



Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2022

Virtual meeting held on Microsoft Teams

Present:

Air Cdre Kevin Pellatt (KP)	Norfolk Armed Forces Commissioner (Chairman)
Vanessa Plumley (VP)	RAF Families' Federation
Wg Cdr Rachel Portlock (RP)	RAF Marham
Cdr Andy Swain (AS)	Royal Navy
Craig Chalmers (CC)	Norfolk County Council
Samantha Armitage (SA)	Breckland District Council
Jamie Athill (JA)	Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Norfolk
Tim Allen (TA)	Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Norfolk
Capt John Davies (JD)	1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards
Cllr Keith Kiddie (KK)	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Stuart Dark (SD)	King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
Nigel Clarke (NC)	Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
Wayne Farrow (WF)	DWP
Petra Claxton (PC)	Guest Speaker: Walking with the Wounded (Item 2 only)
Stewart Blackburn (SB)	Guest Speaker: Veterans' Advisory & Pensions Cttee (Item 3 only)
Stephen Heard (SH)	Guest Speaker: Veterans' Advisory & Pensions Cttee (Item 3 only)
Merry Halliday (MH)	Norfolk County Council
Bev Herron (BH)	Norfolk County Council

Apologies:

Sarah Rhoden (SR)	Norfolk County Council
Frank Hughes (FH)	SSAFA
Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen (SCA)	Breckland District Council
Maj Gavin Rushmere (GR)	3rd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment
Cdre Rob Bellfield (RB)	Royal Navy
Chris Haystead (CH)	Norwich City Council
Jan Feeney (JF)	Norfolk County Council
Maj Ben Matthews (BM)	1 st The Queen's Dragoon Guards
Andy Tovell (AT)	Norfolk County Council
David Powell (DP)	Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
Dr Andrew Hayward (AH)	NHS
Sqn Ldr Stew Geary (SG)	Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Norfolk

Paul Smith (PS)
Jocelyne Newman (JN)

RBL
RAF Marham

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

- 1.1. KP welcomed everyone attending today and listed the apologies.
- 1.2. Wg Cdr Rachel Portlock (RAF Marham), Tim Allen (RFCA) and Maj Ben Matthews (QDG - unable to attend) were welcomed as new members of the Board.
- 1.3. It was noted Samantha Armitage is substitute for Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen.
- 1.4. KP asked for any comments on the minutes of the previous meeting, held 24 March 2022. There were none. The minutes were agreed.

2. Virtual Speaker – Petra Claxton, Veteran Liaison and Support Officer - Walking with the Wounded

- 2.1 Petra Claxton gave a presentation on the NHS's High Intensity Service (HIS). The HIS works with veterans and their families who are at risk of a mental health crisis.
- 2.2 KP asked about the number of clients supported by each VLISO. WWTW try to keep caseloads low; no more than 6 in any one time because the support is bespoke. Since the launch of the service in March 2022, the Eastern Region has had 52 cases.
- 2.3 KP enquired whether the HIS receive referrals from charities such as SSAFA and the RBL. PC replied there were no referrals from welfare organisations, although as they could make referrals into the Transition, Liaison and Intervention Service (TILS) where they would be triaged. This was confirmed by NC, who added that if the veteran had high intensity needs, the TILS Service would refer them directly in to the HIS.
- 2.4 RP was interested to know how success is measured and when the HIS stops engaging with an individual. PC explained it's important to stabilise the veteran and enable them to access therapy with a view to getting them back into employment. Some clients are offered counselling through WWTW's Head Start programme. This lasts 12 weeks and after it, they are still able to access support. They can be handed over to their GP or to the TILS Service.
- 2.5 TA asked what the funding arrangement is. PC said the HIS is being recommissioned under NHS England (NHSE) from April next year. NC expanded on this saying NHSE have put out new tender for all three mental health services under Op Courage, triaged through a single point of contact. Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust have bid and should know by mid-October as to whether NHSE accept the model to roll out by 1/4/23.

3. Virtual Speaker – Stewart Blackburn and Stephen Heard, Veterans’ Advisory and Pensions Committee

- 3.1. SB gave a presentation on the role of the Veterans’ Advisory and Pensions Committee.
- 3.2. KP said he is concerned about the number of support organisations operating in the veteran space and believed benefits would be accrued from merging some of the charities, particularly when there is a shortage of case workers and volunteers. SB agreed, saying the VAPC has an important role to take this message from regions back to Ministers.
- 3.3. SB introduced SH to the Board, outlining his role as Norfolk’s lead in the VAPC.
- 3.4. KP identified the work of the VAPC as an opportunity for things to improve for veterans.

4. Board Membership – An additional place for the Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee

- 4.1. MH highlighted the key points in the report.
- 4.2. JA thought it would be good idea to have VAPC on the Board – since the start of Covenant there has been a lack of information from the MOD on how policy intentions are being carried out and a lack of coordination. The VAPC now has a better regional viewpoint and good Norfolk representative.
- 4.3. WF expressed his support as many of the DWP’s clients could be helped by the VAPC.
- 4.4. KP asked the serving community reps for the ‘in service’ view of VAPC. RP said she wasn’t aware but would support their involvement on Board.
- 4.5. AS concurred; he works with members of VAPC in London and has found it useful in getting messages out.
- 4.6. KP asked for anyone who didn’t agree with offering a place on the Board to the VAPC to indicate their objection. No one disagreed.
- 4.7. Action: KP said he could contact SB to inform him in due course.

5. Veteran focused events

- 5.1. MH outlined the report.
- 5.2. VP would welcome opportunity to include families.
- 5.3. KP replied that the majority of what Board has done to date has been around service families / schools etc, particularly the Conference in 2018 which concentrated on service families. It is easier to understand families but in terms of

veterans, some Board members do not feel they can speak for younger veterans and those just transferring out from the services now.

- 5.4. JA thought it an excellent idea to coordinate and compile what the Board knows and some idea of what it doesn't know; he said he's always struck at lack of awareness of veteran specific issues within organisations and this must be having some level of impact. He believed a good outcome of this work would be a programme of re-stating the case about veterans' needs to service providers and professionals.
- 5.5. JA continued, as part of the Veteran Places, Pathways and People Programme grant funding Veterans Norfolk has a grant for £5k for increasing awareness of veterans' needs so this could be used as a contribution to the veteran focused events.
- 5.6. Action: KP / MH to discuss Veterans Norfolk's funding offer.
- 5.7. KP reflected on how well the Board's engagement was progressing pre-Covid, particularly the NHS and expressed hope to re-start this work.
- 5.8. SA said Breckland Council would support a veteran focused event and would like the opportunity to engage more with community. She asked if there could be a place-based event for districts.
- 5.9. Action: SA and MH to discuss.
- 5.10. Action - MH asked everyone to think about who should be involved / who in community doing good job and whether Board members would be prepared to host events. There is an expectation some members of board will chair events – it's an opportunity for Board members to showcase what they are doing.

6. Update on the current budget, Norfolk 2020 Commemoration Fund and the Health and Wellbeing Fund

- 6.1. BH highlighted key points. There were no questions.
- 6.2. RP thanked Board for the contribution to RAF Marham's Friends and Families Day.

7. Updates from members of the Board

- 7.1. MH gave an update on behalf of AH who was unable to attend. He is engaging with the NHS's new Integrated Care Board on how best to help it understand the needs of the armed forces community in Norfolk and the duty of due regard to the Covenant. Discussions were focusing on a system wide communications campaign, a paper for the ICB and the identification of an ICB board member with responsibility for Armed Forces matters. MH stated Norfolk's ICB is the only one in the East of England without a nominated armed forces champion.
- 7.2. SA asked what training packages are there available to service providers. Breckland has social connectors who would benefit from the training. SA sits on the

Integrated Care Partnership below the ICB and will try starting some conversations about the Covenant.

- 7.3. Action: MH and SA to discuss the MOD online training.
- 7.4. JA reported on the excellent ongoing work by The Bridge for Heroes re the Veteran Places, Pathways and People Programme. Veterans Norfolk have had their website revamped as part of it.
- 7.5. VP said the current national issues from families were the Future Accommodation Model Pilot and the future roll out of the model next year; school admissions; NHS transfers and wrap-around childcare; and access to dental services. None of these were specific to Norfolk.
- 7.6. RP echoed what VP reported on the families' issues. She informed Board the RAF Marham has a change in personnel. Group Captain Marr is now responsible for the flying and Gp Captain Wigglesworth has taken charge of the people and the base. KP asked to meet Gp Capt Wigglesworth.
- 7.7. Action: RP to organise meeting between the Commissioner and the new Station Commander.
- 7.8. WF shared news the DWP has funded the post of Armed Forces Champion for a further year and that all the DWP offices have an armed forces lead.
- 7.9. TA said he works in the NHS and takes up his new role as chair of the RFCA next week. He was surprised by the lack of traction at ICB level. He would like to work closely with RAF Marham and will contact RP for a discussion.
- 7.10. KK updated Board on Norfolk County Council's activities during armed forces week to encourage town and parish councils to sign the Armed Forces Covenant Pledge. Recent signatories were Dereham Town Council and Mundesley Parish Council. The Council also used social media to promote the successful transition of service personnel into local authority careers.
- 7.11. JD reported the Regiment's very busy 18-month period has ended and those soldiers recently returned from deployment will do some adventure training, followed by mandatory training. The QDG took part on Op London Bridge. Deployments to the US and Poland will take place in 2023. He commented on the difficulties families are having accessing dental services.
- 7.12. Action: KP asked JD to arrange for him to meet the new Commanding Officer.

8. Any other business

- 8.1. KP thanked JA for his extensive contribution to the Covenant Board since its inception in 2012. He said he greatly valued his opinions and enjoyed working with him. He wished JA well for the future.

- 8.2. In response, JA commented on his enjoyment as a member of the Board and wished Board all the best on its endeavours. He thanked KP / MH / BH and their predecessors for their support during his time on the Board.
- 8.3. KP asked for views on returning to face-to-face meetings or continuing with Microsoft Teams meetings. Opinions were mixed. Those who would be required to travel a considerable distance to attend were keen to retain the online option. A hybrid meeting could be an option in the future.
- 8.4. It was agreed the January Workshop will be virtual and then Board would reconsider its options from March onwards.

9. Dates of next meeting

- 9.1 Board's Workshop will be held on 24 January 10-12pm via Microsoft teams. The next Board meeting will be on 16 March 10-12pm (venue/ online tbc).