



EMPLOYER
RECOGNITION
SCHEME

GOLD AWARD 2020

Barnsley Armed Forces Covenant Board
Thursday 6 February 2025
Hybrid Meeting, Westgate Plaza Level 4 Room 2 and Microsoft Teams
MINUTES

Attendees		
Name	Position	Organisation
Anne Asquith (AA) <i>Chair</i>	Service Manager, Healthier Communities, and Armed Forces Lead	Barnsley Council
Karen Hallam (KH)	Senior HR Business Partner	Barnsley Council
Michelle Kaye (MK)	Group Leader, Housing and Welfare	Barnsley Council
Helen Ibbotson (HI)	Projects and Contracts Officer, Healthier Communities	Barnsley Council
Chris Crookes (CC) <i>Partial attendance</i>	Projects and Contracts Officer, Healthier Communities	Barnsley Council
Emily Freeman (EF) <i>Observing</i>	Projects and Contracts Officer, Healthier Communities	Barnsley Council
Megan Coupland (MC) <i>Minutes</i>	Business Support Officer, Healthier Communities	Barnsley Council
Sarah Barnes (SB)	Lettings Manager and Head of Customer Service	Barneslai Homes
Roya Pourali (RP)	Inclusion and Wellbeing Lead	BHNFT
Luke Lancaster (LL)	Public Affairs and Campaign Officer (North)	British Legion
David Andy (DA)	Operational Manager, Citizens Advice Bureau	Citizens Advice
Paul Buttery	South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Representative	SYFR
Steve Lowe (SL)	Regional Lead Forces Employment	Op Nova
Paul Carpenter (PC)	Armed Forces Community Covenant SPOC	SYP

Major Adrian Hunt DL (AH) <i>Partial attendance</i>	Branch Secretary	SSAFA
Ross Waterlow	Case Manager	SSAFA
Susan Womack (SW)	Head Of Strategic Partnerships and Operations	BCVS
Neil Halsey (NH)	Armed Forces Champion, South Yorkshire	DWP
Pauline King (PK)	Regional Employer Engagement Director	RFCA Yorkshire
Zarah Khan (ZK)	Senior Employment Advisor	NHS Talking Therapies
Ian Bailey (IB)	South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit/Barnsley MBC Partnership Manager	SYMCA
Chrstine Bradley (CB)	Development Manager	Rotherham MCVC

Apologies		
Name	Position / Organisation	Deputy
CLlr Joe Hayward (Chair) (JH)	Armed Forces Champion	Anne Asquith
Stevie White (SW)	Communications & Marketing Officer BMBC Comms	N/A
Claire Richardson (CR)	Case Manager, Armed Forces Veterans Service Team	N/A
Elaine Mason (EM)	Op Nova Case Worker	N/A
Jamie Wike (JW)	Deputy Place Director	N/A
Andy King (AK)	Regional Lead North East and Yorkshire RCGP Veteran Friendly Accreditation Programme	N/A

Item	Agreed actions and decisions of the meeting – 06 February 2025	Owner	Deadline	Progress
2a	Update on considering resource implications of managing a dedicated Armed Forces Facebook page to be brought to the May 2025 meeting with new Marketing and Comms lead fully briefed.	Anne Asquith / Stevie White	May meeting	Complete
2b	Update on progress made 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.	Anne Asquith	May meeting	Complete
2c	Agenda item on the updated Citizens Advice Bureau survey and the newly produced marketing material to promote their services to the AFC to come to the May meeting.	David Andy	May meeting	Complete

2d	Update from SYMCA on 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	May meeting	Complete
2e	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. Update to be given at the May 2025 meeting.	Chloe Allot	May meeting	Complete
3a	A more detailed update on the GP accreditation scheme to be brought to the May meeting and be presented by Andrew King.	Andrew King	May meeting	Complete
3b	Explore the idea of a list of accredited GP surgeries being added to the Armed Forces Barnsley.	Anne Asquith / Helen Ibbotson	n/a	Complete
3c	Anne Asquith to discuss the ICB signing the Armed Forces Covenant with Jamie Wike.	Anne Asquith	n/a	Ongoing
4a	Business Support to circulate the SSAFA referral form to the Armed Forces Board membership.	Megan Coupland	n/a	Complete
4b	Ross Waterlow to provide a brief overview of SSAFA support services including contact details for Anne Asquith to explore connecting this with the More Money In Your Pocket webpage.	Ross Waterlow / Anne Asquith	n/a	Ongoing
5a	Pauline King to resend the original email/document regarding the ERS Gold Status Revalidation process to Anne Asquith.	Pauline King	n/a	Complete
7a	A further update on the planning progress for Armed Forces Day 2025 to come to the May 2025 meeting.	Helen Ibbotson	May meeting	Complete
7b	Helen Ibbotson to contact Paul Buttery, SYFR, to arrange SYFR's representation at Armed Forces Day to assist in their recruitment of current and former Armed Forces personnel.	Helen Ibbotson	n/a	Complete
8a	Further update on the housing regulations update to be added to the forward plan to come to the May 2025 meeting including clarification from Government on the definition of social housing.	Anne Asquith	May meeting	Complete
8b	Sarah Barnes to ensure the Berneslai Homes published policy is updated to be compliant to current legislation.	Sarah Barnes	n/a	Complete
9a	Helen Ibbotson to explore creating Armed Forces information cards which can be distributed by SYFR on their routine visits to people's homes to raise awareness of services.	Helen Ibbotson	n/a	Complete

9b	Anne Asquith/business support to confirm addition of more SYMCA representatives to the membership with meeting chair, Cllr Hayward.	Anne Asquith / Megan Coupland	n/a	Complete
9c	Business Support to circulate the RBL website links shared in the meeting to the full membership	Megan Coupland	n/a	Complete

Minutes				
1	Welcome, introductions and apologies – Chair			
	The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, introductions and apologies noted as above. The previous minutes were accepted as an accurate record.			
2	Review of actions from previous meeting held on 28.10.2024 – Chair			
Actions and Decisions		Owner	Deadline	Progress
2a	To consider resource implications of managing a dedicated Armed Forces Facebook page and report back to the board at the next meeting. Update 06 February: Update unavailable due to changes of staff portfolio responsibilities in BMBC marketing and comms. Added to the forward plan for the May 2025 meeting and Anne Asquith will ensure Stevie White is fully briefed.	Audrius Kopka/Anne Asquith		Ongoing.
3a	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. Update 06 February: This work is continuing, although due to the elections there is not much being sent out to residents other than the annual update of the electoral register. Elections team are on board with the conversation of facilitating this. Added to the forward plan for a more detailed update at the May 2025 meeting.	Anne Asquith		Ongoing.
3b	An agenda item to be brought back to the board clarifying the benefits of the military parent panels and what they aim to achieve. Update 06 February: Added to the forward plan to be brought to the May 2025 meeting as Hayley Perry was unable to attend the February meeting.	Hayley Perry		Ongoing.
4a	Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) to add two additional categories to their survey question – The Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) and the Merchant Navy	David Andy		Ongoing

	Update 06 February: Done. The survey is complete and an update on this has been added to the forward plan for to be brought to the May 2025 meeting.			
4b	CAB to produce and share marketing material to promote their services to the AFC. Update 06 February: Ongoing. Work is ongoing, added to the forward plan for an update on this to come to the May 2025 meeting.	David Andy		Ongoing
5a	LB to introduce SS to links in the Careers Transition Partnership (CTP) and Defence Transition Service (DTS). Update 06 February: Action complete.	Louise Beaumont		Complete
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. Update 06 February: Susan Smith unable to attend, follow up with Susan agreed for more information at the May 2025 meeting.	Susan Smith		Ongoing.
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 Update 06 February: Progress limited, added to the forward plan for an update to be brought to the May 2025 meeting.	Chloe Allott		Ongoing.
3	Support for GP practices to become veteran friendly accredited (AK)			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brief presentation provided by Andrew King, Regional Lead Veteran Friendly Accreditation programme, on progress made in supporting GP's to become accredited. Presentation delivered by Anne Asquith in Andrew's absence. - Members discussed the increase in numbers of GP surgeries being accredited and recognised this is positive, but it raises the question of 'so what?' What is the impact for veterans, are they seeing and reaping the benefits this should bring them. - Presentation suggesting 'minimal senior management involvement' flagged as concerning, this needs to be implemented and cascaded from the top of organisations down. - Common issues identified as serving personnel and veterans stereotypically not coming forward for help, some veterans not knowing their GP is accredited/which GP's are accredited, and GP's joining the dots when caring for patients who may have served in the Armed Forces. <p>Suggestion made for the Armed Forces Barnsley webpage to include a list of GP's in Barnsley that are veteran friendly accredited.</p>			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Veterans need to be able to advocate for themselves, more promotion of 'Say You Served' needed to expand the current scheme. Example given of a system in West Yorkshire where GP surgeries send out a text message asking patients if they have got a military service history. - ICB supporting and signing the Armed Forces Covenant would be of huge benefit and would also be good evidence against Barnsley's Armed Forces Covenant gold status revalidation.
4	SSAFA Service Offer Overview (AH / RW)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive overview of the origins of SSAFA and the current operation provided. Original values still stand today, focusing on the wellbeing of soldiers. - SSAFA conducts the majority of the case work for military charities across the country and all case workers are volunteers. - Trial ongoing in the East Midlands and Wales to test out the future operational structure of SSAFA. All cases will be controlled centrally at 'the hub' and then allocated to case workers. Currently case workers start the process of a case and see it through. The purpose of the changes is to establish a consistent service across the country and streamline processes. The new process will be in place within the next 12 months. Anyone can complete a SSAFA referral form online. - Challenges include gathering all necessary information from clients, not having named contacts to gain information from specific organisations and managing cases when debt problems are involved. - MK confirmed housing and welfare support is now located at Wellington House, previously The Civic, and is there to support as it is well known that debt drives homelessness. The local authority has a legal responsibility to provide support if the threat of homelessness is imminent within 56 days. - Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) can offer immediate support relating to fuel and food poverty, not just debt support. Online referral is still the quickest way to access support. - Opportunities to link SSAFA with More Money In Your Pocket. Provide of brief overview and contact details. Add to forward plan. Share stuff with SSAFA.
5	ERS Gold Status Revalidation (AA)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Barnsley Council are revalidating the ERS Gold Status in 2025, the current gold status is valid until the end of 2025. - Work is ongoing to compile information and evidence needed for the revalidation. - Armed Forces lead from the Healthier Communities team will reach out to organisations if anything is required from them to support the revalidation. - Pauline King offered a one to one meeting if necessary to support this.
6	Armed Forces Walkway Improvement Programme update (CC / EF)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive update provided on the Armed Forces Walkway Improvement Programme. - New benches will replace the existing ones which are now worse for wear and no longer looked after by BMBC.

	<p>BMBC is buying the first bench, up to 4 more can then be purchased. All come with a customisable plaque and sides and are long wearing due to the coating. All benches should be replaced within 12 months.</p> <p>Conversation ongoing with parks as to where to locate the first bench for it to be best seen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The new flag pole cannot go directly on the walkway due to it not being structural sound so it will be placed on the side. There is a meeting with planning next week (w/c 10 February 2025) to discuss details. - Local suppliers have been found for the production of new stones and initial discussions have been held. Next step is quotes and agreeing the SLA. We note that the new ones will be more expensive as the previous ones were sold to us at cost price. New suppliers guarantee better supply of stones and higher quality. Sale of stones has been paused due to staffing levels in Healthier Communities, but this will be restarting imminently. - Issues around the new planter have been expensive quotes, in the region of £4-5k, currently exploring more options. - Intention is to improve the commerciality and the aesthetic of the walkway, recognising it is many families place to remember and commemorate their loved ones, and to raise awareness as a lot of people do not realise what it is.
7	<p>Armed Forces Celebrations 2025 (HI / AA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update provided on the plans for celebrating Armed forces day 2025. Date for the event confirmed as 14th June 2025. - Planning is in creation stages, working with events team, the libraries team, and external organisations. - Plans for the day include a Veterans breakfast hosted by the Mayor, a military parade ending outside the Lightbox, speeches, and sporting events. - Big focus on inclusion of veterans and encouraging them to get involved. No road closures planned, this is to keep the march route small and ensure interaction with the public is strong. - Paul Buttery. SYFR, expressed interest in using the event to publicise their drive to recruit serving and former Armed Forces personnel. - Verbal update on the plans to celebrate the centenary of the War Memorial. Date for the event confirmed as 11th October 2025. - Late afternoon/early evening event led by Cllr Leach to include; a rededication of the memorial with a religious service, a VIP tea in the Town Hall reception rooms, an exhibition of photos, interviews with veterans to hear what the commemoration of the memorial means to them, a children's artwork competition focused on peace, and a range of video projections being cascade onto the Town Hall. - Projections will include archived video footage of the Barnsley Pals training and marching, archived photos, and imagery such as poppies. <p>Interview recordings of veterans will overlay on top of the video projections, and the winners of the children's competition will be projected onto the Town Hall too.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confirmed planning and progress is going well, all 3 MP's who cover the borough will be invited and therefore a heavy police presence will be organised. Fully aware of Martin's Law and counter terrorism responsibilities.
8	Housing Regulations Update (AA)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verbal update regarding the legislative change removing local connection for Veterans in relation to social housing. - Email was received 18th December 2024 informing Council's that the law around this had changed. The change was in force before Council's were notified. - It is not clear in the legislation whether all social housing providers are included or whether this only applies to social housing provided through local authorities. Social housing as a sector is broad, causing ambiguity in the legislation. - Sarah Barnes, Berneslai Homes, confirmed the published Berneslai Homes policy will be updated so it is fully compliant with the legislation, including the addition of commitments to divorced or separate partners of Armed Forces veterans.
9	AOB (ALL)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paul Buttery, SYFR, advised Doncaster are including the question 'are you a veteran' as part of routine visits into families homes and properties, and providing a leaflet with relevant advice/information tailored if the answer is yes. - Opportunity to explore this in Barnsley, SYFR committed to distributing on behalf of Barnsley Council if the leaflets/cards exist or can be produced. - Susan Womack, Barnsley CVS, extended an offer to support SSAFA in recruiting volunteers from CVS. Ross Waterlow and SW to connect around volunteers. - Ian Bailey advised there is potential for more representation from SYMCA at the Armed Forces Covenant Board meetings and advised he will forward meeting invites on to relevant SYMCA colleagues. - Luke Lancaster highlighted this year is the 80th anniversary of the end of WW2. The Royal British Legion weblink was shared to allow colleagues to complete the form via the link to learn more or attend the events RBL are promoting. - Possibility of next meeting date being amended depending on chair and new HOS availability. Business support will keep membership updated.
	Next Meeting
	Thursday 1 May 2025 (may be amended, comms to follow).