



HERTFORDSHIRE
HEROES



Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board Annual Report 2022-2023



Hertfordshire



Foreword

“ I am honoured to serve as Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board Chairman and to present the Annual Report for the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board for the year 2022 -2023.

From my own experiences of growing up in a military family I recognise some of the challenges that this group can face and I know the Board is committed and keen to continue to address any disadvantages that this community may encounter as well as encouraging our communities to show support for everyone in the armed forces community.

In this report you will find an overview of the initiatives, achievements and collaborations that have shaped our year. We continue to work on projects that support our three main

aims of fair access to services, honouring the armed forces community and joining the civilian and military communities. Through these projects our partnership continues to grow stronger, amplifying our ability to make a positive impact.

I want to extend my gratitude to the Board members, and their colleagues, who have contributed their time and expertise to our work this year. Thank you for your continued commitment and I look forward to another year of meaningful progress to ensure the armed forces community feels welcome and supported in Hertfordshire. ”

Hertfordshire County Councillor Fiona Hill

Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board Chairman

Introduction to the Armed Forces Community and Armed Forces Covenant in Hertfordshire

The Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation ensuring that the sacrifice of those who serve or who have served, and their families, is recognised, that they are not disadvantaged and, where appropriate, 'special consideration' is provided to those who have given the most or who are bereaved. Local authorities and the armed forces community are encouraged to work together to establish a Covenant and, in 2011, Hertfordshire signed one of the first.

The Armed Forces Covenant is now a legal duty under the Armed Forces Act 2021. The legislation further incorporates the Armed Forces Covenant into law in that there is a requirement for specified public bodies to pay due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant in the areas of housing, education, and healthcare. This new duty requires those who are subject to it, including the County Council, to consciously consider the armed forces community when developing policy and making decisions in the specified policy areas, taking the three principles set out above into consideration. Guidance and information about the legislation has been shared with relevant HCC Departments and Officers as well as partner organisations.

The Armed Forces Covenant in Hertfordshire

The Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board, promoted locally as Hertfordshire Heroes, is responsible for delivering the aims of the Covenant in Hertfordshire and meets bi-annually. It is Chaired by Councillor Fiona Hill. Membership of the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board comprises of representatives from:

- Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Northwood Headquarters
- 254 Medical Regiment
- HMS Wildfire
- Families Federations of the Army, Navy and Air Force
- Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA)
- Royal British Legion (RBL)
- Veteran's UK
- Ministry of Defence (MOD)
- East Anglia Reserve Forces and Cadets Association
- Veterans Advisory Pensions Committee (VAPC)
- Herts and West Essex Integrated Care Board
- Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (HPFT)
- Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust (HCT)
- Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce
- Hertfordshire Constabulary
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Citizen's Advice Hertfordshire
- Hertfordshire District and Borough Councils
- Third sector bodies.

This year, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, Robert Voss CBE CStJ joined the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board in recognition of the important work of the Lieutenancy of Hertfordshire in supporting the armed forces community.

The aims of the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant are:

- to ensure that veterans and those in the armed forces are not disadvantaged in accessing services;
- that the sacrifices made by members of the armed forces community are recognised and remembered; and
- to encourage the integration of service life into civilian life.



Then County Council Leader David Williams, Chief Executive of Hertfordshire County Council Owen Mapley, and then Chairman of the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board Councillor Terry Douris collect the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award for HCC in 2019



**EMPLOYER
RECOGNITION
SCHEME**

GOLD AWARD

Promoting the Armed Forces Covenant and Defence Employer Recognition Scheme in Hertfordshire

On behalf of the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board, Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce and East Anglia Reserve Forces and Cadets' Association continue to encourage Hertfordshire employers to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and promote the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. As of 30th June 2023, 175 organisations in Hertfordshire have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, including Hertfordshire County Council. Sixty-six organisations are bronze award holders in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, 23 Silver and 11 having achieved the Gold award.

Hertfordshire County Council retains its Gold Award status in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme awarded in 2019. This is the highest badge of honour given to organisations who support and employ members of the armed forces community.

There has been an effort to raise the profile of the Armed Forces Covenant amongst Parish, Town and Community Councils. Four Local Councils have signed the Armed Forces Covenant this year; Hertford Town Council, Sandridge Parish Council, Watford Rural Parish Council and Wymondley Parish Council.

The Armed Forces Community in Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire is not a garrisoned county but is home to the 254 Medical Regiment at the Army Reserves Base in Hitchin, a sub-division of the Royal Anglian Regiment at the Hertford Reserves Unit as well as Headquarters UK Strategic Command, Royal Navy Maritime Operations Centre, the Permanent Joint Headquarters, the UK Standing Joint Force Headquarters, NATO's Maritime Command and HMS WILDFIRE Royal Navy Reserve all located at Northwood Headquarters.

The known make-up of the armed forces community in Hertfordshire is:

- 25,849 people in Hertfordshire indicated that they had served in the Armed Forces, according the Census 2021 data published in February 2023.
- There are currently 418 children in receipt of Service Pupil Premium in Hertfordshire of which 194 are in county council-maintained schools.
- Northwood HQ has a workforce of about 2,600 of which about 1,700 are military personnel both UK and NATO. Around 350 UK service families live in the Service Families Accommodation of Northwood HQ.
- There are 46 Cadet units in Hertfordshire.
- Members of other regular forces may be resident in the county but currently posted elsewhere.



HM Lord-Lieutenant Robert Voss CBE CStJ opens the new Army Reserve Centre at Hitchin, 23 September 2023. Photo credit ©254 Multi-role Medical Regiment.

Celebrating and Honouring

The following outlines some of the activities undertaken since October 2022 towards the Board's aim of celebrating and honouring the commitment and sacrifices made by those in the Armed Forces and their families.

Member organisations of the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board paid tribute to the armed forces community by marking Armed Forces Day in their own way.

- Hertfordshire County Council Chairman Councillor Terry Douris hosted a flag raising ceremony at County Hall on 19 June 2023. The Chairman was host to the Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, senior military leaders, District and Borough Leaders, Mayors and Chairs as well as Members and council officers who gathered to pay tribute to those in the armed forces community. Attendees were able to view an exhibition provided by Hertfordshire Archive and Local Studies entitled "A County of Soldiers." The display highlighted a project from 2017 which covers records of units in Hertfordshire from the 18th century to circa 1940s.



- Hertfordshire County Council delivered a social media campaign across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to ensure promotion of Armed Forces Day. There were posts across the week which highlighted topics such as:

- the Armed Forces flag raising host by the Chairman at County Hall,
- what the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant means for residents,
- encouraging residents to take part in Reserves Day,
- and promoting support available signposted from Hertfordshire Heroes website.

- Resources for schools such as assembly toolkits and other learning resources about Armed Forces Day were shared to reach all Hertfordshire schools.
- District, Borough and Town Councils hosted events for Armed Forces Day. The following are a few examples.
- The Mayor of Hertsmeire led a flag raising ceremony outside Hertsmeire Civic Offices to show support for the people who make



up the armed forces community ahead of Armed Forces Day. He was joined by the Mayor's Consort, Cllr Christian Gray, Deputy Mayor Cllr

Photo credit: ©Hertsmeire Borough Council

Richard Butler, Reverend Philip Green, bugler Adrian Temple, Royal British Legion Representative Mr John Hodson and other councillors and staff for the occasion.

- Stevenage Borough Council hosted a family day in support of Armed Forces Day on 24 June 2023. The event included live music, arts and crafts, a WWI tank on display and more.



Help raise money for your local charities

Live music: Marching Band (10am),
Miss Jones (10:15am; 12:15pm; 2:15pm)
and D-Day Dollies (11am; 1pm; 3pm)

Plus: Arts & crafts from Junction 7 Creatives,
Free face painting, WWI Tank, and more!

armedforcesday.org.uk #SaluteOurForces

Follow us for more info and to keep up to date:

Twitter: @lovestevenage
Facebook: lovestevenage

www.stevenagetowncentre.com



Free parking
8am - 6pm
St Georges
Multi storey

- Dacorum Borough Council celebrated Armed Forces day in Gadebridge Park with free entertainment and activities including charity and community stalls and the RLC Silver Stars Parachute Display Team.

- Hertfordshire County Council marked Armistice Day in 2022 at all sites with a two-minute silence at 11am and Remembrance resources were shared across the organisation. HCC Officers shared school resources specifically created for teaching Remembrance with Hertfordshire schools

and information about Remembrance parades with Parish and Town Councils.

There was a programme of communications about Remembrance and support available for the armed forces community in Hertfordshire across social media for all residents.

- In 2022, then Chairman of Hertfordshire County Council, Councillor Annie Brewster, attended a Garden of Remembrance Service at Hertford Castle. Following the service, hosted by Hertford Town Council on Wednesday 9 November, Hertford Town Council became the first Local Council in Hertfordshire to sign the Armed Forces Covenant.



Photo credit: ©Hertford Town Council

Community Engagement

The following outlines the progress made since October 2022 on the Board's aim of integrating the military and civilian communities.

- Data about veteran population gathered from Census 2021 was published in early 2023 showing that 25,849 people in Hertfordshire indicated that they had served in the UK Armed Forces. This data has proved valuable in understanding the size of population of veterans in Hertfordshire and in what areas they are residing. The data has been added to the [Census 2021 website](#) on Herts Insight making the information available to residents.
- Two e-learning modules designed to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and issues affecting the armed forces community have been developed by Warwickshire County Council on behalf of Coventry, Solihull, and Warwickshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership. The Partnership has kindly agreed to share this new resource with other Local Authorities and Hertfordshire has taken up the offer. The first module is an introductory module designed to help explain what the Armed Forces Covenant is in place to do, how it works in Hertfordshire and how the different aspects of Service life might affect people when they leave the Armed Forces. Hertfordshire County Council Officers added additional information from the original course to include the Hertfordshire perspective.
- The second e-learning module is designed for anyone working within the public sector or other organisations across the UK who are likely to engage with the armed forces community. This module gives a direct insight into the lived experiences of members of the armed forces community through video interviews.

It explains the Armed Forces Covenant and the Armed Forces Covenant Duty and how staff can support this community. Both e-learning modules are available on the [Hertfordshire Heroes website](#).

- The [Hertfordshire Heroes website](#) remains a dedicated central resource for partners and service users and continues to be updated with key information. Visits to the website increased 25% from the previous year.
- The Hertfordshire Heroes Monthly Newsletter continues into its third year covering Covenant related news, research and briefings, key dates, and other relevant information. Stakeholders receiving this newsletter now reach beyond Board members to other interested organisations and individuals in the county totalling 94 subscribers.
- Hertfordshire County Council successfully organised the 10th annual Christmas Art Competition on behalf of the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board. Key Stage 2 pupils in Hertfordshire schools were invited to submit artwork depicting events important to them in 2022. Nearly 800 children from 29 schools entered the competition which sends messages of "Christmas cheer" to those in the Armed Forces serving away from their families at Christmas. Hertfordshire County Council officers and Members chose the shortlist of entries through a digital vote. The shortlist was sent to Northwood HQ where military personnel stationed there chose a winning entry from each year group for a total of 4 winners.

YEAR 3 WINNER - Kaiqi from De Havilland Primary School in Hatfield



Pictured here with
Col Clinton Read,
Commanding Officer
Northwood HQ



YEAR 4 WINNER - Poppy from Lime Walk Primary School in Hemel Hempstead



Poppy with personnel
from Northwood HQ
and Cllr Terry Douris,
then Chairman of the
Hertfordshire Armed
Forces Covenant Board



YEAR 5 WINNER - Mason from Countess Anne School in Hatfield



Mason pictured here with Cllr Terry Douris, Colonel Clinton Read, Commanding Officer of Northwood HQ and Countess Anne's ward Councillor Peter Hebden



YEAR 6 WINNER - Lizzy from Chambersbury Primary School in Hemel Hempstead



Lizzie pictured here with Major Taylor from Northwood HQ



- A video containing a selection of entries to the Christmas Art competition was shared across Hertfordshire County Council's social media channels, raising awareness of the competition and the Armed Forces Covenant to a wider audience of residents.
- Each winner was presented with a certificate by Councillors and serving personnel from Northwood HQ at an assembly at their schools.
- In March the four winners of the 2022 Hertfordshire Heroes Christmas Art Competition were invited to attend a "day of adventure" kindly organised at Northwood HQ.
- Board members from military organisations continue to provide the Board with a biannual update about their organisations.
- The 254 Medical Regiment runs the "military village" at the County Show which is well attended by military units.
- The Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board promoted different funding programmes offered by the Covenant Fund Trust and is keen to support future bids.
- In September HM Lord-Lieutenant, Mr Robert Voss CBE CStJ opened the new Army Reserve Centre in Hitchin. Many dignitaries and guests from across region, including the High Sheriff of Hertfordshire, Mrs Liz Green, were all given a tour of the building and had the opportunity to meet and interact with soldiers from 254 Medical Regiment and 3 Royal Anglian (also based at site) and the Hitchin Army Cadets. The event formed part of a families' day for the Army Reserve soldiers and was attended by 70 people including local Councillors, Armed Forces District Champions, the Chairman of the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board and Chairman of Hertfordshire County Council.



DAY OF ADVENTURE

Photo credit ©MoD



Photo credit ©East Anglia RFC

County show. Photo credit ©254 Multi-role Medical Regiment



Hertfordshire County Council Chairman Councillor Terry Douris and Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board Chairman Councillor Fiona Hill attend the opening of the new Army Reserve Centre in Hitchin. Photo credit ©254 Multi-role Medical Regiment.

Fair Access to Services

The following outlines the progress made since October 2022 on the Board's aim of ensuring that veterans and those in the armed forces community are not disadvantaged when accessing services.

- Enquiries continue to be received to the Hertfordshire Heroes inbox from members of the armed forces community. Many are seeking support with access to services and are appropriately signposted.

Health

The Health Subgroup has made progress across priorities in 2022/2023 working on three main priorities; Social Prescribing, GP accreditation, and NHS Trust accreditation.

- Progress has still been made on this agenda despite the incredibly busy period faced by these organisations and the establishment of the new NHS organisation architecture.
- The Health Subgroup continues to promote the Royal College of GPs (RCGP) Veteran Friendly GP practice accreditation scheme throughout Hertfordshire. This programme enables practices to deliver the best possible care and treatment for patients who have served in the Armed Forces.
- The RCGP supports these practices to identify and record a patient's veteran status, to appoint a clinical lead to undertake training and other activities related to veteran healthcare. They also provide accredited practices with information to help increase understanding of the health needs of veterans and the specialised services available.
- Herts and west Essex Integrated Care Board communications team, which is a member of the Health Subgroup, worked in collaboration with both the Essex and Hertfordshire Local Medical Committees and the Integrated Care Board communication teams in Mid and South Essex and Suffolk and North East Essex to draft a letter to all GP practices encouraging them to become Veteran Friendly. This was circulated on behalf of the LMC via ICB General Practitioner channels as well as directly by the LMC to local GP practices.
- Veteran Friendly accreditation was promoted to GP practices and via social media by Herts and west Essex Integrated Care Board in Autumn 2022.
- As of September 2023, 32 surgeries in Hertfordshire are accredited as Veteran Friendly with 9 of 10 District and Borough Council areas having at least one accredited practice, nearly achieving the Board's target of ensuring at least one accredited GP practices per District/ Borough Council. The NHS target is to have at least one GP practice accredited per Primary Care Network (PCN) by March 2024.
- The Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board Health Subgroup works closely with the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA), a national group funded by NHSE who seek to accredit Hospital Trusts through their "Veteran Aware" accreditation scheme.
- East and North Herts Trust achieved Veteran Aware accreditation in April 2021 and has received the Gold Award in the Defence Employers Recognition scheme. East and North Herts Trust is also accredited with Step into Health, the NHS veteran's employment scheme.

- Hertfordshire Community Trust (HCT) has signed the Armed Forces Covenant and was awarded the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award in 2022. HCT are in the process of becoming Veteran Aware accredited, expected in October 2023.
- VCHA are engaging with both Watford Hospital and Princess Alexandra Hospital to achieve Veteran Aware accreditation.
- The Subgroup continues to develop links with social prescribers ensuring the needs of the armed forces community are highlighted within social prescribing work streams in Hertfordshire.
- Hospital Community Navigation Service, who provide the social prescribing service, have amended their assessment forms to include a question to determine if the client has ever served in the Armed Forces so that there is an accurate number recorded of veterans being referred and seen.
- Armed Forces Covenant training has been provided to all 100 social prescribers practice link workers in Hertfordshire by the Veteran Lead at the Hospital Community and Navigation Service.
- The Health Subgroup continues to be represented on the Hertfordshire Social Prescribing group to ensure the specialised veteran support is highlighted to the veteran cohort.
- Over 140 local services available for veterans and their families have been mapped ready to be added to the Veterans Gateway, 24/7 information and support for veterans and their families. There is a national review of the Veterans Gateway underway led by the Office for Veteran Affairs (OVA) to ensure that it is fit for the future and

effective for veterans and professional users. Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board continue to promote the Veterans Gateway to organisations in Hertfordshire supporting the armed forces community so that they can find the organisations offering support within Hertfordshire.

- A one-year pilot of a Single Point of Contact service in Hertfordshire (SPOC) funded by NHSE has paved the way for Op COMMUNITY to be launched in Hertfordshire. One of the newest NHS services, Op COMMUNITY is a support helpline for the armed forces community underway in six areas across England.



Those in the armed forces community such as reservists, veterans and their families, can telephone or email to be supported with their health and care. Run by the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB), Op COMMUNITY means there is one single phone number and email address for the armed forces community living in Hertfordshire and west Essex to call if they have a medical enquiry and are not sure where to go. People calling the helpline will be signposted to the most appropriate NHS or community service available in their area. The helpline can assist with:

- Liaising with other organisations to make sure any existing care taking place in one area is transferred quickly and efficiently to another area to provide continued care and support

- Seeking ongoing treatment where required especially when moving in and out of new quarters
 - Providing advice, guidance and support on how to use the NHS, including registering with a GP, especially Veteran Friendly accredited practices
 - Directing callers to the people and community organisations that can best help with their enquiries such as social prescribing and military charities.
- Herts and west Essex Integrated Care Board communications team, which is a member of the Health subgroup, was part of a national group working to develop the Op COMMUNITY name and branding, which included sharing details of engagement opportunities via local channels on behalf of NHS national team.
 - In May 2023, Armed Forces Covenant leads from a number of sectors convened at Newmarket Racecourse for the NHS East of England Armed Forces Community Conference hosted by Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB and supported by NHS England. The goal of the day long conference was to increase awareness and understanding of the range and location of services for the armed forces community in the East of England and better support those serving, reservists, veterans and all their families.

The conference covered six areas, research and funding, the NHS, MOD, Voluntary Sector, Local Authorities and Employment so that attendees had a good overview of the work already taking place to support the armed forces community and to improve integration and outcome of services for veterans and their families.

Education and Housing

The Education Subgroup was established this year and discussed in year admissions, Service Pupil Premiums and admissions around selective schools and timing of entrance exams. The group found that policies for education for children are in place and plan to explore adult education.

The Housing Subgroup undertook two strands of work over the past year. Firstly, the group undertook an assessment of Council housing policies and found that District and Borough Councils have incorporated Covenant obligations in their housing allocation policies. Secondly the group continues to collect lived examples of veterans seeking housing in Hertfordshire.

Looking ahead

To continue to meet the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant, the following projects are in progress.

The 2023 Christmas Art Competition has been launched and promoted to Hertfordshire schools. Key Stage 2 pupils have been invited to create artwork to help bring cheer to those in the Armed Forces who are working away from their families at Christmas. A winner from each year group will be chosen by military personnel at Northwood Headquarters and will be invited to attend a day of adventure at the base.

The Health Subgroup continues to work with partners in the NHS on Op COMMUNITY. Herts and west Essex ICB communications team will be increasing promotion of this service in the coming months through social media and a new leaflet to be circulated to members of the armed forces community through appropriate channels. The aim of this work is to generate consistency across the country for this service to increase awareness of Op COMMUNITY.



Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board will continue to promote the Armed Forces Covenant to Hertfordshire businesses and organisations and specifically to Parish, Town and Community Councils.

The Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board will continue to promote the Armed Forces Covenant Trust programmes and support, where appropriate, future bids by members and other interested organisations.

The Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board reaffirms its commitment to upholding the Armed Forces Covenant in Hertfordshire and building upon the progress made this year to ensure the armed forces community feels welcomed and supported in Hertfordshire. We extend our gratitude to the dedicated individuals on the Board and their colleagues who have played a vital role in compiling this year's annual report.

For further information, please visit www.hertfordshireheroes.org.



HERTFORDSHIRE
HEROES

