
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 established relationships with the Forces Community, This is further strengthened by the close proximity to Catterick Barracks.
3. Each year the Council provides an annual report on the activity undertaken to support the Forces community. This includes access to services provided directly by the Council and also support delivered by the wider public and voluntary and community sector in Darlington.
4. Much of the activity is undertaken at a local and regional level. There is a designated section on the Councils website which details key information for Forces Personnel and Veterans in Darlington.
5. Since the previous annual report to Health and Partnerships Scrutiny on 13 January 2016 Darlington Borough Council has been awarded a Silver Award from the MOD Employer Recognition Scheme.

Recommendation

6. That Health and Partnership Scrutiny Committee note the work taking place to support this community.

Suzanne Joyner
Director of Children and Adults Services

Background Papers

Helen Watson: Extension 5866

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no items directly related to crime and disorder.
Health and Well Being	The provision of support to Armed Forces and Veterans as detailed within the Stocktake includes specific activity relating to Healthcare, Housing, Education and Family Life.
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impacts
Diversity	The provision of support to the Armed Forces is across the whole of the borough, there are also networks in place with a diverse range of local voluntary and community groups to ensure information and support is widely available.
Wards Affected	All activity around the Armed Forces and Veteran community is across the whole of the borough. Although there are wards in Darlington where there are larger populations of Armed Forces Personnel.
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	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	The Armed Forces Stocktake covers a number of priority areas contained within One Darlington Perfectly Placed.
Efficiency	There are no financial implications arising from this report

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 support the 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 identifies key priorities that require work on a regional basis. The group includes representation from Colonel Butterwick and other representatives from all of the Armed Forces.
10. In addition, there is a Tees Valley Armed Forces Forum which comprises of 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. The group has been very effective as a forum for understanding the issues faced by both serving armed forces representatives and veterans.
11. 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.
12. 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.

Darlington Based Activity

13. A significant achievement of note in 2016 is the award of MOD Silver Employer Recognition Status to Darlington Borough Council.

Other key achievements include:

- (a) The Creation of Mayoral Cadets;
- (b) Joint work between the Reservist Centre and the Coleridge Centre (Darlington Borough Council Learning and Skills) regarding the opportunity for tailored literacy and numeracy sessions as part of an adult literacy offer. Presently explorations are being made regarding the opportunity for a tutor from Coleridge Centre delivering sessions both within the community centre and the Reservist Centre; and

(c) Person Centred support for Veterans with housing related support has been accessed across the following service provisions Vulnerable Adults floating support, substance misuse floating support and Physical and Sensory Impairment floating support services.

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 Council's website and highlights the range of help and support that can be accessed by Armed Forces and Veterans.
16. A stocktake of Darlington's performance for the year 2016/17 against the following Pillars has been completed and submitted to the Armed Forces Covenant Military lead for evaluation and RAG rating against each of the Pillars. The stocktake performance report has traditionally covered the following areas:
 - (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.

There were four additional Pillars added into performance return for this year covering the following; Individuals (focusing upon dedicated Champion Members and Council Officers), Communication, Collaboration and Vision and Commitment.

17. The stocktake requires local areas to set priorities for the year ahead which for Darlington are as follows:
 - (a) Improvement towards the number of green status Pillars within TVAFF 'stocktake';
 - (b) The promotion of the Reserve Service within Council both internally and externally;
 - (c) Support to "Pop-Up" activities within the town centre. Further development of the support offered to local veteran's agencies and associations;
 - (d) Improve liaison with Employers throughout the area by maximising opportunities through Darlington Partnership;

- (e) To embed the Mayoral Cadets;
 - (f) Work towards the Gold Award and review any best practice; and
 - (g) Details of the criteria for the Gold Award of The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) can be found through the following link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-employer-recognition-scheme/defence-employer-recognition-scheme>
18. A number of public events have taken place throughout the year, this includes, but is not limited to, Raise the Flag Armed Forces day on 19 June 2016, an air display by RAF Jets and special ceremony within the Town Centre to mark Armed Forces Day 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 23 June 2016 supported by members of the Royal Signals (Northern) Band and the Royal Air Force Honington Voluntary Band 102 Battalion REME Pipes & Drums Central.
19. In addition Cllr Copeland has taken a Notice of Motion outlining the Councils Support to the Royal British Legion and Poppy Scotland in their Campaign to the Government to ensure that questions on the Armed Forces community are included in the next UK Census, in 2021.
20. The Mayor and Mayoress have attended Phoenix House for a briefing from the armed forced recovery centre, providing insight to the support provided and individual's integration into the community.

Conclusion

21. The Council is meeting the necessary obligations and ensuring that Armed Forces personnel can access services and do not face any barriers to this. Supporting serving Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans will continue in partnership with other stakeholders in the region.