

COVENANT NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT
ACROSS LANCASHIRE

Issue 6: April 2022



Leading the way to ensuring best care for veterans



The new Armed Forces Champion at East Lancashire Hospitals Trust, Fiona Lamb is determined make a difference for all veterans visiting any of the five hospital sites.

The Clinical Site Manager has a nursing background and about 12 months ago she realised that; although the Trust had signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant in 2017, it had not had the opportunity to develop the pledge any further in relation to patients, despite there being a policy in place for employing ex-Forces personnel within the Trust.

She said: "I got on my soapbox and, because my background is in A&E and I knew of a veteran who regularly came into the department who had problems and who sadly ended up taking his own life, I started looking at what the Trust did for the armed forces community and decided that we could do more."

Fiona asked bosses if she could become the Trust's Armed Forces Champion and she secured money from the Armed Forces Covenant for a two-year Advocate Project. In April, Army Veteran Shafiq Sadiq, known as Sid, was appointed as the Trust's first Armed Forces Community Advocate.

The Royal Blackburn Hospital, Burnley General, Pendle Community, Clitheroe



Community and Accrington Victoria are part of the East Lancashire Hospitals Trust and all are Veteran Aware health care facilities accredited by the Veteran Covenant Healthcare Alliance programme.

Fiona said: "Over the last 12 months, I have developed a services' referral process with the IT department, so anyone who comes into one of the Trust's settings as is asked if they have served in the armed forces. If they have, a referral is then sent to me to action."

"We also have a basic information leaflet which is given out to patients and if they are a veteran in need of support for a condition related to their military service, we can expedite that referral quicker."

As Sid works the day shift Monday to Friday while Fiona covers the night shift,

during the week there is always someone on hand to assist veterans attending the trust.

Fiona and Sid work closely with community-based charities including Healthier Heroes, Blackburn Rovers Community Trust and Burnley Football Club so that patients can be signposted into projects within their local communities for additional support and activities.

They are hoping to set up a network of Forces people who are employed by the Trust so that more patients are aware of the services that are on offer outside of the hospital setting. Forces people includes: veterans and their families, military reservists and armed forces cadet leaders.

INSIDE:

Veterans' Hub to open soon	2
Somewhere to call home	2
Garstang Breakfast Club	2
Sporting chances	3
Dinner marks decade	3
Op Banham on course	3
Armed Forces Champions	4
Latest digital news	4
Training workshops	4

YOUR COVENANT AT WORK



VETERANS' HUB IN THE PLANNING

A dedicated veterans' hub will hopefully soon be opening in Skelmersdale.

Veteran David Scott, who served six years in the Navy, is now an inclusion manager at the Birchwood Centre. He explained the plans: "West Lancs Veterans' Hub will be the first of its kind in this area and it will be open five and maybe even seven days a week.

"It will be run by veterans and manned by volunteer veterans, we will provide space for the Sea Cadets to carry out drills if they wish, and will be having yoga sessions, a kitchen and a workshop."

At the height of the pandemic, through his work at Birchwood, David was involved with getting hampers to hundreds of people who needed them and he inquired about how many veterans lived locally. That led to a successful breakfast club being started.

He said: "As a veteran myself, I knew of 20 other veterans and wanted to reach out to others. Out of this, about a year ago, a breakfast club started. Although we have moved twice, we have now settled at the West Lancs Diner in Old Skelmersdale near the War Memorial. We meet on the first Saturday every month, offer a free breakfast barm up to £3 and anything extra the members pay for. The most we have had to the club is 32 and we also welcome children, partners and families; it is for the veteran community."

SOMEWHERE TO CALL HOME

Nearly 100 veterans have been helped with accommodation by Burnley-based Healthier Heroes and now there are plans to expand into Shropshire and Greater Manchester.

The Community Interest Company (CIC) was set up by Managing Director Andrew Powell in December 2020 and has been supported by Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust grants.

As well operating Bancroft House in Burnley town centre, which offers accommodation for 21 homeless veterans, Healthier Heroes also has

three properties where eight more veterans can move on to prepare them to live independently. The CIC has recently been approved by Burnley Borough Council as a supported housing provider.

Andy said: "As soon as they are ready, we move veterans into our supported properties, we have two two-bed and one four-bed in the Burnley and Padiham areas and they will stay there for six to 12 months until they are ready to move on. We teach them how to manage a tenancy and their finances and look for future employment programmes and opportunities with the end result being they are able to live independently."



About half of the veterans helped by Healthier Heroes have now moved to live in their own accommodation or returned to their partners or families as they have been able to rebuild their relationships.

CLUB IS THRIVING

Garstang Breakfast Club has settled into its new location and numbers are increasing.

Chairman of Garstang Armed Forces and Veterans' Breakfast Club Paul Robinson explained the club had been based in four different venues since it launched in May 2019, initially as a coffee evening at Booths.

After lockdown, members met for walks when allowed but it was not until September 2021 that the club returned to meet at Th'Owd Tithe Barn, then at Christmas it moved to its current base at The Wheatsheaf.

Paul said: "We meet on the first Saturday of every month from 9.30am. Prior to lockdown we had 60 people attending and when we started back there were 20-25 but in the last couple of club sessions we have had more than 40."



YOUR COVENANT AT WORK

SPORTING CHANCES

When veterans attending Burnley FC in the Community projects were affected because of last year's withdrawal from Afghanistan, additional funding was provided by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

Head of Community Welfare and Inclusion Mike Colquhoun said: "When we applied for the funding in October, we identified a need because we have quite a few younger veterans on our sporting projects who had served in Afghanistan or veterans who had family connections to the conflict.

"Our staff team were straight on to the need for additional support and the need to do something – speaking for myself, my brother served three tours of Afghanistan with 7 Para RHA so we know of the unique issues the Afghanistan conflict had and can cause, especially with it being back in high profile news with the withdrawal. We have maintained two members of staff, Daniella Worth and John Pluckwell, who is a veteran himself."

New sports sessions have been introduced at the local Rugby Club, extra fitness and social activities, a mental health quiet zone gives veterans the opportunity to talk and a Friday drop-in session is open to anyone wishing to speak confidentially to staff.



A HUGE celebration will be held at Burnley Football Club on September 30 to mark 10 years of Veterans In Communities.

The Rossendale-based charity, which works throughout East Lancashire, Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale, will host an evening celebration when former World Champion snooker player Steve Davis will deliver an after-dinner speech.

Operations Manager Bob Elliott said: "The charity has come a long way since our early days when we were based at the REAL Centre in Bacup. We are asking local

businesses to show their support by buying a table and sponsoring a free veteran place."

Corporate tables are £500 for 10 places and sponsorship of a free veteran place. Contact 01706 833180.

Bob said: "As well as our after-dinner speaker, veteran Keith Walmsley will be singing and the room can accommodate 250 people. There will be a hot high-quality buffet, including dessert, and we will be handing out 10 awards for our 10 years to thank volunteers from all of the areas where VIC operates."

OP BANHAM ON COURSE

It is all systems go for Op Banham, the incredible European bike ride to recreate the liberation journey made by Lewis Banham from Weir.

The team from Veterans' Living History Museum in Blackburn will be honouring Lewis, who will be 100 in November. He was a despatch rider in the Second World War and in 1944 landed with his

BSA WDM20 motorbike, on Gold Beach in Normandy. For a year he criss-crossed Europe delivering vital messages to front-line troops.

Veteran Wayne Hester said: "The bike is complete and is currently on display at the National Motorcycle Museum. It has his original number on the tank and it will be ready for the trip to France on June 9 at 6pm. There will be 15 of us



making the trip and three will be riding the bike: myself, serving Army Captain Ste Tickle and RAF veteran Duncan Balderson."

The trip, which will visit the

countries Lewis did, will end in Berlin and return on June 17. A Jubilee Day homecoming is planned for June 18 at Healthier Heroes Bancroft House in Burnley.

YOUR ARMED FORCES CHAMPIONS

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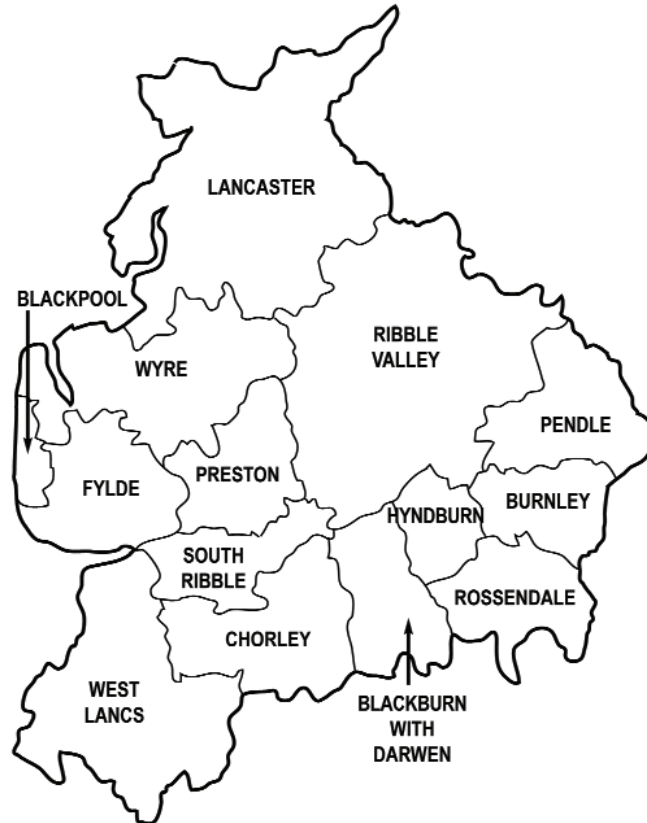
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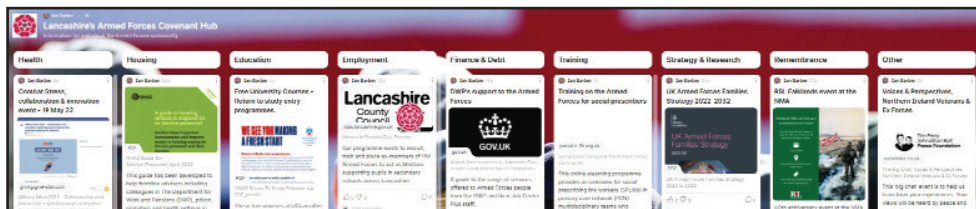
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Online advice

A new noticeboard has been added to the Lancashire Hub website for those interested in the Armed Forces Community.

The information is organised into individual posts within themes, such as: health, housing and education with new posts being placed at the top.

More content will be added by Lancashire

Hub staff. Project Leader Ian Barber said: "We've created a place to access the latest information on the armed forces community for people across Lancashire to visit. Now we need the information sharing with Forces people across the county."

If you have a suggestion for an article to be included on the noticeboard email Ian Barber on lancscovenant@uclan.ac.uk

Visit: www.lancashire.gov.uk/armed-forces/noticeboard/

Training workshops

Lancashire's 'one voice' training workshops will be rolled out this summer.

The Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Hub is working with all Lancashire Councils to plan face-to-face and online sessions, to provide council staff with an overview of what the Armed Forces Covenant is, an insight into the Armed Forces Community and where they may need support and to explore how public sector workers can help this community. To register an interest in attending, email: lancscovenant@uclan.ac.uk

