

NEWS LETTER

Issue N° 2

April 2013

Introduction. The Armed Forces Group Preston (AFGP) has undergone a period of instability since the first Liaison Officer, Sharon Austin, resigned to relocate to Lincoln. Finding a replacement proved difficult.



However, stability was to appear when Mrs Joan Burrows, Chief Officer for the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) Central Lancashire secured funding from Lee Griffiths of the Poppy Factory, to appoint Mark Banks as new Administration Officer in November 2012 who quickly steered the Group in the right direction. In January 2013, the Management Committee appointed Aaron Beaver as Liaison Officer.

Aaron Beaver and Mark Banks

First Anniversary of the Signing of the Armed Forces and Community Covenant. Preston City Council, along with the AFGP and CVS Central Lancashire marked the first anniversary of the signing of the Armed Forces and Community Covenant on Wednesday 27th February 2013. The event was held in the Town Hall in the form of a relaunch of the One Stop Shop where the original signatories of the Covenant were invited to attend a presentation along with newly recruited organisations on the benefits of signing up to the Covenant.

AFGP First Anniversary and Guild Work Club Launch. The Armed Forces Group Preston, supported by the Council for Voluntary Services Central Lancashire, celebrated its First Anniversary and Guild Work Club Launch in the Guild Hall Arcade, Preston on Wednesday 10 April 2013.

The High Sheriff of Lancashire - Mr. M. Jeremy Gorick Esq. DL, the Chairman of Lancashire County Council - Councillor John Shedwick and the Deputy Mayor of Preston - Councillor Veronica Afrin attended the event as well as other VIP's from the surrounding district and Regimental Association Standard-bearers representing Preston and District Veterans Council.



**Volunteer staff with the High Sheriff of Lancashire Mr. M. Jeremy Gorick Esq. DL
Carole Pollit, Martin Taylor, Keith Sedgewick, Tony Richards, Jack Kendall, Russ Wright, Steve Allen**

The Chairman, Keith Sedgewick, introduced the High Sheriff of Lancashire, Mr. M. Jeremy Gorick Esq. DL, who gave a short speech wishing the venture well and saying it was such a badly needed service. The Liaison Officer, Aaron Beaver gave a brief presentation and introduced the launch of the Guild Work Club and the forthcoming opening of an Outreach Station at Chorley.

Mr. Sedgewick, said, “We have had to adapt in our first year and now have momentum and direction to build on the good work already in place. I would like to thank all the volunteers for their hard work, and the organisations that support us.

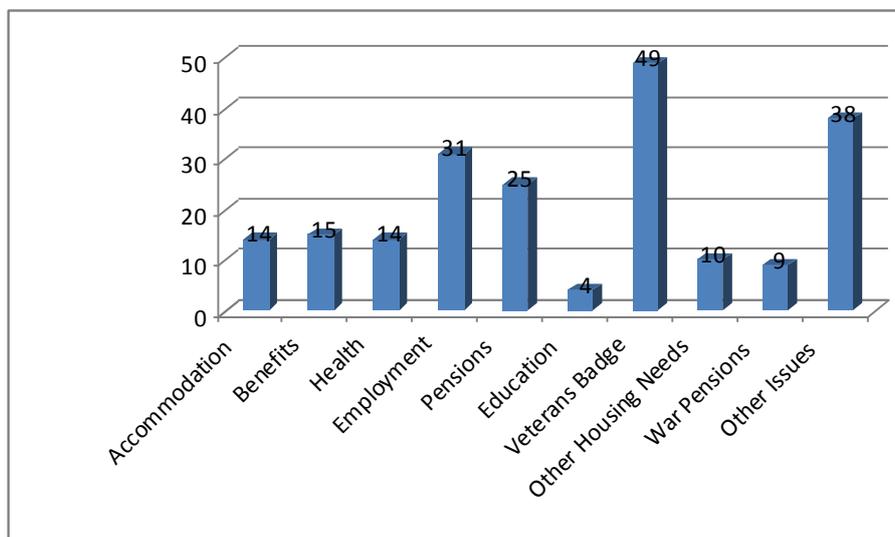
Mrs. Joan Burrows, Chief Officer, of the Council for Voluntary Services, said, “The information point to the Armed Forces Community is vital, we are proud to support the Armed Forces Group with this local initiative”.

Volunteers. We now have a team of seven volunteers who staff the Preston ‘One-Stop-Shop’ on a regular basis. The team either are ex-service personnel or have a service connection; without their help, the AFGP could not operate.

AFGP Constitution. The first AGM agreed amendments to the constitution. Mrs Wendy Hogg, Chairman, CVS Central Lancashire, kindly agreed to work with the Aaron Beaver, to write further necessary amendments, and put them to the Management Committee at future Special General Meeting.

Business Plan. The Business Plan initiated at the launch of the AFGP is nearly complete. It is required to assist in the application for Charitable Registration with the Charity Commission and to secure funding from Central Government, Local Government, the National Grant Giving Trust and other sources.

Clientele. The clientele continues to grow with a database of 146 people from all three services making 209 enquiries in the first thirteen months. Issues range from employment and training, housing and homelessness, general health and mental health and veteran badges.



Clientele Enquires March 2012 to Apr 2013

The Guild Work Club. The AFGP, in conjunction with Job Centre Plus and CVS Central Lancashire established the Guild Work Club to support the Armed Forces Community and the public on their pathway to work. The service offers four Laptops and a wireless printer, purchased with a £2100 grant from Job Centre Plus to compile a CV, assist with applications and interviews.

Lifeworks Course. The Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) held a Lifeworks course at the CVS meeting room in April 2013. A fully funded five-day course to help equip Ex-Armed Forces personnel with the tools to get into and maintain a civilian job, normally run in Aylesford – Kent, the North West pilot project identified the need to conduct satellite courses with a view to repeating the course quarterly.

Veteran Badges and Preserved Pensions. In April 2013, on an initiative of Mark Banks, he and Aaron visited nursing and care homes in the Preston area to identify those who may be entitled to Preserved Pensions and Veteran Badges. Tony Richards, Secretary, recognised that other badges were also available to those who had served as Merchant Mariners, Atlantic Convoy Crews, and the Bevin Boys who contributed working in mines and the Women's Land Army and Timber Corps. The project is proving successful and gratefully received by both veterans and care home staff alike.



Chorley Outreach Service. On 18 April 2013, after new consultations with Chorley Borough Council, the AFGP opened an Outreach Service to the Armed Forces Community of Chorley in Chorley Borough Council Civic Offices on Union Street between 9am and 1pm each Thursday. The AFGP plan to open an Outreach Service to the Armed Forces Community of South Ribble in the near future.

An Armed Forces and Community Covenant – Chorley. On the 17 April 2013, Chorley Borough Council agreed to proceed with an Armed Forces and Community Covenant. Planned for the summer, the Covenant is an opportunity to bring, the knowledge and expertise of Borough Council and partner organisations to the Armed Forces Community, encouraging integration to civilian life.

Meeting with Dan Jarvis MP - Shadow Armed Forces Minister. The AFGP Chair and LO were invited by Cllr Peter Wilson to meet Dan Jarvis MP, Shadow Armed Forces Minister on Tuesday 23 April at Astley Hall, Chorley. The Shadow Minister was in the North West to promote a scheme, which will guarantee ex service personnel an interview for employment.



Mr Steve Williams, Secretary, Chorley Pals Association, took the Shadow Minister round an exhibition in Astley Hall highlighting sacrifices made by Chorley Borough personnel in conflicts past and present. Keith Sedgewick briefed the Shadow Minister on the Preston One Stop Shop, while Aaron Beaver briefed him on the Chorley Outreach Station and D (64) Medical Squadron (Volunteers), 5 Medical Regiment, which he is a member.

Cllr Peter Wilson, Dan Jarvis MP, Aaron Beaver, Keith Sedgewick

Leyland & Cuerden Valley Lions Club. Mrs Joan Burrows – Chief Officer CVS Central Lancashire and Aaron Beaver - attended the Leyland & Cuerden Lions Club Presentation Evening at Wellington Park Leyland, Tuesday 23 April 2013. The purpose of the evening was for the Lions to present charitable donations to worthy causes.

The guest speaker was Staff Sergeant Billy Baxter from Blind Veterans UK (formerly St Dunstons).



Whilst on duty in Bosnia as a member of NATO, Billy collected bodies for appropriate burial, wiping his eyes; he infected them with germs leaving him blind.

Billy spoke of the land speed record that he holds of 164.87mph for a solo blind motorcyclist. He has also appeared on Top Gear as 'The Blind Man' as a 'Star in a Reasonably Priced Car'. He set a lap time of 2:02 minutes, beating sighted personalities Terry Wogan and Richard Whiteley.

Joan Burrows, Maria Pikulski, Billy Baxter and Aaron Beaver

Together with blind veteran Maria Pikulski who works in the sight clinic at St Helens' hospital, they informed the audience of the lows felt by visually impaired service personnel. They entertained the room with inspiring and humorous stories of blind veterans skiing; horse riding and the other ways service personnel fight their way to recovery to lead as normal a life as possible.

AFGP PROMOTION. The AFGP designed a website, facebook page and twitter accounts as well as producing PowerPoint presentations to increase the profile of the AFGP.

AFGP PowerPoint Presentation. The Liaison Officer produced a PowerPoint presentation for the first anniversary of the signing of the Armed Forces Community Covenant on 27 February 2013 in the Town Hall. Given by Mr Tony Richards, Secretary, the presentation was well received and promoted a healthy question and answer networking opportunity with the existing and new signatories.

Foyer PowerPoint Presentation. The LO edited the AFGP PowerPoint presentation that scrolls on the PC in the CVS foyer as it was difficult to read and in need of being updated.

Email, Website, Facebook and Twitter. An email account was set up, afgpreston@hotmail.co.uk along with a web page, www.afgp.org and a Facebook link that automatically updates Twitter.



Facebook allows the AFGP to promote other services available to the Armed Forces Community such as Dig In North West. Run by the Senior Horticultural Therapist, Donna Rowe-Green, who provides horticultural therapy sessions for Military

Veterans & their families, based in Ashton Park in Preston, Lancashire.

Leaflet Drop. Distributed leaflets to shops and businesses in the Preston area promote the AFGP services and the Guild Work Club.

Local Media. The AFGP have a good relationship with the local media to promote services and events and includes the Lancashire Evening Post, Chorley Guardian and Chorley FM.

Volunteers and Recruiting. The AFGP are extremely grateful to all the volunteers for their hard work and dedication and remain eager to recruit more volunteers with appropriate knowledge and skills. We are currently recruiting volunteers, preferably with a military background or Service connection for both our Preston and Chorley offices. If you would like to help as a part time volunteer, please call into the Guild Hall Arcade, Lancaster Rd, Preston, PR1 1RH, or contact us by phone on 01772 251108, email www.afgpreston.org.uk, afgpreston@hotmail.co.uk or visit us on Facebook at Armed Forces Group Preston.

While the long-term aim of the AFGP is to establish independency, the AFGP are extremely grateful to the CVS Central Lancashire, in particular to the Chairman Mrs Wendy Hogg and Chief Officer Mrs Joan Burrows for their generosity in hosting and mentoring the AFGP from its conception. Without this direct and practical support, the AFGP would simply not exist and could not have achieved its successes, the AFGP look forward to a continuing the current relationship.