Defence Medical Welfare Service in the meeting.</p>	



DMWS flyer.jpg

- 7.3 Major MP Lynch, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment**  
November is a busy month for all the Remembrance Services – the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion will be attending a Regimental service at York Minster and taking part in the marching contingent at London as part of the Remembrance Parade. Currently there are troops deployed to Iraq and Estonia. Major Lynch also reminded the group that every serviceman has access to a benevolent fund which helps those struggling due to the cost-of-living crisis, £100k was given out last year, which RBL matches 100% and SSAFA coordinates.
- 7.4 Cllr Ian Jones, Rotherham MCVC**  
Further funding has been secured from the National Lottery to fund Chris Bradley for a further 2 years. MCVC are also looking at appointing a part-time admin post and are also working on implementing a database and are looking into a data sharing agreement with other partners. The database will take around 18 months to get up and running. The daily drop-ins have now increased thanks to additional funding. MCVC have been supporting VAR at Catcliffe following the recent floods, in providing teas and coffees to those affected. MCVC are also working on loneliness and isolation amongst veterans and working with organisations, including the Citizens Advice Bureau at Doncaster to help identify veterans affected by those issues.
- 7.5 Elaine Mason, Op Nova / Forces Employment Charity**  
There is still a significant amount of casework and Op Nova will be having its Regional Launch at Manchester in November.
- 7.6 Amanda Naylor/ Danella Senior, OpCourage North**  
Now working under an integrated service with one pathway and working on building links, sharing information and ensuring working from a joined up approach. Would welcome an opportunity to provide more of an overview of the work of the Trust at the next meeting of the Covenant Group.
- Employee Recognition Scheme Gold status has recently been awarded to the Trust and an awards ceremony will be held in November for the presentation of the award. The Trust will also be holding a Remembrance Service on 12<sup>th</sup> November.
- 7.7 Pauline King, Reserves' Forces & Cadets' Forces Association for Yorkshire and Humber**  
Submissions will be open from the 9<sup>th</sup> January with deadline of end March for the Employee Recognition Scheme awards. There may be some changes to the submission process and this information will be rolled out once available.
- Following the success of their first joint Cadet Careers Fair earlier this year, they are now planning for next year's event which will be held on Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> February in York. The aim of the event is to bring members of the Sea Cadets, Army Cadet Force and Air Training Corps, aged 15½ -18, from across all of Yorkshire, the Humber and North East Lincolnshire.
- 7.8** Military business expo Bradford was well attended – another is scheduled for the 12<sup>th</sup> March at Sheffield Wednesday Football and is open to all signatories and invites to be sent shortly.
- 7.9 Malcolm Blease, Royal Airforce Association (Rotherham)**  
Continued support is being provided to a veteran who was helped into housing earlier this year.
- 7.10 Jonathan Hunt, SSAFA**  
Nothing to report, but highlighted to the Covenant Group he was proud to be on the group of individuals who cared so much about the Armed Forces Community and very grateful to the support provided.

7.11	<b>Ron Moffett, Royal British Legion (Rotherham)</b> RBL have £10million set aside for the cost of living crisis which is still available for those who need it. The RBL are looking to reinvent and focus on a wider spectrum of youth (5 to 25 years) rather than just focussing on Cadets. It is a very busy time with the Poppy appeal, the new TV appeal advert has gone live and a new eco-friendly poppy is available.	
7.12	<b>Cllr Keenan, Rotherham Council's Armed Forces Champion</b> Introduced drop-in sessions at Rotherham MCVC from September taking place on the first Friday of the month and is attending the South Yorkshire Breakfast Club on the first Saturday of the month. Also approached Shiloh about doing a surgery alongside them and the RBL every couple of months.	
8.	<b>Rotherham's Remembrance Parade &amp; Service, 12<sup>th</sup> November</b>	
8.1	Vicky Hartley confirmed this year's Remembrance Civic Event will be held in Clifton Park with refreshments from 10am for invited guests and dignitaries. The parade will set off from the top of Clifton Park at 10.35am heading to the Cenotaph where the Service will take place, 2 minutes silence and wreath laying.	
8.2	The car park at Clifton Park Museum will only be available for the marching contingent and civic dignitaries and closed to the public to ensure health and safety and restriction of vehicles given the parade involving all contingents, cadets and veterans will require the car park to fall out.	
8.3	The Council's Events Team are ensuring the appropriate communications are sent via social media platforms and appropriate road signage will be displayed ahead of the event directing to alternative car parking.	
9.	<b>Any Other business</b>	
9.1	The Office for Veterans' Affairs are carrying out a consultation around supporting our veterans and participation is encouraged. The consultation can be filled in if a veteran, a supporting organisation or a civilian. Consultation closes on 4 <sup>th</sup> January. <a href="https://www.gov.uk/supporting-our-veterans-a-consultation">Supporting Our Veterans: A Consultation - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</a>	
10.	<b>Future Meetings</b>	
10.1	These would all be held in person at Rotherham Town Hall (2-4pm) on Mondays: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024  <b>Agenda for this meeting to focus on spotlight on the work led by colleagues from the Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.</b></li> <li>Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024</li> <li>Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2024</li> <li>Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024</li> </ul>	Vicky Hartley / Amanda Naylor / Danella Senior