

New grant covers training to raise awareness



THE LANCASHIRE
ARMED FORCES
COVENANT HUB

Lancashire County Council has been granted further funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to continue its work to improve the delivery of the armed forces covenant across Lancashire.

The Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Hub will continue to act as the delivery vehicle for this work, on behalf of Lancashire County Council and its strategic partners; the University of Central Lancashire, the Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust and the regional military headquarters based in Fulwood Barracks, Preston.

The grant will be used to deliver training sessions on the armed forces community to local authority staff across all Lancashire councils.

“This is the second grant that the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust have provided to Lancashire County Council and we believe it demonstrates the faith that the Trust has in us to keep improving the



way the armed forces covenant is delivered across Lancashire,” said lead officer for the armed forces at Lancashire County Council, Kieran Curran, *pictured above*.

Training sessions will be provided face-to-face and online providing flexibility to council staff and maximising the opportunities for them to engage. Leaflets, posters and online tools will be provided to help increase the understanding of the covenant and how to support armed forces

personnel, as well as publicising the Lancashire Covenant Hub.

Hub Project Lead Ian Barber said: “This is an important next step for our partnership and will directly improve the training we can provide to local authority staff. There is a lack of understanding about the armed forces covenant and this training will help council staff to better understand who the armed forces community is, what kind of health and social care needs they have and, perhaps most importantly, how best to support them to access public services.”

The project will run for 12 months and will mean recruiting a new part-time member of staff to collaborate in the development of the training package and to deliver it across the county.

FINDING LOCAL FORCES GROUPS

For information about local groups and events aimed at the armed forces community, visit the Our Lancashire website – www.ourlancashire.org.uk – click on the *Groups* page and in *Select Category* click on ‘armed forces’.

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YOUR COVENANT AT WORK

ACHIEVING THE GOLD STANDARD

Four Lancashire employers have been awarded gold for supporting the armed forces community.



They received the top standard in the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, and were among 140 across the country to achieve gold.

In Lancashire the top award went to: Healthier Heroes CIC, Blackpool Teaching Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Burnley Borough Council and Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust.

Victoria Doran, MOD Regional Employer Engagement Director, said: "On behalf of the Ministry of Defence we are delighted to be able to recognise the support and commitment given to the armed forces covenant by employers in the region, through the Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Awards.

"Each recipient has demonstrated the highest level of support to the armed forces community and we thank them for their outstanding commitment and

enthusiasm. There is a huge amount of support for the defence community in the Lancashire region, and we are very proud of the number of Gold Award winners this year.

"Representing the highest badge of honour, Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Awards are awarded to those that employ and support those who serve; veterans and their families. This is a huge achievement and I look forward to seeing how these organisations develop their support in the future."

To achieve an award, organisations must provide 10 extra paid days leave for Reservists and have supportive HR policies in place for veterans, Reserves, and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, as well as spouses and partners of those serving in the armed forces. The scheme was launched in 2014 and there are three levels of award: Bronze, Silver and Gold.



RIBBLE VALLEY OUTREACH

Charity Veterans In Communities opened a new coffee morning and outreach in Clitheroe in June and already 25 new members have signed up.

A generous donation from the charity fund of former Ribble Valley Mayor Councillor Stella Brunskill helped towards costs and Ribble Valley VIC has now moved into community rooms at Trinity Methodist Church on Parson Lane, and is open every Tuesday from 10am to noon.

Project Worker Ray Sharkey runs the outreach and said: "This is the perfect location for VIC, in the town centre and easy walking distance from the busy market. We have joined up with a men's walk and talk group Let's Live Life and they held a special walk just for veterans. Our new base offers capacity for VIC to be able to develop the outreach we offer."

VIC has a base in Haslingden and works throughout East Lancashire, Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale. The charity will be 10 years old next year..

To find out more contact Ray at VIC on 01706 833180 or email raysharkey@vic.org.uk

GROWING SKILLS

'Bloomin Marvellous' is a project aimed at reducing loneliness in diverse community groups.

The two-year practical project is led by Dig In North West CIC and supported by Healthier Heroes and UCLan with the aim of engaging as many people as possible.

Sessions are held at the Dig In's walled garden in Preston, online or a blend of both. Participants can make anything they want to with help and support from the team at Dig In and this does not have to be related to plants, it could be planters or



another creative project. All the materials are provided.

Bloomin' Marvellous is already making great progress and Dig In is also looking for more volunteer befrienders who will be provided with training and ongoing support. For more info email info@diginnorthwest.org or call 07933 616 312.

YOUR COVENANT AT WORK



EMPOWERING SERVICE CHILDREN

An innovative collaborative project is underway to support service children to be heard and gain increased confidence.

Funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Force for Change Programme, Weeton Primary School, Carr Hill, Army Welfare Services and the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) have devised a series of outreach sessions aiming to empower and engage.

Rebecca Steel, from the College of Military Veterans and Emergency Services, is leading and coordinating activities designed to support service children make decisions about their future aspirations. These use arts-based methods, coaching, reflective and expressive learning to provide a safe space for service children to reflect on their current life experiences, the project helps them to share thoughts and feelings of their personal journey.

The project is underpinned by the Service Children's Progression Alliance's (SCiP) Thriving Lives Toolkit, this provides seven principles of support to working with service children and young people. Dr Celia Hynes and Rebecca Steel are Chairs of the Lancashire and the North West SCiP Alliance Hub hosted at UCLan. Dr Hynes said: "Life can be unsettling and challenging for some service children and young people so we are designing outreach and interventions to listen to what they want and to offer support to reduce any worries they may have."

The Thriving Lives Toolkit is available free of charge to all schools working with service children and families at www.scipalliance.org

NEW BREAKFAST HUB OPENS

Around 60 people attended the official launch of a new Veterans' Breakfast Hub at Blackburn Rovers Football Club.

Community Welfare Officer Chris McGrail, who organises the club, said: "We had about 60 people come along on the day, local veterans as well as members of other organisations and charities, Veterans In Communities, Veterans Living History Museum and Healthier Heroes."

An application has been made for nearly £10,000 from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, which will help to cover oncosts and also support activities.

Chris added: "We have already carried out a consultation, so we know what the veterans have said they want to do; now we want to make it happen."

To find out more contact Chris on 07787 585 109 or email Chris.McGrail@brfctrust.co.uk



ARK PROVIDES A SAFE HAVEN

Support and advice agency West Lancs Ark CIC has been working with the Armed Forces for nearly 20 years.

Director Jan Monaghan pictured said: "In the last year we have rehomed four or five veterans who were living on the streets and we also help the unemployed and work with ex-offenders and people coming out of prison. Over the pandemic we provided 900 food parcels and our phone line is available 24-7."



The Ark is based in the Ecumenical Centre at Fibeck, Skelmersdale, on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays between 9am and noon and is open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays for appointments only.

Jan is hoping to apply for funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to assist with the project's development and the services they provide to the armed forces community in West Lancashire. Call 07826 656 387.

YOUR ARMED FORCES CHAMPIONS

LANCASHIRE County Council
Councillor Alf Clempson
Tel: 07983 335630
email: alf.clempson@lancashire.gov.uk



BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN Borough Council
Councillor John Slater
Tel: 01254 775743
email: john.slater@blackburn.gov.uk



BLACKPOOL Council
Councillor Derek Robertson BEM
Tel: 07931668305
email: Derek.robertson@blackpool.gov.uk



BURNLEY Borough Council
Councillor Cosima Towneley
Tel: 07817 725976
email: ctowneley@burnley.gov.uk



CHORLEY Borough Council
Councillor Aaron Beaver
Tel: 07985 118402
email: aaron.beaver@chorley.gov.uk



FYLDE Borough Council
Councillor Ed Nash
Tel: 07917521933
email: Edward.Nash@lancashire.gov.uk



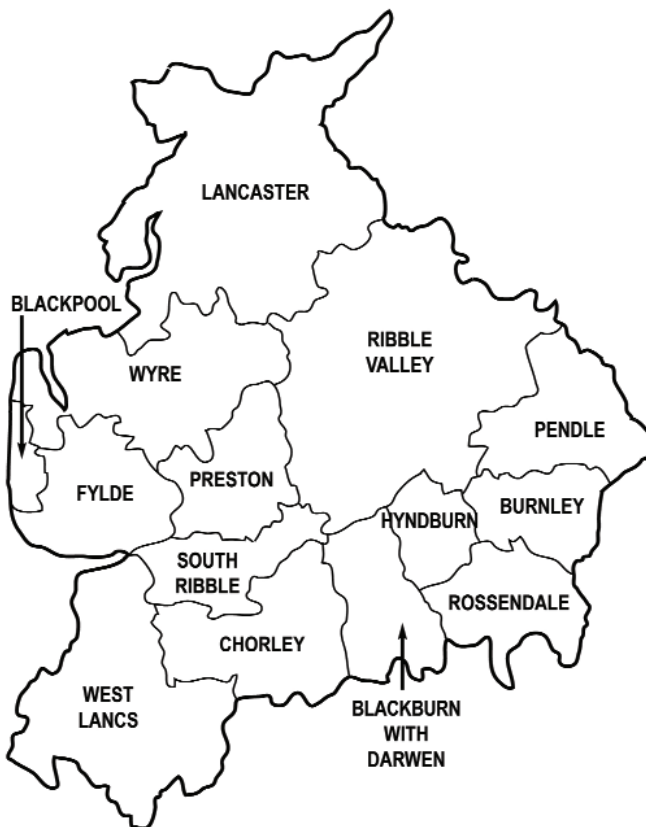
HYNDBURN Borough Council
Councillor Paddy Short
Tel: 07488 556559
email: paddy.short@hyndburnbc.gov.uk



LANCASTER City Council
Councillor Roger Dennison
Tel: 01524 417710
email: rdennison@lancaster.gov.uk



PENDLE District Council
Councillor Neil Butterworth
Tel: 07747 843186
email: neil14@live.co.uk



PRESTON City Council
Councillor Nweeda Khan
Tel: 07867308345
email: cllr.n.khan@preston.gov.uk



RIBBLE VALLEY Borough Council
Councillor Richard Sherras
Tel: 01200 445429
email: cllr.sherras@ribblevalley.gov.uk



ROSSENDALE Borough Council
Councillor Christine Gill
Tel: 07817 414288
email: christinegill@rossendalebc.gov.uk



SOUTH RIBBLE Borough Council
Councillor Derek Forrest
Tel: 01772 421582
email: cllr.dforrest@southribble.gov.uk



WEST LANCS Borough Council
Councillor Terry Devine
Tel: 07724 508311
email: Cllr.Devine@westlancs.gov.uk



WYRE Council
Councillor Peter Le Marinel
Tel: 07976 706744
email: peter.lemarinel@wyre.gov.uk



HELP IS OUT THERE FOR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Armed forces veterans in England have access to support and assistance if they are struggling with mental health issues.

The NHS launched its Op Courage service in March this year offering specialist services to veterans suffering

a mental health crisis. Doctors, nurses and other NHS staff are working with military charities to provide therapy and services, and in extreme cases inpatient care, to hundreds of former soldiers, sailors and RAF personnel.

Op Courage not only provides

help and support to the veteran, but also access to local services to assist the rest of the family, if they too have been affected.

Veterans or members of their family can access Op Courage in the North of England by contacting

123 1145, by speaking to their GP or contacting a military charity.

Other agencies are also able to provide help:

Samaritans 116 123
Mind 0300 123 3393
Combat Stress
0800 138 1619.

COVENANT NEWS has been provided by The Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Hub working in partnership with Lancashire County Council, the University of Central Lancashire, Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust and Regional Army Headquarters.

