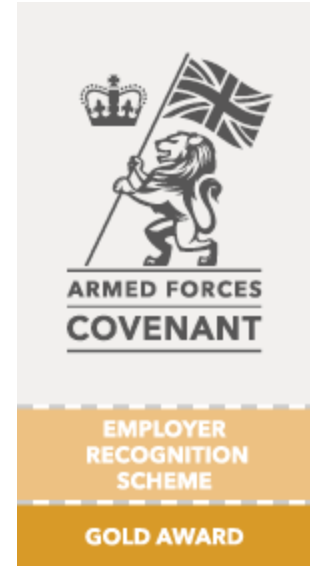




NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE ARMED FORCES LIAISON GROUP ACTION PLAN

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT – 2023 / 2024

Introduction

This report highlights the key progress made during 2023/24 against the themed actions outlined in the North East Lincolnshire Armed Forces Strategy and Action Plan.

This report is the third annual report, based on the work of the North East Lincolnshire Armed Forces Liaison Group.

Cross-cutting Factors

- The North East Lincolnshire Armed Forces Liaison Group continues to expand its membership with new organisations and charities joining over the past year. The work of this group also contributes in us working towards the requirements of the DERS Gold Award.
- A member of the Group has also joined the Lincolnshire Community Covenant Partnership Group which are similar in structure and make-up to the NEL group and provides a broader understanding of need across Greater Lincolnshire. The invitation has been reciprocated.

Armed Forces Major Events Team

A full summary provided by AFMET can be found at Appendix 1.

Service Provision:

The Knoll Hive remains a crucial venue for service provision to the Armed Forces Community, offering various support services and activities.

Veteran Support:

The presence of veterans within the structure is vital for understanding and address complex hidden injuries and needs.

Event Planning:

AFMET successfully organizes major events like Armed Forces Day weekend and Remembrance events, enhancing North East Lincolnshire's reputation.

Public Engagement

- Following the success of a Royal Navy Capability Demonstration held in February 2024, NELC are working with the British Army to host a similar event in October 2024 and with the Royal Air Force in the very near future to showcase their capability.

What Next?

The work of the North East Lincolnshire Armed Forces Liaison Group will continue to move this agenda forward, meeting three times per year. We will seek to utilize the group in creating plans and actions moving forward to ensure the plan is working for North East Lincolnshire and it's residents.

The Action Plan (2024-2029) attached at the end of this report, details the actions of the Group in supporting local veterans, our support for current armed forces employees and reservists, our role in supporting the Armed Forces Covenant and in commemoration of those who have served and made the ultimate sacrifice.

AFMET Annual Report in Full

AFMET continues to fully deliver those agreed aspects of North East Lincolnshire Covenant duties and commitments through the Knoll Hive and support facilities (Blighty's Coffee Lounge, counselling rooms, fully functioning and provisioned meeting rooms and operational services) which is the main activity centre for these. It is also the operational base of AFMET who continue to plan and deliver the main provision of the covenant together with military/civil events planning and delivery, including further support to accommodate an expedient growth of the Armed Forces Day weekend attendances. together with those other commemoration or celebration events, as they occur.

The Knoll Hive is seeing a slight change in the landscape of referrals as active warfighting has reduced which affects public interest and subsequent awareness.

The importance of having veterans themselves within the current embedded structure cannot be underestimated, given their mutual understanding of complex hidden injuries and welfare provision requirements post-service, including those that effect service families. Presentation to seek advice can often take up to 14 years given some service leavers are often reluctant to engage before this point.

The overall impact is that these have also forced some adjustments in methodology to ensure a more robust fast-track development of links and previously established lines of communication with the whole collective within the armed forces community. The current geopolitical situation(s) we believe is likely see a slight return to immediate post-Afghanistan referral numbers.

The Hive at the Knoll remains a popular and well recognised venue for service provision to the AF Community in general and Veterans Cohort in particular; It remains the primary first point of contact for veterans and their families across wider NE Lincolnshire region. The methodology associated with the delivery of services within the AF Hive (for North East Lincolnshire at Cleethorpes) is now extremely well understood, offering complimentary multiple activities designed to promote civil/military integration (an important factor in post-service and transition and employment services) working closely with MOD, all which continue to function well.

Positive progress with AFMET/HIVE organised activities (particularly AFD and Remembrance Days) has without question also firmly established North East Lincolnshire as the perfect location for TRI- SERVICE National Associations annual reunions & meetings. All in the full knowledge that it will be easier to organise, attracts new membership with a positive bonus of being amongst 'Peers' which brings benefits both physically and mentally. AFMET's reputation and NEL working relationship has clearly attained national credibility. Promotion in this respect of North East Lincolnshire on the national stage is extremely beneficial and very much part of our 'quid pro quo'

Notwithstanding, locally there is a potential risk that parking spaces within the footprint of the Knoll which are now likely to also be included in the sale of the Civic building could potentially impact on the ability of professional support service attendance and delivery and would also affect Police station at Knoll (currently all providing services free) – discussions with estates team are ongoing with the hope of a quick resolution.

Recommendations for the protection of the Knoll and its footprint was a further supported by the Conservation officer to highlight the need to ensure appropriate consideration be given to its 'listed status' and particularly LA future asset protection. Other matters detailing cause and effect of any removal and delivery model have been highlighted.

We continue to be seen as an 'exemplar' of best practice with AFMET having now been approached by 4 other large authorities seeking advice on how to deliver successful armed forces days which is testament to the model of excellence seen by others at Cleethorpes – all are extremely keen to discuss whole weekend models given one day events are seen as inappropriate when other groups are often given a whole month of promotion.

In terms of categorisation of support services, these may be broken into the following undermentioned elements:

- (a) **General support** enquiries and attendees at Knoll with subsequent referral to the most appropriate provider: 2-3 daily average.
 - a. For 023/part24 – 680 (slightly down)
 - b. 60% for which NO direct professional referral required.
 - c. Referrals to professional services remains 30%
 - d. Subsequently seen at Knoll (mix n match) 10%
- (b) **Housing**- Direct action with NELC and Lincolnshire housing partnership, with white goods support NOW from regimental associations since SSAFA withdrawal of all services.
- (c) **Mental Health** (Op Courage & old TILS) now weekly
- (d) **Debt Management** (DWP/SSAFA at Knoll) – monthly and as required (generally 1 month)
- (e) **Other (3rd party enquiry or dealt with on day)** In House provision.
- (f) **Legal Services** – Established Monthly at Knoll
- (g) **Welfare and pension advice** – RNA, RBL (limited), RAFA, Y&H VAPC, Veteran's UK x-ref veteran's gateway.
- (h) **Veterans in the justice system** – Op Nova caseworkers (NOW UNDER Forces Employment Charity).
- (i) **Outreach presentations.** – continuous requests from numerous agencies and associations.
- (j) **Employment opportunities and requests.** – Many MAJOR employers are actively target veterans through AFMET/KNOLL, we have been able to guide veterans in their PREFERRED direction and facilitate interviews, in the main with successful outcomes.