
ANNUAL REPORT - VETERANS AND ARMED FORCES

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update members on the activity undertaken in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant including work at a regional level.

Summary

2. Darlington Borough Council has very close relationships with the Armed Forces Community partly because of the close proximity to Catterick Barracks. However it is important to remember that there are also a number of Naval and RAF families that live in Darlington.
3. Each year the local authority has agreed to provide an annual report on the activity it is undertaking to support these members of our community. This includes access to services provided directly by the local authority and also to support those delivered by the voluntary and community sector in Darlington.
4. In the current environment there is little funding available but much of the activity is to publicise the help that is available at local and regional level. This work is undertaken by maintaining an up to date directory that is hosted on our website.
5. In many cases it is important to ensure that services are delivered in a way that are accessible to this community and that understand the issues that they face. This includes ensuring that children are accommodated in school and that there is access to support when needed.

Recommendation

6. That Health and Partnership Scrutiny Committee acknowledge the value of the Armed Forces Community and note the work taking place to support this community.

Paul Wildsmith
Director of Neighbourhood Services and Resources

Background Papers

Mary Hall : Extension 6053

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no direct benefits for crime and disorder.
Health and Well Being	Provision of support to the Armed Forces and Veterans people will help facilitate prevention activity with these residents.
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impacts
Diversity	Support will also assist organisations that work with diverse communities.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected by work to support the Armed Forces and Veteran community.
Groups Affected	The key group affected by the detail in this report are the Armed Forces Community and their families who live in Darlington.
Budget and Policy Framework	There are no budget or policy issues.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Organisations accessing support are amongst a number of vulnerable people in Darlington and will help to reduce inequalities by ensuring access to services for this community.
Efficiency	This report aims to deliver this agenda within current budgets.

MAIN REPORT

7. Darlington Borough Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant in August 2012 and since then has worked with a range of organisations to ensure delivery of this commitment.

Regional Activity

8. Work has been undertaken to support delivery of the North East Regional Scrutiny work in relation to the Health Needs of Veterans.
9. Councillor Copeland in her role as Veterans Champion is co-chair of the Association of North East Councils Armed Forces Forum. This group will meet two or three times per year to look at priorities that require work on a regional basis. The group includes representation from Colonel Butterwick and other representatives from all of the Armed Forces.

Tees Valley Activity

10. In Tees Valley there is the Armed Forces Forum which comprises of the representatives from the five Local Authorities within the Tees Valley, the Local Authority Member Champion and one Officer, representative covering housing, health and employment, one representative from a Military Charity, one representative from Veteran Support Agency and two representatives from the Army.

11. The group has been very effective as a forum for understanding the issues faced by both serving armed forces representatives and veterans. There have recently been presentations on the needs of service families and the role of schools in supporting armed forces personnel and their families.
12. The group has also been involved in exploring mutual areas of cooperation across health, housing, education, NHS, Job Centre Plus, Military Charities and Veterans Welfare Services to support and improve the health and wellbeing of members of the Armed Forces Community.
13. The group supports the development of Tees Valley wide activity and provides a forum for bids to the Armed Forces Covenant to be discussed prior to submission. It is important to note here that the process for assessment and distribution of these grants has changed and further details can be found at:

<http://www.darlington.gov.uk/your-council/communities/north-east-veterans/>

Darlington Based Activity

14. Within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment there is a section specifically setting out the needs of Armed Forces and Veterans as highlighted in the British Legion Household Survey of 2014 and also the regional work undertaken by the Compass Partnership.
15. There are a number of voluntary sector groups in Darlington that support Veterans and those still serving in the armed forces. The directory of services is available on the Councils website which highlights the range of help and support that can be accessed by Armed Forces and Veterans. This directory has recently been updated to ensure it gives accurate information.
16. A stocktake of our performance in Darlington has been completed and submitted to the Armed Forces Covenant Military lead. The local authority is meeting the necessary obligations and ensuring that Armed Forces personnel can access services and do not face any barriers to this. The stocktake covers the following areas of activity:
 - (a) Healthcare;
 - (b) Housing;
 - (c) Benefits and tax;
 - (d) Family Life;
 - (e) Transition;
 - (f) Recognition of the value of the Armed Forces;

- (g) Participation as Citizens; and
 - (h) Recourse procedures.
17. The Armed Forces Covenant reinforces the importance of supporting the health and well-being of military families. The Council is responsible for a range of public health services which military services have access to. The programmes include Child Measurement Programme, sexual health services, NHS Checks that are accessed via the GP and the Healthy Child Programme. In addition it is important that this community can access services including domestic violence and mental health support.
 18. It has been agreed as part of the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant to strengthen the links to the local Reservist Centre at Neasham Road. Darlington also continues to work closely with Catterick Base to ensure that any basing changes are taken into account when planning services.
 19. The role of the Member champion is also to developing networks and understanding the issues faced by armed forces personnel and their families. She has attended a range of events to recognise the importance of the Armed Forces and to support voluntary sector fundraising events.
 20. Two events supported by Councillor Tom Nutt, the Mayor of Darlington have raised a total of £1,012.85 in aid of ABF the Soldiers' Charity. To mark Armed Forces Day a special ceremony and Armed Forces Day Parade was held in the town on 22 June 2015 to pay tribute and say thanks to all servicemen and women, past and present, for the contribution they had made to keep this country safe and safeguard freedom and democracy. This was followed by the Armed Forces Day Proms in the Park, a free family day in the Town's South Park on 28 June. 2015

Conclusion

21. Supporting serving Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans as much as possible will continue in partnership with other stakeholders in the region. Locally we are going to apply for recognition of the work we are doing currently by applying for the Bronze Award as part of the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme for support for the Armed Forces.