

COVENANT NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT
ACROSS LANCASHIRE

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SECURE HOMES FOR VETERANS



MILLIONS of pounds of is being invested to prevent military veterans from rough sleeping and to end veteran homelessness.

The Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) announced, last December, that £8.5 million of Government money was being made available to deliver more than 900 supported housing spaces in England, where specialist help for veterans, including with health, education and employment needs would be provided.

Partners Healthier Heroes CIC, based in Burnley, and Launchpad Veterans, a Merseyside charity, were awarded £859k and together they will support 230 veterans over the next two years.

Healthier Heroes Managing Director Andy Powell said: "We have been working together for the last two to three years and, if we have a referral but no accommodation available, we will ask Launchpad for help to house the veteran. Since OP FORTITUDE's dedicated phone line was introduced in July, we have had 22 referrals and all were found accommodation. In the vast majority of cases, it all went pretty smoothly. I am impressed with the way OP FORTITUDE is working and with the quality of information that is being passed on."

Full-time members of staff have been taken on at Healthier Heroes to deliver the service, *pictured above from left* – Gary Heys, an independent living co-ordinator, Aisha Akhtar, a psychotherapist and Liam Hamnett, an education and training co-ordinator. They ensure the needs of the veterans are met including, when the time is right, helping them move on into their own accommodation and providing support to ensure they maintain their tenancy.

Of the referrals received, the veterans in crisis had been sofa surfing, released from prison with no fixed abode, had a relationship break down and a couple had been living in tents in a forest. Andy said professionals, family members, friends or veterans themselves can refer to OP FORTITUDE but they are advised to get as much information as possible about the veteran in crisis before contacting the service.

At the same time, the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust established a Reducing Veteran Homelessness programme, to award grants on behalf of the OVA again, to projects contributing to pledge to end veteran homelessness. Homes at Ease NW, led by Armed Forces HQ in Wigan received a Covenant grant to work in partnership with statutory and third sector organisations to try to prevent

veterans who are struggling with a range of situations from becoming homeless. Helen Hubberstey, *pictured top right*, is the newly appointed Operations Director at Armed Forces HQ Wigan and has worked in housing and adult support services, for more than 30 years.

She said: "The new service will work hard to combat veteran homelessness across the North West of England, providing intensive housing related support. We are committed to working collectively in partnership, to provide better homelessness solutions to people referred via the Op Fortitude National Helpline." To contact email helen@armedforceshq.org.uk

Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Hub Project Lead Ian Barber said: "Healthier Heroes has significantly improved the services offered to homeless veterans across Lancashire since it opened and we now welcome the Homes at Ease NW project. We hope these will improve preventative housing services for veterans."

Refer to OP FORTITUDE

QUALITY referrals will help to provide the fastest service. Refer via the website <https://riv.org.uk/opfortitude> or call 0800 952 0774. On receipt of the referral, the veteran's safety, current housing situation, location and complexity of need will be assessed and matched with the most appropriate services available.

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YOUR COVENANT AT WORK

IN A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

A NEW North West Football League just for veterans' teams has been introduced by Lancashire and Manchester Football Associations.

In 2023/24, players will be competing in the first season of the new North West Military Veterans League, which will bring ex-forces personnel from across the North West together to play regular competitive football. Fixtures will take place every four to six weeks at a central venue with varied kick off times.

The league also intends to provide education and support to team players and volunteers through CPD and workshops from armed forces charities and organisation throughout the season.

A number of clubs, and community trusts, have already signed up to the 7-a-side

league with teams from Burnley FC, Curzon Ashton, Fleetwood Town, Foundation 92, AFC Fylde, Liverpool FC, Blackpool FC, Oldham Athletic, Preston North End and Rochdale AFC. All new teams receive £200 to support setting up, purchasing kit and equipment or for match fees.

Daniella Worth, Veteran Project Coordinator at Burnley FC in the Community, said: "This is a great opportunity for BFCitC Military Veterans and those from across the North West to be a part of the new sanctioned league run by Lancashire and Manchester FA."

Joe Mathias, Manchester FA, and Leigh Jeffrey, Lancashire FA, added: "We are delighted to be able to provide this new offer to veterans of the armed forces in



the North West. We have made sure to include members of the community in designing the league to ensure it fits their requirements and we can't wait to get the football underway in September."

Military veterans interested in joining or starting a team in their area, can email either Leigh.Jeffrey@lancashirefa.com or Joe.Mathias@manchesterfa.com

SEASIDERS' SILVER GOAL

WITH a proven track record of helping veterans since 2017, Blackpool FC Community Trust has now extended its programme to support veteran mental health.

Dave Maclean, Community Engagement Manager said: "This enables us to continue with what we were already doing around sports, physical activities and social inclusion and as part of the programme we have referral pathways with local organisations, charities and the NHS



should veterans need extra support. We have groups like walk and talk, a wellbeing hub with outside speakers from Healthier Minds and Lancashire Fire and Rescue and a general peer support group Get Vocal that some of our veterans have joined."

The projects have reached out to more than 100 local veterans, but, since the extra

Armed Forces Fund Trust grant was agreed, a further 25 have come onto the programme.

Email Dave on: Dave.Maclean@bfcct.co.uk

● Blackpool FC Community Trust was awarded Silver under the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme for its support to Defence and the wider Armed Forces community.

ROVERS' LADIES

A FEMALE Veterans' Leadership and Employability Skills Programme is now running at Blackburn Rovers Community Trust.

A social group runs on a Tuesday morning, the trust is delivering employability sessions on a Thursday, including support with CV writing and interview preparation, and Friday breakfast meetings.



The sessions are a great opportunity for female veterans to develop new friendships, discuss their experiences and what they wish to get out of the programme, and for the community trust to plan with the female veterans individually how to support them to achieve these goals. Future plans include: supporting female veterans with functional skills, volunteering programmes and gym sessions.

Contact Lauren Yates 01254 508121.

YOUR COVENANT AT WORK

PNE FORCES

PRESTON North End Community and Education Trust supports Armed Forces personnel through its PNE Forces initiative, which is open to anyone who is currently serving, has previously served and their spouse.

Through the PNE Forces programme, the Trust has been able to support a number of beneficiaries to access weekly football and social sessions, as well as providing complementary match tickets to Preston North End fixtures.

The Trust is grateful to be a part of the Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant, and was successful in securing a Covenant Fund Trust grant to build on the existing provision and to appoint a dedicated Armed Forces Officer to lead and deliver on the 'Back in the Game' initiative to support older veterans to access community-based services that inspire better social and wellbeing outcomes.

The project engages those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods of Preston who are facing challenges with loneliness, social isolation, and broader socio-economic inequalities. For more information on the PNE Forces programme please email darrensteele@pne.com.



NAAFI CAFE OPEN

A NEW NAAFI Café Lancaster opened in October on Market Street, Lancaster, after a complete refurbishment – new seating, decor, signature flower walls and menu.

As a not-for-profit organisation, NAAFI returns all trading surpluses back into supporting Armed Forces communities, either as direct contributions or by investment into the facilities they operate.



FLEETWOOD'S GARDEN

AN ARMED Forces community garden has been opened by Fleetwood Town Community Trust after the land was gifted by HAASRA and the Civil Service.

A Wyre Borough Council cost of living grant and an Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust grant helped to fund the project which took five weeks to plan and develop. The garden includes furniture and high raised planting beds made from recycled or sustainable materials with a dramatic entrance leading to

a boules pitch and tyre planters.

Veterans get involved planting seasonal flowers, as well as tending a vegetable plot. Volunteers from The Prince's Trust helped with a section of the garden, building a small 'Lest we forget' section. There is now a gardening club on a Tuesday afternoon and a coffee morning on a Friday. The garden was opened by Major George Briscoe MBE, who serves with The Duke of Lancaster Regiment.

Contact Tony Codling email Tony.Codling@fleetwoodtownfc.com

GARY BRIDGES GAP TO DWP

HAVING served 23 years in the Queen's Royal Hussars and being deployed on numerous Operational Tours, Gary Shivers knows exactly how it feels to leave the forces and return to civilian life.



With his own lived experience, he wanted to help and support veterans and the community to gain knowledge of what support there is. Gary became Department of Work and Pensions Armed Forces Champion for Cumbria and Lancashire and it was his mission to

ensure the Veteran Community was aware of what support was on offer, regardless of their employment status. Gary said: "I provide support and guidance and when I don't know an answer, I will know someone that does. This is down to the collaborative working relationships between DWP internal and external providers such as Forces Employment Charity, Healthier Heroes, LCC Armed Forces Covenant Hub, NHS, Blackpool FC Community Support."

Any veteran concerned about their benefits or other DWP services, should ask to speak to the Jobcentre Armed Forces Work Coach or Champion.

YOUR ARMED FORCES CHAMPIONS

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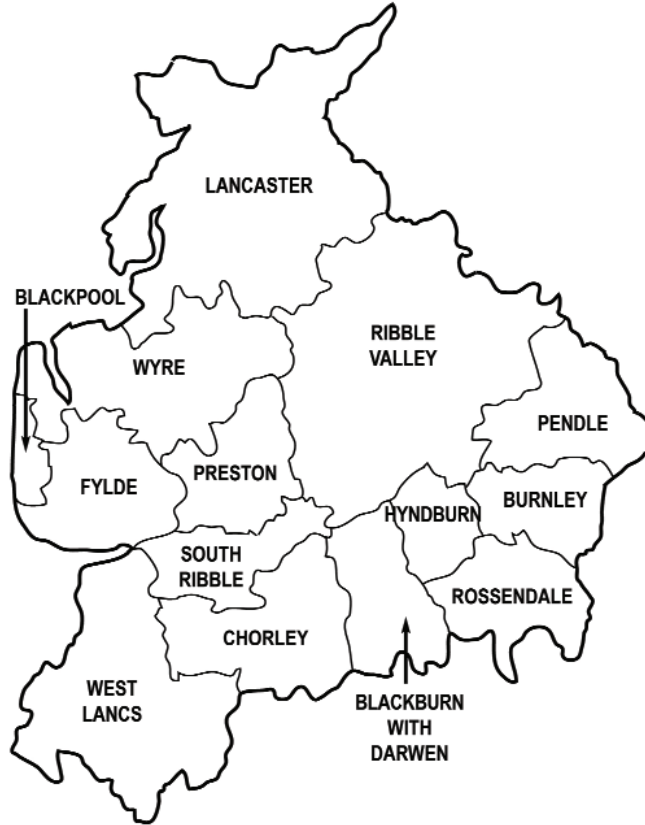
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LANCASTER LEADS THE WAY

FORMED in 2022, the Lancaster Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Group supports the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant for serving personnel, service families and military veterans within the Lancaster district.

Led by Lancaster City Council Armed Forces Champion Councillor Roger Dennison, and meeting quarterly, it includes representatives of the district's public, voluntary and commercial sectors.

Its main focus is to:

- Promote awareness of the Armed

Forces Covenant and advocate its principles.

- Encourage the Armed Forces Community to support the wider community, through participation in events, joint projects, or other forms of engagement
- seek to embed the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant in the policies and practices of member organisations; encourage activities that raise awareness and help integrate the armed forces community into local life.
- Share experiences to highlight how services could be better adapted/developed to provide inclusivity to the



armed forces community.

- Celebrate, promote, and actively support key armed forces events.

Ultimately, the Covenant group brings together public sector providers, with charity and CIC representatives who engage directly with the local armed Forces community. This kind of co-ordination and co-operation has real benefits for the Armed Forces Community of Morecambe and Lancaster.



THE LANCASHIRE
ARMED FORCES
COVENANT HUB

Lancashire
County Council



University of
Central Lancashire
UCLan



Lancashire &
South Cumbria
NHS Foundation Trust

