

Supporting Vulnerable Families

What was the challenge you faced?

Surrey County Council supports 1.1 million residents within the County including approximately 55,000 veterans and 6,200 serving personnel and their families. Often the first point of contact for residents requiring support is Surrey County Council's Contact Centre. The challenge was to raise awareness amongst front line staff of the potential issues facing Surrey's armed forces community and the support that is available through statutory and voluntary organisations, including service charities.

How did you respond?

A series of training sessions were held with staff from the Contact Centre on the armed forces community explaining who they are; where they are located, the types of issues they face; the additional help they can access; and how staff can support them. Members of the Training Team also attended these sessions so they could train new members of staff. A list of key service charities and organisations providing support to the armed forces community was circulated and added to the online resources available to staff.

In addition, a further presentation was given to the top 100 managers from Adult Social Care by ssafa and the Royal British Legion to explain services provided and give examples of support given. Following this the Chairman of ssafa Surrey visited the Contact Centre to further promote service charities and build up good working relationships.

What were the outcomes?

The Adults Team within the Contact Centre has appointed an Armed Forces Champion who is able to provide more in depth advice to colleagues on more difficult issues.

Staff are now able to provide additional advice to members of the armed forces community where appropriate. Set out below is a summary of a call taken in January 2017, which shows the positive impact of the training and links made with service charities.

A call was taken from an ex-serviceman who explained that he, his wife and two children, one with special needs, were homeless and currently living in emergency housing. He hadn't eaten for a number of days, had no money and large debts and was close to committing suicide as he didn't know what to do. During conversation the call handler asked whether he had previously served. He explained that he had been discharged from the Army a few years ago following nearly 20 years of service, including tours in Afghanistan and had regular nightmares about the terrible things he had witnessed. As well as linking in statutory services to support the family, including housing, Community Mental Health Team and Children's Services, links were also made to The Royal British Legion and ssafa to explore support available for a deposit for a house, Combat Stress for support with his PTSD, SERVES Project for further support for his mental health and the Local Assistance Scheme for money for food and petrol.

Each month there are approximately five referrals from SCC Contact Centre to ssafa Surrey who have been able to provide additional support in a number of cases.



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