

# DRAFT Surrey Civilian-Military Partnership Board

## Armed Forces Annual Report – April 2023 – March 2024

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## Foreword

As Chairman of Surrey CMPB, I am really pleased and proud of all the successes that have been achieved across Surrey. It has been yet another very eventful year with so much happening!

I would highlight a brilliant Reserves Day at Surrey County Council HQ in Woodhatch supported by 4PWRR and 579 EOD with Col Mark Siebenaller, Deputy Commander – Reserves, 11 SFA Brigade and HQ SE. The event was well supported both SCC Reserves and well as ex-service working with Surrey Fire & Rescue and Surrey Police. The event also staged hands-on weapons display by 4 Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment based in Farnham.

Another highlight was attending and then inspecting 120 recruits at a Passing Off Parade at Army Training Centre Pirbright. I was also pleased to attend the Surrey Army Cadet Force Annual Camp Crowborough where I had the opportunity to meet cadets from across Surrey - I am now promoting Cadet Force Adult Volunteers at Surrey CC.

I am proud that Surrey CC continues to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant through the successful Armed Forces Awareness Training led by the Covenant Lead Officer

across Surrey. This and the Surrey County Council sponsored Forces Connect App really helps directly support Surrey residents who are part of our Armed Forces community ensuring they can access services and support as required.

But the icing on the cake was no doubt for me was last September when members of the SCMPB were invited to join HMS Kent in Portsmouth Royal Naval Dockyard for a tour of the Type 23 Frigate – HMS Kent which is part of the escort party for Queen Elizabeth Aircraft Carrier – an experience I will never forget. This gave board members useful insight into Naval life and how this can impact on family members, a number of whom live in Surrey.

Here in Surrey, we are most fortunate to enjoy excellent working relationships with the Army Training Centre Pirbright and especially its Commanding Officer – Lt Col Michael Bysse; 1 Irish Guards and of course, Col David Kenny – Commander, HQ SE as well as with Col Patrick Crowley from SERFCA.

We also work closely with 4 Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and its Commanding Officer – Lt Col Steve Garmory and with 579 Field Squadron (EOD) and Major Duncan Wood. These are excellent and fruitful partnerships which really underline the fact that Surrey is very much a Military county, widely respected by the Ministry of Defence.

One of the undoubted benefits of being Chair of Surrey County Council is that I am also Chair of Surrey Civilian-Military Partnership Board and I must say that it has been one of the most enjoyable parts of the role as I attend and participate in so many Military activities and am really getting to know and to understand the Military. It has made me 'armed forces aware' and given me the confidence to represent them and their interests at the highest level.

Having now be in post for ten months, I continue to be filled with pride and with all that has been achieved to date including Surrey CC continuing to be a Gold Award holder of the Employers Recognition Scheme. Our partners like me stand committed to ensure that no member of the armed forces community is disadvantaged because of their service. If anything, all our partners and our Board Members are now even more aware of the ultimate sacrifice that our armed forces are prepared to pay to keep Britain and Surrey safe and free.

Saj Hussain

Chairman of Surrey Civilian-Military Partnership Board

## Introduction

The 2023-24 annual report sets out some of the key achievements of the Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board and its partners to help ensure members of the Armed Forces community are not disadvantaged by their services. Partners on the SCMPB include the Lord-Lieutenant, Army Headquarters South East, Army Training Centre (Pirbright), 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Irish Guards, South East Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association (SERFCA), Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, borough and district councils, Surrey Police, Service Charities and our partners in health, education and business.

## Engagement

### Surrey Civilian-Military Partnership Board

Following his appointment in May 2023, the Chair of Surrey County Council Saj Hussain took over as Chair of Surrey Civilian-Military Partnership Board. Issues progressed by the Board during the year included planning for a new chapter within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on the needs of Surrey's Armed Forces community, addressing the educational attainment of service children and exploring specific actions around suicide prevention within Surrey's strategy as well as updates on the priorities of the Army in the South East, the development of the Army Training Centre (Pirbright) into the new Soldiers Academy (South) and the work of the Reserves and Cadets within Surrey.

### Surrey Military Appeals Committee (SMAC)

SMAC brings together lead representatives from the Military, Civic, media, politics, service charities and business to encourage and support the Armed Forces and the service charities. During the year it met three times under the chairmanship of Mr Michael More-Molyneux – Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey and for the first time had an external speaker from Reading Force, which provides service children with books whilst their parent is absent on deployment or training, to brief them.

### Local Civil-Military Panels

SCC is pleased to be represented on all the local Civil-Military Panels in Guildford, Surrey Heath and Woking and also whenever the North Surrey Runnymede and Spelthorne Partnership meets. Matters discussed include Remembrance Services, Freedom Parades and welfare support as well as strengthening local links with the Armed Forces community.

### Surrey Leaders and Chief Executives

During the year SCC officers briefed Surrey Leaders and Surrey Chief Executives on the Armed Forces Covenant and the impact of the Armed Forces Act 2021 as well as encouraging their boroughs and districts to move forward to apply for silver or gold as part of the MoD Employers Recognition Scheme Awards. SCC officers also are mentoring councils such as Runnymede as they aim for the Gold Award.

### All-Party Armed Forces Covenant Parliamentary Group

The Covenant Lead Officer remains Armed Forces Champion and Covenant Lead to the All-Party Armed Forces Covenant Parliamentary Group and often uses examples from Surrey as best practice in his presentations to the APPG.

### National Armed Forces Covenant Conference

As in previous years, SCC was represented at the MoD National Armed Forces Covenant Conference in Newcastle. A keynote address was given by Dr Andrew Murrison MP and Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Minister on the state of the Armed Forces Covenant and the widening of the Statutory Provisions to include spousal employment. Surrey's Covenant Lead was privileged to lead a session on education and how to ensure that service children are not disadvantaged by their frequent moves and changes in their curriculums.

### SERFCA AGM and County Committee

SERFCA hosted the SERFCA County Briefing at RMA Sandhurst in June for Mayors, Armed Forces Champions, businesses and other key leaders in the community. In December the SERFCA Committee took place with top level and in-depth briefing on all activities over the past 12 months by both Regular and Reserve Units as well as from Surrey's Armed Forces

Champions. The briefing was held at the Farnham Reserve Centre where 4PWRR have a Reserve Company.

### [Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey Awards Evening and Ceremony](#)

The Lord-Lieutenant's annual awards ceremony, organised by SERFCA, was held at Guildford Cathedral in October. Meritorious awards went to a number of long time Reservists from 4 Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment headquartered in Redhill with its main Reserve Unit in Farnham, as well as Cadet Force Adult Volunteers from all three Services. The evening also saw His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant Cadets appointed from all three Services as well as a front-line briefing on the Army and its commitments today from the Commanding Officer of Headquarters South East.

### [SSAFA AGM](#)

The SSAFA Surrey AGM took place in Guildford under the chairmanship of Sqn Ldr Bryan Jones. Lt Gen Sir Andrew Gregory – Controller – SSAFA was the guest speaker who reported on the regionalisation of the SSAFA Operation which will be run as the SE Region with the existing County Branch structure under review. Surrey's Covenant Lead Officer also provided a training session on Armed Forces Awareness Training and the Armed Forces Act 2021.

### [HMS Kent](#)

In September members of both the SCMPB and SMAC were invited to join HMS Kent in Portsmouth Royal Naval Dockyard for a tour of the Type 23 Frigate – HMS Kent which is part of the escort party for Queen Elizabeth Aircraft Carrier. Members received a confidential briefing on the capabilities of HMS Kent from the Executive Officer including its anti-submarine operations and combat procedures and gained a greater understanding of life in the Royal Navy and a greater appreciation of the impact that naval life has on families that we support here in Surrey.

### [His Majesty's Massed Bands of the Royal Marines](#)

Building on the relationship developed during the year with the Royal Navy, officers were delighted to attend HM Massed Bands of the Royal Marines Christmas Spectacular as well as a special event held at Dorking Halls in February 2024. The events gave the opportunity to build closer links with the Royal Navy HQ London and Eastern England team based at HMS President.

### [Recruits Passing Off Parade at Pirbright](#)

The Chair of Surrey County Council was accompanied by Officers from the Armed Forces Team to a Passing Off Parade for 120 recruits at Army Training Centre Pirbright. As part of an ongoing piece of work with the Royal Alexandra and Albert School in Reigate, 15 Service children and their teachers were also invited to attend. The Chair was honoured to be part of the inspection of the recruits alongside the Brigadier.

### [SCMPB Annual Armed Forces Covenant Conference](#)

On 7 March 2024 the team held its very successful annual Armed Forces Covenant conference at the Army Training Centre (Pirbright), now renamed The Soldier Academy. Over 160 people attended the event including the Lord-Lieutenant, High Sheriff, Mayors, military, businesses, health, SCC, district and borough councils, Police, fire, and veterans, which was chaired by Saj Hussain in his capacity as Chair of Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board.

The theme of the conference was EDI and delegates heard from a wide range of inspirational speakers covering the issues facing Foreign, Commonwealth and Overseas armed forces personnel and their families both first hand from a female soldier from St Vincents and from the Army Multicultural Network. They also heard from Caroline Paige, Chief Executive of Fighting with Pride, who joined the RAF in January 1980 serving 35 years as a navigator on fast jets and battlefield helicopters. In February 1999 she became the first openly serving transgender officer in the British Armed Forces and she spoke about the issues she faced, the impact of the gay ban, and the support Fighting with Pride provides to those impacted. Jonny Holloway, who recently starred on the BBC show Traitors explained how his life was instantly changed when his leg was blown off by an IED whilst serving in Afghanistan, and how he coped with the support of service charities. Other speakers included SCC and MoD colleagues exploring the support available to carers, and the Head of HR from CGI who talked about their relationship with Defence. Feedback from the day was wholly positive with organisations leaving the day considering how they can become more inclusive. Surrey County Council is currently looking at how we can remove some of the disadvantages that ex-service personnel face by considering guaranteed interviews for appropriately qualified candidates seeking employment.

### Armed Forces Awareness Training

The Covenant Lead Officer has led Armed Forces Awareness Training on both the Covenant and Armed Forces Act 2021 across Surrey at both in person and online sessions. These sessions have been interactive and very well supported by the many new Elected Councillor Armed Forces Champions, Covenant Lead Officers, Adult Social Care, Education, Housing, Surrey Police, Surrey Fire & Rescue, Age UK, Service Charities and the Boroughs and Districts as well as by the Military themselves.

### BSL Signed Awareness Raising video for training

Last year a combined Armed Forces Awareness Training Course for both Armed Forces Champions, their Officers and Front-line and Contact Centre Staff was filmed and had BSL signing added to ensure wide accessibility for the training. <https://youtu.be/dVpgy2KQfCI> and <https://youtu.be/HgkesEDq6Y8>. This was shared with the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust for onward sharing nationally through the Knowledge Network.

### The Soldiers Academy (South)

Over the next few months, work will begin on a massive redevelopment of Pirbright Camp as it becomes The Soldiers Academy (South). This is a great endorsement of the current work being undertaken by Pirbright in training up to 7,500 recruits a year. SCC Officers are supporting ATC Pirbright, as well as liaising with the local MPs and the borough councils involved.

## Employment

### SERFCA Gold Employer Recognition Scheme Workshop

In January 2024, SERFCA arranged two Gold Workshops for Local Authorities and Businesses holding the Silver award and wishing to apply for the MoD Employers Recognition Gold Award. The Covenant Lead for Surrey led both sessions on Advocacy, as he will at the Sandhurst Leadership Luncheon this March in his role as Chair of the SE Gold Awards Association.

## Reserves Day

As in previous years, Surrey County Council held its Annual Reserves Day in Woodhatch hosted by the Chair of SCC with Col Mark Siebenaller, Deputy Commander – Reserves, 11 SFA Brigade and HQ SE. The event was well supported both SCC Reserves and well as ex-service working with Surrey Fire & Rescue and Surrey Police. The event also staged hands-on weapons display by 4 Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment based in Farnham. At the end of the event, Saj Hussain presented Col Siebenaller with a County Shield in appreciation of his support for Surrey's Reserves and Surrey County Council over the years.

## Social Value Market Place

Both Guildford and Woking veterans' hubs have benefited from generous donations through the Social Value Market Place initiative. To date, two tea urns and a generous amount of food vouchers have been donated providing great support to our local hubs.

## SE REEG

SCC Officers continue to attend the twice-yearly South East Regional Employers Engagement Group (SE REEG) meetings where they are able to promote the good and exemplary work of Surrey including best practice and give excellent examples for case studies for onward transmission to the MoD and other silver and gold award holders.

## Education and Young People

### Supporting Service Children

Surrey County Council has established an Education Task and Finish Group ensuring that the new Covenant Duty is implemented within the authority. As well as the core elements of the duty, including admissions, attainment, transport SEN and Service Pupil Premium, the group is also considering the needs of the Early Years to ensure they too are not being disadvantaged by their parents service.

Surrey County Council is also an active member of the Ministry of Defence Local Authority Partnership (MODLAP) which is a partnership between the MOD and 18 English local authorities that have committed to work together to improve the experience and outcomes of children (both at early years and at school age) of UK Armed Forces families. The local authority membership of MODLAP represent those authority areas with the highest numbers of service children in England, of which Surrey is one.

### Surrey Army Cadet Force Annual Camp

The Lord-Lieutenant, Chair of Surrey CC and Covenant Lead Officer were guests at this year Surrey ACF Annual Camp held in Crowborough. They had the opportunity to meet cadets from across Surrey. All cadets came across as both confident and assured with a number of them advising that they intended to join the Armed Forces through university entrance.

Along with the above three guests, a number of Surrey Mayors also attended and were personally briefed by the soon to retire Cadet Commandant – Col Mike Potter on both the amazing activities undertaken by Cadets but also the urgent need for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers across Surrey.

### Partnership work with the Royal Alexandra and Albert School

Recognising that The Royal Alexandra and Albert School in Gatton Park has the largest number of service children (180 on roll) in Surrey a Service Children Peer Support Group

has been set up with both the Chair of SCC and Covenant Lead Officer as members. This Group will concentrate on making school life easier for service children with termly meetings to discuss issues of concern as well as termly visits to Passing-Out Events at ATC Pirbright with the first one taking place on 8 December 2023. A special Armed Forces Awareness presentation was also given to 96 members of staff at the school, with two interactive sessions involving all the boarding and teaching staff to help highlight some of the issues facing service families.

### [Pirbright Crossing](#)

SCC Officers are involved in planning a re-routing of the pedestrian crossing and footways to and from Pirbright Camp for parents going to Pirbright School. Financial support has come from two County Councillor's Community Project funding, Pirbright Parish Council and the MoD. The work is expected to start soon.

### [Promoting Covenant Funding Opportunities to Schools](#)

During the year an article was published in the school's bulletin promoting funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to schools with children from the Armed Forces – there are currently approximately 1,224 service children within Surrey schools.

## [Health, Wellbeing and Welfare](#)

### [Surrey Armed Forces Health Champions](#)

This Group met under the chairmanship of Surrey Heartlands where positive discussions were held around the increasing number of GP surgery's in Surrey accredited as Veteran Friendly. This is now slightly above the national average, as well as discussions around developing a new JSNA chapter focussing on the Armed Forces community to be developed in the new financial year.

### [Veteran Friendly GP Practices](#)

During the past 12 months, there has been a significant growth in the number of Veteran Friendly GP practices across Surrey with many more keen to sign up to the scheme. There can be no doubting that Veterans and Ex-Service personnel greatly benefit from attending a GP Veteran Friendly Practice as they immediately feel at home and understood by the Practice.

### [Forces Connect App](#)

Surrey County Council demonstrated its ongoing commitment to the Armed Forces community by continuing to sponsor the Forces Connect App for a second year. The app, which was developed as part of the Forces Connect South East project, signposts users to relevant support in just four clicks. Since its inception its reach has grown to cover many regions, with an increase of 15% over the past twelve months totally more than 22,500 users in the 33 Regions with Moray and Fife being the most recent to join. The App is about to be upgraded to make it available for use on PCs and laptops and with easier access for the devolved Regions.

### [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#)

As part of the requirement of the Armed Forces Act 2021 and its recently enabled Statutory Guidelines requiring councils and other public bodies to show a duty of care in the provision of Education, Health and Housing services, Surrey County Council is working with colleagues



to develop a specific chapter on the Armed Forces community, focussing primarily on housing, healthcare, education and employment.

### Veterans' hubs

Surrey's veterans' hubs continue to be well-supported as they offer a warm welcome and banter for like-minded veterans. Each continues to offer something different, and the three veterans' hubs hosted in Fire Stations have become a permanent fixture with the local Regiment at Pirbright supporting them by attending their monthly hubs. External speakers are also attending along with welfare providers and DWP. Fordbridge Hub celebrated its second anniversary on Tuesday 27 June 2023.

Armed Forces Week 2023 saw the launch of a new veterans' hub in Banstead – run by Royal British Legion and supported by Surrey County Council and Reigate & Banstead Borough Council. Two additional new hubs taking place in the evening have been established in Leatherhead and Tongham by Surrey and Borders Partnership Trust under the strap-line of 'Brew and Banter Drop-Ins'.

### Armed Forces Breakfast Club at Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Ashford and St Peter's Hospital host a monthly Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club on the last Friday of every month at 10am in the Edu Kitchen. During Armed Forces week, the Veterans and Reservists of the Trust and attendees of the breakfast club were joined by The Mayor of Runnymede, The Chair of Surrey County Council and Dr Ben Spencer MP for Runnymede & Weybridge.

The event was well attended and full of banter, many regaling stories of their past exploits of their time in service. The breakfast club ensures this is a safe space for discussions. Ashford and St Peter's have been awarded Veterans Aware accreditation from the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) and a Gold Employment Recognition Scheme accreditation for supporting employment for those who have served, their family members and those who continue to serve in the Armed Forces.

### Norbury Park Sawmill

Surrey County Council's Armed Forces Team has been working with the SCC Countryside Team and the Youth Offer Team who welcomed seven veterans to the Norbury Park Sawmill on 1 March to carry out some volunteering with the team. They got involved in processing wood for the Forest Schools and really enjoyed the opportunity of being outdoors whilst getting to know fellow ex-service personnel. The session was such a success that it has been agreed that it will be repeated on the first Friday of each month going forward, thereby supporting the values of the SCMPB and the wellbeing of our veterans.

### Collaboration with Surrey's Unit Welfare Officers

A meeting set up, convened and chaired by SCC was held with all Army Unit Welfare Officers across Surrey and beyond– key issues discussed included housing, education, early years provision, employment and suicide prevention. The takeaway for the UWOs was to manage the expectations of the Armed Forces family who had higher expectations what they thought the Covenant could do rather than what it actually does.

### Volunteers Week

As part of Volunteers Week (1-7 June) the Surrey Armed Forces Team promoted some amazing opportunities to SCC staff including a campaign on social media to encourage more people to consider becoming a Cadet Force Adult Volunteers. More volunteers are

desperately needed to enable a wide range of activities and opportunities for young people to continue and expand.

Noting that the Armed Forces Charity SSAFA is seeking Volunteer Caseworkers to provide invaluable support to those in need, Surrey County Council also promoted the SSAFA caseworker vacancies again on social media.

## Remembrance

### Remembrance events across Surrey

Remembrance events were held at various locations across the county. The Chair of Surrey County Council led the service at Woodhatch Place with representatives from the ABF, Royal British Legion and SSAFA in attendance along with Reservists and Veterans from Surrey Fire and Rescue.

A further special service of Remembrance and the Last Post was held for veterans at Guildford Fire Station on Armistice Day attended by Guildford Veterans and Surrey Fire and Rescue with the Covenant Lead Officer taking the service after an afternoon reception and tea party.

The County Remembrance Sunday Service was held at Guildford Cathedral on Remembrance Sunday with both the Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey, Chair of Surrey as well as the High Sheriff being in attendance. Remembrance Sunday Services were also held across Surrey with reported record large attendances in Dorking led by the recently retired Bishop of Kingston.

### Armed Forces Day Flag raising

As in previous years, Armed Forces Week began with the Annual Surrey Joint Services' Charities Choral Mattins at Guildford Cathedral with a After the flag-raising by the Lord-Lieutenant, the march-past and inspection by the Lord-Lieutenant, High Sheriff and SCC Chair went really well.

### Armed Forces Week

Surrey joined the nation in marking Armed Forces Week which ran from 19-24 June - holding a number of events to publicly thank the Armed Forces for their outstanding contribution and sacrifice. These included Surrey's Joint Services' Charities Choral Mattins at Guildford Cathedral, which saw a record turn-out of tri-service and police cadets, as well as a larger than usual number of parents joining the service, along with events at Woodhatch Place and district and borough Civic Offices, with Flag Raising on the Monday and Reserves Day on the Wednesday.

### Merdeka Day 2023

On 3rd September 2023 the Surrey Branch of the National Mayala Borneo Veteran held an event at the West Clandon Royal British Legion. The event was to remember those who are still there and celebrating the Malayan Independence on August 31, 1957. The event was attended by the Mayor of Guildford Councillor Masuk Miah, The National President Tex Pemberton OBE, as well as thirty-five members and guests. What made this event special for the Surrey members was that members from the Solent branch joined, making a true gathering of likeminded veterans. The afternoon was spent enjoying good company, games, and good food. Ken Chandler explained the Missing Comrades table, which is a humble reminder to those friends and family that have been lost in conflicts around the globe. At the end of the event information was shared about other events nationally as well as information

on Veterans' Hubs within the Surrey Area, and further information on the Armed Forces Covenant and the help that is available to those in need.

#### [Dunkirk Veteran - Douglas Edward Philips \(Ted\)](#)

Sgt Ted Philips of the East Surrey Regt was the 11<sup>th</sup> oldest man in Britain at the time of his death, he was also a survivor of Dunkirk. Collaboration from partners within the SCMPB achieved a fitting occasion for this old soldier, with his funeral cortege going through Addlestone.

#### [RBL Surrey Poppy Launch](#)

The launch of the Surrey Poppy Appeal was held at ATC Pirbright with the Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey and Lt Col Michael Bysshe - CO 1 ATR as guest speakers. Dame Penelope Keith recited 'In Flanders Field'. SCC was represented by the Chair of SCC and supporting officers.

## [Surrey Employer Recognition Scheme 2023 Award Holders](#)

### [Surrey Silver and Gold Awards 2023](#)

#### **The following companies received their Gold Award in 2023:**

BAM Nuttall

Combat Stress

Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust

#### **The following companies received their Silver Award in 2023**

Aspris Children's Services Ltd

Frazer-Nash Consultancy Ltd

McCarthy Bainbridge Ltd

Mole Valley DC

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey

Peter Bruinvels Associates ('PBA')

Surrey & Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Surrey & Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust

Surrey Police

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