



Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant Board Minutes 20 March 2024

Hybrid meeting held in Cranworth Room, County Hall 10am to 12pm.

Present:

Air Cdre Kevin Pellatt (KP)	Norfolk Armed Forces Commissioner (Chair)
WO1 Andrew Taylor (AT)	Norfolk Armed Forces Commissioner Designate
Wg Cdr Alison McLean (AM)	RAF Marham
Tim Allen (TA)	Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Norfolk
Dr Andrew Hayward (AH)	NHS Primary Care
Stephen Heard (SH)	Veterans' Advisory & Pensions Committee
WO1 Janice Scott (JS)	Royal Navy
WO2 Richard Stevens	3 Royal Anglian Regiment
Paul Smith (PS)	RBL
Sqn Ldr Stew Geary (SG)	Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Norfolk
Cllr Keith Kiddie (KK)	Norfolk County Council
Wayne Farrow (WF)	DWP
Capt Christian Eade (CE)	1 st The Queen's Dragoon Guards
Cllr Stephen Bearshaw (CB)	King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
Sarah Rhoden (SR)	Norfolk County Council
Dr Andy Griffiths (AG)	NHS - Norfolk and Waveney ICB
Nigel Clarke (NC)	NHS Op Courage
Abigail Wood (AW)	Anglia Ruskin University
Caroline Evans (CE)	RAF Families Federation
Jade Cole (JC)	RAF Families Federation
Wendy Drysdale (WD)	RAF Families Federation
Faye Gower-Smith (FGS)	Norfolk County Council
Merry Halliday (MH)	Norfolk County Council
Bev Herron (BH)	Norfolk County Council

Apologies:

Andy Tovell (AT)	Norfolk County Council
Craig Chalmers (CC)	Norfolk County Council
Maj Ben Matthews (BM)	1 st The Queen's Dragoon Guards
WO1 Michael Rendall (MR)	Royal Navy
Cdre Rob Bellfield (RB)	Royal Navy
Chris Haystead (CH)	Norwich City Council
Vanessa Plumley (VP)	RAF Families' Federation
Frank Hughes (FH)	SSAFA
Cllr Alison Webb (AW)	Breckland District Council

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies.

1.1. KP welcomed everyone attending and listed the apologies. It was noted that this was KP's last meeting as Armed Forces Commissioner. He introduced Andrew Taylor, Armed Forces Commissioner Designate to those who had not previously met him.

1.2. Minutes from September 2023 meeting - no comments or outstanding actions.

2. Guest Speaker – Abigail Wood, Anglia Ruskin University.

2.1 AW introduced the findings of the report “Navigating Modern Communication”, a project to explore how RAF families communicate during deployment. She thanked the Board for funding the research.

2.2 KP said that the right amount of contact is a hard balance and seeing the Serving person in hostile environment can be difficult for families.

2.3 SG agreed that a one size fits all approach isn't suitable for all families or all family members. Some children want to maintain contact, and some do not because it's too difficult. Opportunities to contact family members must fit in with the demands of operational duty.

2.4 AG commented it would be interesting to do additional research to look at the experience of Serving personnel compared to family members.

2.5 SB suggested that a 'resilience day' which happens when Serving personnel return after deployment could be an opportunity to do this.

2.6 CE offered AW access to returning QDG soldiers post-deployment to Poland.

2.7 AW thanked him and said the MOD had stringent rules in place around research involving Serving personnel, but she would investigate options.

Action: MH to put CE and AW in touch to facilitate AW attending a resilience day with the QDG when they return from Poland noting three squadrons have 18 months of back-to-back deployment.

2.8 PS noted his own experience saying children sometimes keep 'secrets' from the Serving person to avoid giving them additional stress, e.g. medical issues.

2.9 AW said that although the term 'secrets' wasn't used, there are some good examples within the report of this type of behaviour / concern from children.

2.10 KP thanked AW for the report and commended it to the Board.

3 Update on the Budget

3.1. BH presented a paper on the current budget position.

3.2. The Board noted the Budget. No questions were asked but KP said that it is important the Board recognises the budgetary pressure being experienced by NCC.

If the budget is not spent on achieving the Board's aims and supporting the armed forces community then it may wish to return any underspend.

- 3.3. KK reiterated what KP's comment but also noted that elected members continue to be supportive of the Covenant and realise that it achieves a lot with very little financial input.

6.4 Update on Action Plan

- 4.2 MH introduced the new action plan and asked Board to endorse it.
- 4.2 No questions were asked but SG thanked MH / BH for pulling together the action plan, saying that it was a fair representation of the workshop in Dereham and provided a clear direction for the Board over the next three years.

5. Update on Terms of Reference for Board and Finance Sub-Group

- 5.1 BH explained the reasons to update both the Board's and the Finance Sub-Group's TORs.
- 5.2 SH noted that the VAPC had been omitted from the Board's ToR.

Action: MH / BH to add VAPC to the Board's TOR.

- 5.3 SR stated para 3.5 referenced the Board's 'quorum' for meetings and suggested should this be amended to include reference to the fact that a good spread of organisations would be needed not just the number. Board agreed.

Action: MH/BH to amend the definition of the Board's quorum.

- 5.3 The updated ToR for the Finance Sub-Group were agreed, and the following individuals volunteered to be members, alongside the Commissioner: Stew Geary, Tim Allen, and Paul Smith. KP thanked them.

6. Updates from members of Board

6. 1 SG reported on the Norfolk Employer Engagement Group (NEEG):
- Norfolk did well in securing 2 gold and 5 silver awards in the 2023 Defence Employer Recognition Scheme – the 2024 window for gold and silver has closed, so he is waiting to find out how many have applied this time.
 - Chairs from East Anglia Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) met in Cambridge recently to discuss group membership, priorities, and challenges. It was agreed that employer engagement needs to be the focus.
 - The RFCA is trying to encourage military bases and units to develop stronger engagement links with the companies they have contracts with and encourage them to sign the Covenant Pledge.
 - Lotus have extended open invitation to their 2024-Armed Forces Day event.
 - NEEG is planning another breakfast engagement event at the Royal Norfolk Show.

6.2 AH updated Board on NHS related issues:

- Veterans and families are experiencing the same issues as civilians when accessing medical support, but the NHS is making progress on veteran friendly GP practices – 70% have signed up in Norfolk and have achieved the target of one in every primary care network (PCN).
- However, there are instances where senior managers in the practice have understand the scheme, but more junior staff and receptionists are not aware of the accreditation.
- Over the next year, the focus will be on encouraging the accredited GP practices that are signed up to provide mentoring and be advocates –
- AH said he gave a presentation to social prescribers.

6.3 SH followed this up - 71% of GP practices are now accredited as veteran friendly – the 30 that are not accredited will be the focus for this year. Only two PCNs across the East of England have no accreditation.

6.4 KP added that Norwich Royal Air Forces Association's (RAFA) members were unaware they need to declare themselves as veterans at their surgeries.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 SG said he'd been in touch with Philip Hulme from RAFA would like to attend the September Board meeting to give a presentation.

7.2 Action: MH / BH to invite Philip Hulme to speak in September.

7.3 AM updated Board that Defence Primary Health Care at RAF Marham, who manage the medical centre, are declaring deregistration of 244 civilians - 97 adults and 144 children. They will no longer be registered and will have to access GP services elsewhere.

7.4 SH recommended that these people register with a veteran friendly practice.

7.5 Action: SH to send AM a list of veteran friendly GP practices near RAF Marham.

7.6 CE commented that Serving personnel from Robertson Barracks access medical facilities at RAF Marham.

7.7 AM said the MOD has paused the roll-out of its Future Accommodation Model. A new option for service families to buy / rent in local area is being looked at. It is unsure whether this will mean a surge for demand for housing near Marham / West Norfolk, but as this is a transient workforce there may be peaks and troughs. AM offered more info to anyone on the Board who would like it. Families can still apply for married quarters but not everyone is married and not everyone wants to live on site – some want to own / rent their accommodation.

7.8 SH – noted new funds available from the Covenant Fund Trust to aid veteran mobility and to support Service children in schools (see Appendix 1)

7. 9 WD reminded Board next month, April, is month of the military child which recognises the sacrifices they make. For further information: Month of the Military Child and RAF Families Federation Month of the Military Child.

8. Farewell to Air Commodore Kevin Pellatt

8. 1 SG read an ode to Air Commodore Pellatt and presented a gift and card by way of thanking him for leadership and achievements during his five-year term in office.

8. 2 KP replied saying he'd greatly enjoying being Commissioner and thanked everyone for their support.

8. 3 SG formally welcomed AT as the new Commissioner. AT replied saying he was looking forward to getting to know people and working with everyone.

9. Date of future meeting

The next Board meeting will be held on Thursday 26 September 2024 10am to 12pm as a hybrid meeting at Norfolk County Council Offices.

10. Appendix 1 – Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust Funding Streams 2024

10.1 Veterans' Mobility Fund

From Tuesday 12th March, veterans whose mobility issues are attributable to their service can apply for support from the reinstated Veterans' Mobility Fund (VMF). The VMF supports veterans with physical disabilities through grants to enable them to access mobility equipment that improves their quality of life. During the fund's hiatus, Help for Heroes (H4H) handed out support grants to veterans worth more than £400,000. The fund will remain open for five years and eligible veterans will, ordinarily, be in receipt of a War Pension or an award from the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. Veterans who believe they may be entitled to support can apply on the H4H web site for life-changing grants or equipment to help with their mobility. [Apply to Veterans Mobility Fund](#).

10.2 Service Pupil Premium Support Programme

A very interesting opportunity for grants for the Local Authority Education teams has arisen. [Download Service Pupil Premium application information](#).

The Service Pupil Premium for service children has been used in some imaginative ways by schools around the UK. [Read examples of Service Pupil Premium best practice](#)

Information supplied by SH.