



EMPLOYER
RECOGNITION
SCHEME

GOLD AWARD 2020

Barnsley Armed Forces Covenant Board
Wednesday 23 October 2024
Westgate level 3 boardroom/Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Attendees		
Name	Position	Organisation
Clr Joe Hayward (Chair) (CJH)	Armed Forces Champion	Barnsley Council
Jayne Hellowell (JH)	Head of Healthier Communities and Armed Forces Lead Officer	Barnsley Council
Anne Asquith (AA)	Service Manager – Healthier Communities	Barnsley Council
Louise Beaumont (LB)	Projects and Contracts Officer – Healthier Communities	Barnsley Council
Susan Smith (SS)	Economic Policy Officer – Employment and Skills	Barnsley Council
David Andy (DA)	Operational Manager	Citizens Advice Bureau
Richard Rose (RR)	Family Hub Engagement Officer – Early Start and Families	Barnsley Council
Andrew Simpson (AS)	Royal Navy and Falklands War Veteran rep and Head of Commercial and Operational Service Support	Barnsley Council
Michelle Kaye (MK)	Group Leader, Housing and Welfare	Barnsley Council
Elaine Mason (EM)	Op Nova caseworker	Forces Employment Charity
Pauline King (PK)	Regional Employer Engagement Director	RFCA for Yorkshire and the Humber
Audrius Kopka (AK)	Communications and Marketing Officer	Barnsley Council
Ian Bailey (IB)	South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit/Barnsley MBC Partnership Manager	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority
Jamie Wike (JW)	Deputy Place Director – Barnsley	South Yorkshire ICB
Chloe Allott (CA)	Lettings Manager	Berneslai Homes
Paul Carpenter (PC)	Armed Forces Community Covenant SPOC	South Yorkshire Police
Neil Halsey (NH)	DWP Armed Forces Champion for South Yorkshire	Department for Work and Pensions

5a	LB to introduce SS to links in the Careers Transition Partnership (CTP) and Defence Transition Service (DTS).	Louise Beaumont
5b	To query with SYMCA if there is an option to request a proportion of support, through the pathways to work commission project, which could be dedicated to supporting the AFC.	Susan Smith
6a	To send information for a simplified graphic to be included on the Armed Forces Barnsley website to outline what Berneslai Homes' revised lettings policy means for members of the AFC when applying for social housing. To email details to armedforcescouncilqueries@barnsley.gov.uk	Chloe Allott

Minutes	
1	Welcome, introductions and apologies – Chair
	The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, introductions and apologies noted as above.
2	Actions from previous meeting held on 01/08/24 – Jayne Hellowell
	The previous minutes were accepted as an accurate record. Updates on outstanding actions are captured in the separate action log above.
3	Military family parent panels – Richard Rose
	RR provided an update on work being undertaken in Barnsley's Family hubs related to setting up a Military Parent Panel to inform support for military families: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Family Hubs team are setting up a number of parent panels in communities to enable parents to have a voice and convey what sort of services and support they would like to see for parents and their children. • They are looking to set up a military parent panel or ensure there is representation from military families on existing parent panels. • The team know there are at least 251 children in Barnsley for whom schools receive Service Pupil Premium. This is a minimum number as the onus is on parents to notify schools that they are a service family. This number does not include children from a veteran family. • There is very little specific support in communities or schools for armed forces families, especially those with very young children. • It is recognised Armed Forces families experience unique challenges due to impacts of service life. • Future plans for the panels include a deeper dive into finding armed forces families so they can participate in the panels. This could be through raising awareness of this work with military groups. • The team would like the MOD to be aware of the family hubs so service families can be signposted to family hubs rather than needing to travel to barracks for support, which is sometimes unfeasible.

	<p>Ask of the board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The family hubs team would like awareness to be raised across board members' networks to help identify military families and direct them to the hubs and to this project. • Board members and their respective organisations direct military families they work with to the family hubs. Details of the hubs can be found here https://barnsley.cloud.servelec-synergy.com/Synergy/ <p>Comments/questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PC/PK advised military families that live in civilian housing should have access to welfare officers rather than being told they need to travel to barracks to access any support. • EM asked if family hubs are only looking to support serving families or if veteran families are in scope of this project. RR advised they will support all families, but they need to know who they are as they are not getting the approaches from serving or veteran families at present. • EM asked for a list of family hub locations/opening times. The link to the family hubs website is included above. • JH commented that it may be challenging for military families to get to the hubs if they do not live in close proximity. RR advised most hubs are located next to schools to allow easy access for parents when dropping children at school/nursery. • PK asked how family hubs are funded. RR advised the hubs are a service provided by the Council. • CJH asked if there was a question included on any forms that go out to all residents, e.g. council tax forms, electoral roll forms etc to ask the question if residents are part of the armed forces community. It was agreed this needs exploring with the benefits team/electoral services. • PC asked if Service Pupil Premium applied to post 16 education – <i>post meeting update – Service Pupil Premium only applies up to year 11 so not post 16.</i> • Board members would like clarity on the benefits of the parent panels, so they are aware of what they are promoting prior to sharing through their networks. This is requested to be brought back to a future board meeting. <p>ACTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AA to explore with benefits team/electoral services if there are any forms that are sent to all residents that could have a tick box question added to declare being a member of the Armed Forces Community. • An agenda item to be brought back to the board clarifying the benefits of the parent panels and what they aim to achieve.
4	Citizens Advice Bureau Customer Survey – David Andy
	<p>DA advised Citizen's Advice Bureau Barnsley are currently undertaking a survey of their customers to find out how many are part of the armed forces community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The survey asked customers if they, or a member of their household currently serve in the military, or have served in the Army, Navy and Air Force including as territorial forces personnel. • Results from 29th July until 2nd October 2024 identified 28 customers out of 1080 client contacts that fell into these categories. (425 customers out of the total 1080 customers chose to answer the question).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may indicate that members of the armed forces community are not approaching CAB for support and advice with their finances as they may not be aware it is available to them. <p>Ask of the board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DA asked board members and their organisations that have contact with members of the armed forces community, that may benefit from CAB’s support, to direct them to CAB’s website so they know where and how to receive advice and support with finances. <p>The survey will continue for the next three months to establish if approaches from the armed forces community increase through board members and their organisations promoting CAB support.</p> <p>Comments/questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AS recommended adding two further categories to the question to include the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) and the Merchant Navy. This may lead to more armed forces community members being identified by opening the network wider and increasing numbers through word of mouth. • PC asked if CAB had any marketing materials to promote their services to the armed forces community. DA advised he is happy to produce and share some material. • PK asked if CAB Barnsley work with SY CAB branches that have signed the AF Covenant to share good practice. DA advised he would do this. <p>ACTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DA to add the two additional categories to the survey question. • DA to produce and share marketing material to promote CAB’s services to the AFC.
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5	Armed forces needs assessment priorities – Employment update – Susan Smith
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	<p>SS provided an update on work being undertaken that links to better supporting members of the Armed Forces Community to secure civilian employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An event to support people into work and to promote employment support has recently taken place in Barnsley town centre. • The Adult Skills and Community learning team can support with transferable skills required to be work ready. • There are plans in the next quarter to bring all providers together that offer employment support. This may be useful for the AFC board. • An overview of the Pathways to Work commission, which aims to support economically inactive residents back into work, was provided. The Armed Forces Community can be included in this group. • There are plans to develop a good employers charter which will involve working with employers to understand the needs of discreet communities, including the Armed Forces community, and develop a toolkit to help other employers understand these needs. • The Great Childhoods Ambition project will help to stem the flow between leaving school and economic inactivity.
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- It was acknowledged there is more operational work to be done to foster links with MOD transition teams to bridge the gaps between military and civilian employment.

Questions/Comments:

- JH asked what this work directly means for the armed forces community and how can we translate the challenges this community experience with civilian employment into the work of the employment and skills team. SS advised when they get to the operational work of individual support it will be about understanding specific support needs of the AFC.
- AS advised there are lots of links to be made to open up avenues to support the AFC into employment. E.G. members of this group could benefit from support from a personal coach. Existing work that supports offenders and ex-offenders through pathways into employment could support the AFC and ex-offenders that are part of the AFC, in a similar way. Links with Op Nova could support this.
- PK advised Reed in Partnership are the new MOD Careers Transition Partnership partner. LB can connect SS with the CTP (Career Transition Partnership) and DTS (Defence Transition Service)
- CJH asked if employers who are willing to take on members of the Armed Forces Community have been approached. SS advised they are predominantly working with public sector employers that are willing to commit to employing economically inactive people at this stage, but it would be good to engage with those who are forces friendly.
- AS asked if there was scope to secure a specified proportion of support from the pathways to work commission project to support the AFC. SS will take this back to the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA).

ACTIONS:

- LB to introduce SS to contacts in the CTP and DTS.
- SS to query with SYMCA if there is an option to request a proportion of support, through the pathways to work commission, to be dedicated to supporting the AFC.

6 Armed forces needs assessment public plan – Louise Beaumont

LB advised a public plan for the armed forces needs assessment has been produced which is available on the Armed Forces Barnsley website. This is to make members of the public and the armed forces community, who contributed to the needs assessment, aware of the outcomes of this research and how it is contributing to improved support for this community.

LB outlined how priorities to come from the needs assessment align to the SY Armed Forces Covenant action plan.

Comments/Questions:

- CJH asked about the housing priority within the public plan and asked how the social housing lettings policy considered veterans. CA gave an overview of recent changes to the lettings policy that will facilitate better support for those leaving the military. JH advised people need making aware this does not put the armed forces community in an advantageous position, and they need to understand rejecting reasonable offers can move them down into a lower priority band. CA

	<p>advised Berneslai Homes could do more in terms of communicating and managing people’s expectations here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JH would like a simplified poster that outlines what the new Berneslai Homes lettings policy means, adding to the housing section of the Armed Forces Barnsley website. CA will provide information for this. This needs to highlight what people need to do for themselves and that it does not offer any advantage. • EM asked if there was anything in the lettings policy that accounted for prison leavers that could not return to the area in which they have a local connection. CA advised this can be considered at assessment stage. <p>ACTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CA to send information for a simplified graphic to be included on the Armed Forces Barnsley website to outline what the Berneslai Homes revised lettings policy means for members of the AFC when applying for social housing. To email details to armedforcescouncilqueries@barnsley.gov.uk
7	Armed Forces Barnsley Newsletter – Louise Beaumont
	Board members agreed the content of the newsletter. LB to distribute the newsletter.
9	AOB
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Event – 19 November 2024 – the chair reminded board members of this event. Board members confirmed receipt of the event’s invitation. • MHCLG DMP Letter to Councils – Housing for veterans – Housing reps who sit on the board confirmed they have had sight of this letter and are aware of content related to housing for veterans. • PC asked if there was scope for Barnsley to host an awards evening to recognise local organisations / individuals that support the armed forces community. JH/AA advised this cannot be facilitated by Barnsley Council alone due to budget and resources constraints. It was advised other options could be explored but that it would need to be a partnership approach. Options mentioned were to offer something as part of the existing Armed Forces Day celebrations or Pride of Barnsley awards etc.
	Next Meeting
	Date/Location– TBC