

**WEST LANCASHIRE ARMED FORCES
COMMUNITY COVENANT WORKING GROUP**

HELD: Wednesday, 19 February 2020

Start: 2.00 p.m.

Finish: 4.05 p.m.

PRESENT:

Councillor: T Devine (Chairman)

Councillor: J Gordon

In attendance: Ian Barber (Lancashire Hub)
Alan Lewis (Skelmersdale Veterans)
James Matthews (Skelmersdale Veterans)
Councillor J Monaghan (West Lancs Ark)
Andy Cook (Breck Centre)
Kenny Whittaker (Breck Centre)
Karen Sutmire (Girlguiding UK)
Craig Kirby (The Sewing Rooms)
Sarah Bennett (Citizen Advice Bureau)
David Knowles (Ex Services Association)
James Oates (Ex Services Association)
Paul Mosquino (Skelmersdale Veterans)
Phil Winnard (West Lancashire CCG)
County Councillor Nikki Hennessy
Nicky Speed (Edge Hill University)
Natalie White (Nat West Bank)
Alison Bunn (Royal British Legion)

Officers: Stephen Kent, Leisure Operations Manager
Susan Griffiths, Principal Member Services Officer
Jill Ryan, Member Services/Civic Officer

10 **INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

11 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Rosetta Hart (RAFA).

12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest received.

13 NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP

AGREED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Working Group be approved as a correct record.

14 THE BRECK CENTRE

The meeting received a presentation from Andy Cook from the Breck Centre; he was also accompanied by his colleague Kenny Whittaker. The Breck Centre is based in Liverpool City Centre and whose patron is the Earl of Derby.

The first thing that was highlighted to the meeting was that coming into the Breck Centre for help was one of the hardest decisions that many of our ex-servicemen and women make, it is very hard for them to ask for help.

The Centre is designed to help all those veterans who need help in the Region, many of whom are homeless, have alcohol or drug related problems, have recently come out of the military and are taking the first steps back into civilian lives and need help.

He informed the meeting that there are currently 32,000 veterans in Liverpool alone. 130 of these were currently in the Criminal Justice System.

He also informed the meeting that Wirral had just set up a similar scheme.

The Centre provides a One Stop Shop for anyone who has served in the military including reservists and they are able to get help and assistance for them and their families in many ways.

He informed the meeting that they also have many other activities going on for veterans they run a Kick Start to Health Programme, they organise job fairs one of which was held at the Maritime Museum in Liverpool.

He outlined the help they had received from other organisations in getting the Breck Centre in Liverpool off the ground. He informed the meeting that they had been given 7 houses from Liverpool City Council solely for veterans.

They also have a project called New Beginnings, which they were asked to undertake by Merseyside Health in Liverpool Prisons. At the outset, they were awarded a grant through Lottery Funding to get this project off the ground and their aim was that they wanted to work in 6 Prisons in 3 years, this has been surpassed and they are now working in 12 Prisons in the North West.

He outlined the work that they do with the Prison Service, going into Prisons in the Region visiting ex Veterans to meet with them and prepare them for when they are released. Getting them set up with GP's, living accommodation and other essential services. He informed the meeting that the Centre was currently now active in 12 prisons in the North West supporting 183 individuals, and added that only 23 of these had reoffended. He also stated that other outside agencies could also be

contacted and brought in to assist if this is needed.

They have also set up a Champion Inmate who can interact with other ex-veterans in other wings in the Prison these are known as blue banders.

Questions and queries were raised in relation to:

- The work done in prison with the Veterans
- The length of time spent with individual Veterans during prison visits
- Veterans who don't wish to receive support
- Interaction with Custody Officer and prisoners
- How did the information filter through that they are ex forces personnel

The Chairman expressed thanks to Andy for attending the meeting and for his very informative presentation, he also added that West Lancs Ark in Skelmersdale do outreach work, and asked if this could be put on the Armed Forces page of the Council's website.

AGREED: That the presentation be noted.

15 **DIGITAL SAFETY & FRIENDS AGAINST SCAMS SESSIONS**

The Working Group received a presentation from Natalie White from the Nat West Bank on information sessions provided to groups across Lancashire on digital safety and friends against scams.

Natalie's presentation outlined the work that she did across the Borough and the many training and advice sessions that she could deliver to groups.

These included:-

- Money Sensing Schools for ages 4-18 years of age
- Groups on Friends Against Scams
- Rogue Traders
- Digital Safety

Natalie's work is right across our Borough and she works with all ages in society. Her role was created by Nat West Bank to help with closures of many local branches and the need to be there for people who perhaps are vulnerable, need help and assistance with their finances, and to promote digital safety.

She also works with the Princes Trust running money management sessions, ICT skill groups, pupils expelled from school, doing home visits if necessary.

Questions and queries were raised in relation to:-

- How contact can be made with veteran organisations
- The issue of people who are homeless getting bank accounts and how do they get bank accounts especially veterans serving prison sentences
- Whether debt was something that was dealt with
- If people she worked with were asked if they are ex-service personnel
- Whether individuals would have to bank with the Nat West to be able to get advice

The Chairman expressed thanks to Natalie for attending the meeting and for the very informative presentation.

AGREED: That the possibility of a presentation be delivered at West Lancs Ark in Skelmersdale in the future.

16 **MILITARY VETERANS PATHWAY**

The Working Group received a presentation from Phil Winnard from West Lancs CCG who had been invited to talk to the group about the Military Veterans Pathway. Phil explained that he was also the Mental Health Commissioner for West Lancashire.

He informed the Working Group that a new programme was being rolled out at the Ennerdale Centre in Skelmersdale, which was being used for mental health rehabilitation, and it was hoped that this would support communities in a different way. He informed the Working Group that suicide was relatively high in West Lancashire and most of these people were not known to be already involved with mental health services.

The Ennerdale Centre was a large centre with a room big enough to hold 50 people and 10 smaller rooms if needed. There were I.T. Training Rooms also which could be used by groups.

Phil informed the Working Group that he wanted this facility to also support our ex servicemen and women and hoped that these facilities would be utilised by them.

It was felt that the Ennerdale Centre would also prevent social isolation, assist with relationship problems and people being able to access the Centre if needed the same day.

Phil went onto add that there would be 3 members of staff on duty from 8am until 10.00pm who were support staff in principle, he added that similar facilities had also been opened in Preston and Chorley.

Phil discussed with the Working Group the work of the Military Veterans Service and in particular the Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS). He also raised that a pilot was taking place for a single point of access for West Lancashire, which

was being established but that this was in the very early stages of development.

Questions and queries were raised in relation to:

- Staff at the Ennerdale Centre
- It was felt that it would be worth members of the Working Group going along to see the service
- Whether there would be smaller meeting rooms for people to talk in a more private environment
- Whether the Centre would be open for ex forces related groups to use and whether they would be able to have therapies there
- The Birchwood Centre and the role they play in supporting the community
- Whether people could use the office space at the centre for free
- Waiting times that veterans are experiencing to access support services
- Where all the facts and figures in relation to veterans actually go to

The Chairman expressed thanks to Phil for attending the meeting and his presentation.

AGREED: That the presentation be noted.

17

WEST LANCASHIRE COMMUNITY COVENANT WORKING GROUP ACTION PLAN

Consideration was given to the report of the Armed Forces Champion on the West Lancashire Community Covenant Working Group Action Plan, the purpose of which was to consider the draft action plan and that any revisions and identified outputs in the Action Plan be agreed at the meeting and be incorporated and, that the Action Plan be updated.

The Principal Member Services Officer commented that the Action Plan was a work in progress and she was seeking input from members of the Working Group on their thoughts and views.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- A lead name placed against each action
- A lot of work had gone into it and it was felt that it looked overwhelming.

AGREED: That the points raised above be taken into consideration and that the Action Plan be revised and circulated to Members of the Working Group for their input.

18 COMMUNITY COVENANT GRANT FUNDING

The Armed Forces Champion advised on the availability of Community Covenant Funding.

The Report set out to let members of the Working Group know that there was currently one Government Grant Programme available, which was the Positive Pathways Programme.

The closing date to apply for this funding was the 6 March 2020 and members of the Working Group were urged to get the endorsement from the Armed Forces Champion if they were thinking of applying.

It was reported that no bids had been submitted from West Lancashire at the present time.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

19 OFFICE FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Consideration was given to the report of the Armed Forces Champion advising on the establishment of the Office for Veterans' Affairs.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

20 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items under this heading.

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Chairman