

Report

Report to:	South Lanarkshire Council
Date of Meeting:	26 June 2019
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Support for Veterans
----------	-----------------------------

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ advise the Council on the current range of supports provided to Veterans and their families in South Lanarkshire
- ◆ outline how this support might be developed through the work of the Council working with partners on the Lanarkshire Firm Base including assessing the arrangements that other Scottish Local Authorities have in place
- ◆ provide an update on creating a guaranteed interview scheme for ex-armed forces personnel who apply for vacancies with the Council following a motion agreed by the Council on 19 December 2018

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Council is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the key areas included in the Work Plan of Lanarkshire Firm Base be noted;
- (2) that the current range of supports that the Council has in place for veterans and their families, detailed in Paragraph 4, be noted;
- (3) that the intention to assess initiatives/projects which have been implemented by other local authorities and potentially develop these through Lanarkshire Firm Base be noted;
- (4) that the proposed Guaranteed Interview Scheme for veterans, as detailed in Paragraph 6, be approved and implemented

3. Background

3.1. Last June as part of Armed Forces Day 2018, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to the Armed Forces Community Covenant which provides a statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community.

3.2. Following this recommitment, the Council together with North Lanarkshire Council and other appropriate voluntary sector and military partners, relaunched Lanarkshire Firm Base to take forward the terms of the Covenant within Lanarkshire. As part of the relaunch, the first meeting took place in June 2018 when it was agreed that South Lanarkshire Council host a one day seminar for organisations and individuals who were either veterans themselves or who were part of organisations who provide support and advice to veterans and their families.

3.3. The event was held on 19 September 2018 and was very well attended with just under 60 individuals or representatives attending.

- 3.4 One of the outcomes from the event was to identify the key areas which were of most relevance and importance to veterans living in Lanarkshire.
- 3.5 From those outcomes, the Firm Base, at its meeting on 30 January 2019, agreed a Work Plan based on the following priorities:-
- ◆ mental health
 - ◆ access to benefits and education
 - ◆ access to housing
 - ◆ social inclusion
- 3.6 The priorities within the Work Plan will be taken forward on a themed basis at future meetings of Firm Base.

4. Council's Position

- 4.1. The Council already has in place a range of services to support veterans in the areas identified as priorities in para 3.5 above. These are outlined in paragraphs 4.2 to 4.6 below

4.2 Mental Health and Social Work Services

Craig Cunningham Head of Commissioning and Performance has been appointed as a veteran's champion, to provide the link between the Council's Health and Social Care Services and NHS Lanarkshire. The key purpose of this role is to act as a veterans' advocate and to help ensure fair and equitable treatment for the ex-Service community in order to meet the intent of the Armed Forces Covenant. The Scottish Government and Veterans Scotland have jointly produced guidance entitled "NHS Champions Aide Memoire" designed to provide a useful checklist for effective championing within primary, secondary and community care settings. The NHS Veterans Champion holds overall responsibility to enforce the guidelines which provide that Veterans should receive priority treatment for any health problems that are a direct result of service to their country.

4.3 Access to Education

In 2018/2019, there were 191 pupils from Veteran's Families spread across the Primary, secondary and ASN sectors of education.

Education Resources have increased awareness through briefings within schools of the requirement to provide young people with the necessary support to settle in and to progress their learning, taking account of any change of school they might have encountered.

A pilot project is being implemented at Duncanrig High School, East Kilbride which will develop further the links between the primary and secondary sectors and will introduce a transition document on each child from a veterans' family to ensure that all secondary schools obtain relevant data in advance and can provide a clear briefing to pupil support teams within the School.

4.4 Housing

Priority is given under the Housing Allocations Policy to veterans who have completed a minimum of 3 years' service, or who have been injured in action or discharged on medical grounds. The highest priority

will be awarded under this category up to 6 months prior to and up to 6 weeks following the date of discharge from the service, on meeting the qualifying criteria.

Advice is available through the Home Options Service (24 hour on line service) which provides access to information and advice covering a range of housing and related options.

Advice and assistance is also available for veterans who need help to prepare for, or manage and sustain their own tenancy, by developing the skills required to manage a new home.

4.5 **Leisure**

The Council is working with South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture and partners Veterans First Point to support an initiative called “Health for Heroes”. This initiative would involve Veterans First Point referring veterans who they feel would benefit from access to membership of South Lanarkshire Leisure facilities. Veterans referred would receive a 10 week free access to facilities as well as receiving one to one instruction from trained staff. These sessions would also include the opportunity for veterans to talk to trained staff about their situation and tailor a programme specific to their needs. Following the 10 week initial period, individuals can join the gyms at a concessionary rate providing they meet the current criteria which is that they are in receipt of a War Pensioners Mobility Supplement or Armed forces Independence Payment. They would also qualify if they were in receipt of Income Support, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction.

4.6 **Communication**

Work has commenced on the development of a dedicated Lanarkshire Firm Base website that will include information on the services provided by each partner and will be the main vehicle for signposting veterans and their families to the services available in Lanarkshire. South Lanarkshire Council have been requested to take this forward and work is ongoing to develop the look and feel of the site prior to the next Firm Base meeting in September. To augment this work, facebook and twitter accounts will be set up for Firm Base to allow engagement via social media. North Lanarkshire Council will take forward the development of written material in the form of information leaflets and a veteran’s handbook and again drafts will be developed for the Firm Base meeting in September 2019. It should also be noted that an application for grant assistance for this work will be made to the Community Covenant Grant Scheme.

4.7 **Veterans Hub**

Premises have also been identified in Craigneuk within North Lanarkshire as a potential veterans’ hub where veterans can go to network, have access to IT facilities and receive signposting information on services. Work is ongoing with NLC Estates Services to finalise the acquisition of the building for use as a veterans’ hub.

5 **Areas of Good Practice**

Following the initial report on support for veterans to the Corporate Management Team in February 2019, all Scottish Local Authorities were contacted on the level and range of supports they have in place to support veterans and their families with a view to obtaining information on areas of good practice that could potentially be considered and developed by the Firm Base in a Lanarkshire context.

5.1 **Most of these local authorities, take a similar approach to North and South Lanarkshire and coordinate their support to veterans through a partnership arrangement similar to the Lanarkshire Firm Base.**

- 5.2 An exercise will be undertaken in liaison with other local authorities to assess any worthwhile initiatives and projects being implemented. Any areas which are thought worthy of further consideration will be considered by the Firm Base and any with implications for the Council will be brought to the appropriate Committee.
- 5.3 A number of Councils refer to guaranteed interview if veterans meet the minimum criteria for a post and this is dealt with in a South Lanarkshire context in paragraph 6 below.

6 Enhanced Support for Veterans - Guaranteed Interview Scheme

- 6.1 At its meeting on 19 December 2018 the Council considered a motion submitted by Councillor McGeever that veterans be afforded a guaranteed job interview as long as they meet the minimum criteria for a post and that a report on how this would work in practice be submitted to the Council for consideration.
- 6.2 It is proposed that the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Veterans will operate for all external recruitment and will apply to applicants whose previous long term employer was the Armed Forces.
- 6.3 The Guaranteed Interview Scheme will involve some minor amendments to the existing recruitment processes.
- ◆ A standard clause will be included in the advert text for all external posts outlining that all veterans meeting the essential criteria for a post will be offered a guaranteed interview
 - ◆ Veteran applicants will be highlighted to managers, who will consider if they meet the essential criteria for their post
 - ◆ Veteran applicants who meet the essential criteria will be invited for interview
 - ◆ Veterans will be asked to bring their Military Service Record to the interview which will be checked by the hiring manager
- 6.4 In addition to individual job advertisements, the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Veterans will be communicated through Lanarkshire Firm Base and a news story will also be produced for South Lanarkshire View as well as raising staff awareness through Workforce Development tools such as Management and Staff Briefs and continuous promotion through strap lines on the internet.

7 Employee Implications

- 7.1 The employee implications are detailed in Paragraph 6 above.

8 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

9 Other Implications

- 9.1 There are no significant issues in terms of risk or sustainability.

10 Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1 Consultation has taken place with other local authorities and veterans organisations as appropriate.

Paul Manning
Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources Resources)

11 June 2019

Link(s) to Council Values/Objectives
People focused.

Previous References
South Lanarkshire Council 19 December 2018

List of Background Paper
Original notice of motion

Contact for Further Information
If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-
Gordon Bow
Administration Manager
Ext: 4719 (Tel: 01698 454719)
E-mail: gordon.bow@southlanarkshire.gov.uk