



Meeting held 10th April 2024, Conference Room, Sheffield Town Hall

Present:

Cllr Denise Fox – SCC Armed Forces Champion (DF – Chair), Paul Taylor - Sheffield City Council Head of Customer Services (PT- notes), Pauline King - RFCA (PK), Neil Halsey – DWP (NH), Jane Townsend - Forces Employment Charity (JT), Mike Anthony SYFR (MA), John Chapman - Home Mess (JC), Nigel Taaffe – SYP (NT), Stephen Burke – Sheffield City Council Civic Office Manager (SB), Terry Newton – RAFA (TN), Stacey Aherne – DWP (SA), John Nixon – Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club (JN), Mark Egglestone - Age UK Sheffield (ME), Kathy Albertson – Sheffield Hallam University (KA), Mick Lynch – Royal Yorkshire Regiment/Care After Combat (ML), Sarah Chester - Reed in Partnership (SC), Elaine Mason – Op Nova, Forces Employment Charity (EM), Andy King - NHS Regional Lead, NE and Yorkshire (AK)

1. Welcomes, introductions and apologies

Apologies were received from: Karen Gardner - RBL, Robert Barker - Sheffield City Council, Rick Short - VAPC, Steve Halton - Home Mess, Adele Miller – Blesma, Ben Winter – SWFC, Danella Senior – Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Martin Cohen – SYP, Linda Wilkinson – Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS.

2. Minutes of previous meeting (30th November 2023) and matters arising

Item 6 – PT outlined work around increasing Board Membership. Laura Hayfield (SCC) has agreed to join the Board but was unable to make this meeting. PT noted useful contacts made at the Sheffield Military Business Expo in March had resulted in SC joining the Board. Another private sector contact is keen but was unable to join this meeting. PT continues to look for attendance from Sheffield Teaching Hospitals. DF said that Amco Geffen (Veteran Employment) have been in touch with her – they are looking to sign the Covenant and want a stall on Armed Forces Day.

NH said that he is still spreading information around DWP contacts. SA noted that people don't like Job Centre environments and so more emphasis is needed on outreach. More discussion will take place with SCC.

3. RCGP Veteran Friendly Accreditation Process

AK presented this item, and noted that a slide deck will follow. The Veteran Friendly Accreditation Process was set up around 2018/19 and centres around the needs of veterans, reservists and their families, making use of lived experience and education. The scheme is voluntary. Progress was impacted by the Covid pandemic. NHS England and the RCGP have been invited to be part of the scheme.

A key issue concerns what services are available from Primary Care. Medical practices are the key to physical, mental and social health for veterans and their families. Individual practices can become accredited. The GP Contract is currently in transition but under this contract practices must pay due regard to the needs of this group.

The South Yorkshire ICB area is currently exactly on the national average of 40% accreditation (the regional average for the north-east region is 60%). Accreditation is pending for two practices in Sheffield. Nationally the scheme is reaching 43% of the veteran population. The vision is to be able to create integrated teams so that veterans can be passed on appropriately. Armed Forces Advocates are being created in Trusts. AK added that veterans are not always wanting to share that they are veterans.

KA asked how we can know if a practice is accredited. It should be shown on the practice's website and in waiting rooms. KA asked what the training looks like; AK said that it focuses on what is available for veterans. A flag on an individual's file will show that they are a veteran and the Veteran ID card will help. PK asked how aligned the scheme is to the VCHA accreditation and AK replied that this is a different body. PK said that there is a Care Homes Veteran Friendly Network and she will send AK an invite to this (**action PK**). PT said that he will link AK in with the other South Yorkshire Covenant Boards (**action PT**).

NH said that people hear about accreditation but don't know what to do about it. AK noted that there is a 30% turnover in GP practices. The aim is to achieve 75% accreditation by the end of 24/25. DF asked what information practices get once accredited. AK confirmed that practices receive an information pack once they are accredited. AK noted that in Sunderland all GP practices are accredited and with an Armed Forces Champion in each practice.

4. Reed in Partnership – Pioneer Work Routes

SC explained that Pioneer Work Routes are part of an employability support programme, and the only criteria for being part of them is that people are ex-armed forces and their families. The aim is to build foundations with people who already

have a good number of skills. People can be in employment counselling within two weeks of making contact. The focus is on what jobs are suitable for people and they are allocated their own advisor. In-house training is provided, focusing on putting together a CV and confidence building as well as work around mood management. 80% of people who have gone through the scheme are still in work. If people fall out of work they can come back to Reed. SC noted that coaching is key – participants need to hear that people believe in them. The team is office-based in the City Centre. They cover all of South Yorkshire, Derbyshire and the North East. MA asked whether if we know an applicant for a job is a veteran we can signpost them; SC confirmed that people could be referred on. People who are unsuccessful can be referred on, and the team can also do the “before” element, helping with the application form, fit with person specification and interview training.

PK noted that Reed in Partnership is taking over the Career Transition Partnership contract and this should result in more professional training for service leavers. SC confirmed that the service they provide is free of charge. JT noted that the Forces Employment Charity also work with armed forces personnel on job searching. The point was made that people can also be referred to Mind, but that a charge may be made.

MA said that more needs to be done to communicate the support available to people. SC said that she was happy for her details to be circulated. PT said that information can also go in the next Armed Forces Newsletter (**action PT**). SA said that she would take information back to DWP Work Coaches. PT also noted the NHS Step into Health programme and AK referenced the NAFESE Directory of Services for Veterans.

5. Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club

JN introduced this item by explaining that AF&V Breakfast Clubs have been running nationally since 2007. The Sheffield one is run by JN. It meets three times per month and receives no funding. The club represents a safe space for veterans and their families to attend. This has only been running for six weeks, and is based at the Sheaf Island pub on Ecclesall Road, with a new venue also being the Wetherspoons in Woodseats.

Attendees pay for their own food but get free tea and coffee. Where people are struggling financially, organisers provide help out of their own pockets. JN noted that this is the only social outlet for some people attending. NH noted that this is often the first place DWP refer people onto. PT asked whether the pre-existing Sheffield Breakfast Club run by Paul Oldfield is still operating and it appears that it is. JT said that as someone involved with the RBL she knows how important Breakfast Clubs are. She has been approached by the mothers of young veterans who have said how beneficial such clubs are.

PT raised the point that meeting in a pub might prove problematic for some attendees, for example those who have had alcohol issues. JN replied that it is hard to find a location which is not a pub, and also parking can be an issue. MA said that the Fire Station Community Rooms could be used. AK referenced Andy's Man Club, noting that a good percentage of attendees are ex-military and the club meets at the Fire Service rooms. PT agreed to reference the Breakfast Club in the next Armed Forces Newsletter (**action PT**).

6. Regional Update

PT confirmed that the Regional Armed Forces Covenant Group meetings are back on track. Armed Forces Champions and the Armed Forces Staff Leads from Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield will meet every three months (the next meeting was due on 16th April). PT said that it has been agreed that the meeting set for 19th November in Rotherham will be one where all of the members of the four South Yorkshire Covenant Boards will have a chance to all come together; invitations will be issued in due course.

7. Armed Forces Newsletter

PT apologised that the third edition of the Armed Forces Newsletter remains to be produced. PT will draft this and circulate to Board members for comment and final agreement (**action PT**)

8. Armed Forces and Veterans Day 2024

AF&V day will take place in Sheffield on Saturday 22nd June. PT asked which organisations would like a stall on the day and a number of attendees asked for this; PT to follow up (**action PT**). This year's contact in the Events team is Julie King. SB raised the question of what veterans want from the day, noting that we need people to engage with and be part of it. NH said that it would be good to get families along and so e.g. having a fairground might help. MA asked whether the city centre feels like the right venue. DF said that Norfolk Park had been considered but it is already busy this year. NH wondered whether split venues could be operated. DF said that when details are clear they will be circulated to all Board members.

9. Credit Their Service

PT presented this item on behalf of Karen Gardner. The Royal British Legion (RBL) has congratulated Sheffield City Council for responding positively to the Credit their Service campaign. Up and down the country, some councils continue to unfairly treat Armed Forces compensation as income in means tested benefits. It is really good news for the Armed Forces community in the Sheffield area, that Sheffield council has taken action to remove this injustice.

RBL will continue to work with every local authority and central government until all military compensation is fully disregarded as income in means tested benefits.

Hannah Pearce, Director of Campaigns, Policy and Research at RBL, said “We want to thank Sheffield City Council for working with us and doing the right thing by veterans and the whole Armed Forces community. All councils in Great Britain have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, and this is a really good example of the tangible difference councils can make to some of the poorest veterans in their community.”

PT agreed to check on Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham’s stance on this issue **(action PT)**.

10. Feedback from partners

Ex-Services Home Mess

Socials are now taking place on Fridays as well as Mondays. Home Mess has lost its National Lottery funding for Gardening and so is looking for other sources. They have now got the services of a trained counsellor. The Board placed on record its thanks and appreciation to Tony Cooper who has now stood down as Chair due to ill health.

Op Nova

Now have a Family Support Worker employed

SYFR

This will be MA’s last meeting as Armed Forces lead as he is moving to Humberside Fire and Rescue. Going forward the lead will be Gary Devonport. The Board expressed its thanks to MA for his work with us.

Sheffield City Council

The Sheffield Military Business Expo on 12th March, jointly organised by SWFC, RFCA and SCC was a successful and vibrant event with some engaging speakers and the opportunity for lots of useful networking.

DWP

A Military Employment Event was due to happen in Doncaster on 11th April, and NH will look for useful contacts there. (AK noted that employers get 12 months National Insurance reimbursement when employing veterans). NH said that there are also grants in the Education sector for families of service personnel. SB raised the Service Pupil Premium adding that every school should know about this but some don’t. The Board agreed that it would be helpful to invite someone from the SCC Education team to the next meeting **(action PT)**.

RAFA

This was TN’s first meeting and he noted that lots of information from the meeting ties in really well with the work of RAFA in Sheffield. There are two main thrusts for

the organisation in Sheffield. The Battle of Britain Memorial happens every year on the closest Sunday to 15th September. Then every February is the commemoration of Mi Amigo. This year was the 80th anniversary. Work has gone on to improve the memorial and access to it. The SCC Parks Service has been very receptive. The work of a colleague from NS&I, and a Go Fund Me page raised £20k in a couple of months. The poignant 80th anniversary got national coverage. Relatives of the airmen came over for the anniversary and they were astonished at how honoured the aircrew were by the people of Sheffield.

11. Future Agenda Items

As per earlier discussion – a representative from the SCC Education team, and also if possible someone from the Schools Forum.

12. Any other business

None raised.

Next Meeting

Wednesday 21st August 2024, 10.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon. Venue details to be confirmed.