

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CHARITABLE GIVING

A REVIEW OF 2023



CEO Ian Rylatt with Henry Watts, 500th participant of the Annington Challenge

Our Charitable Giving Statement of Purpose acknowledges the commitments we have - as a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant - pledged in support of the UK's military, their families, and veterans.

Our charitable giving and community engagement strategy focuses on four key areas:

## 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Our flagship programme, **The Annington Challenge**, welcomed its 500th participant – Royal Navy Youngster Henry Watts. Read the story of his summer on page 2.

We entered a key new partnership with **Building Heroes**, the UK's leading military-to-construction charity which provides free construction skills training to veterans and those transitioning out of the military. Read more on page 12.

**Royal British Legion Industries** confirmed that our 2023 donation of £50,000 to their LifeWorks programme delivered £1.99 million of social value. Read more on page 14.

**The Service Children's Progression Alliance** published the results of the consultation project sponsored by Annington. Read more on page 5.

The second year of **Kings Camps** for Army children saw us expand the project to Aldershot Garrison. Read more on page 7.

ANNUAL  
BUDGET  
£500K

### MILITARY FAMILIES



We are proud to champion families of military personnel and to support projects and organisations that are working to best meet their needs. This includes programmes that reinforce and support the family unit and eradicate social isolation.

### VETERANS



We help veterans in the most practical and urgent ways, through programmes that address mental health and welfare, employability, and rehabilitation.

### CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



We support the children of military personnel through initiatives that create greater access to education, build self-confidence and resilience, and generally recognise the special circumstances associated with children of military personnel.

### COMMUNITY PROJECTS



We provide funding for projects and initiatives that support life on the Married Quarters Estate and bring military communities together.

# MILITARY CHILDREN



## ANNINGTON CHALLENGE CELEBRATES 500TH PARTICIPANT!

**The Annington Challenge welcomed its 500th participant in 2023 – and thanks to an increase in our funding to £75,000 - 100 military youngsters enjoyed a summer to remember on an Outward Bound Trust course.**

Launched in 2012, the Annington Challenge provides UK-based military youngsters aged 10-18 with the opportunity to tackle one of the Outward Bound Trust's summer adventure courses with our funding subsidising up to 90% of course costs. Aimed at improving self-confidence, resilience and team-working skills, applicants – and their parents - are asked to explain how they feel the Annington Challenge will benefit them and what they hope to gain from the experience.

The 2023 application process began in late 2022 and by the time the closing date arrived in February, the Charity Committee, and the team at the Outward Bound Trust had their own challenge in deciding who should be offered a place. Eventually, the team whittled the applications down and offers went out in April.

The lucky 100 spent between 5-19 days at one of the Outward Bound Trust's fantastic centres - Aberdovey in Wales, Ullswater in Cumbria and Loch Eil in Scotland – where they enjoyed a whole host of outdoor activities that included everything from sailing, abseiling and rock climbing through to wild camping, canoeing and gorge walking.

The courses were overseen by the Outward Bound Trust's team of hugely experienced and qualified instructors – many of whom have worked with previous Annington Challenge participants. They encouraged our youngsters as they tackled activities designed to take them outside their comfort zones.

**Royal Navy youngster, Henry Watts became the 500th military youngster to take part in the Annington Challenge and Ian Rylatt, CEO caught up with him at the end of his seven-day course.**

A pupil at Bay House school in Gosport, Hampshire, Henry was encouraged to apply for the Annington Challenge by his mum Nicola. "She showed me the video and that was it – I knew I wanted to go!"

Henry chose to attend a course at the Outward Bound Trust's centre in Aberdovey, which itself was a challenge, as his mum explained!

"My husband's draft changed at the last minute and his plans to take Henry to Manchester to meet the Outward Bound Trust coach had to be rethought. Even though he's only 15, Henry decided he was up for making the journey to Manchester Piccadilly on his own on the Megabus!"

After staying overnight in Manchester with a relative, he boarded the Outward Bound Trust coach to Aberdovey – and immediately struck up conversations with two youngsters who were on his course. From there, he didn't look back, despite his initial nervousness.

"Although I find it easy to meet and talk to new people, there was just a tiny bit of doubt that I wouldn't get on with everyone. But I needn't have worried as I met other navy lads – Charlie and Isaac – and it was great. We understood each other and the challenges of being in a military family – it really helped."

"The best thing about the Challenge was the sailing and the scrambling. We built a raft and it worked brilliantly. The worst bit was the first day which saw us tackle our first expedition. It rained non-stop and no-one really knew each other so it was pretty hard going!"

"I think the biggest thing I took from the Challenge is learning how to assess people and how best to work with them. That's an important life skill."

**£75,000  
DONATED**



## CLAIRE STEPS UP

Once again, an Annington employee volunteered to join a group as our Annington Ambassador – and this year, Claire Hogben from our Rentals team took the plunge. Despite having two young children of her own, Claire was determined to rope in her family and friends to make the necessary childcare arrangements so that she could support the project.

“My week at Outward Bound was great! I worked with Steph, who is extremely passionate about the outdoors and it was clear she was keen to pass this on to the youngsters. She and I worked with a lovely group of 10–12-year-olds including some of our Annington Challengers who were an inspiration. They brought such a positive attitude,

despite some being away from their parents for extended periods of time or having to move on a regular basis. Generally, the youngster’s support for one another throughout the week was great to see.”

“Once everyone had arrived and were settled, we headed to the sea for an Outward Bound tradition – the ‘jog and dip’!

“On Wednesday we went canoeing on the Estuary on the River Dovey and then we left site to walk from Abergynolwyn for a night camping under the stars. We had an early start on Friday morning to summit Mountain Tarrenhendre, and we walked around 20k; most of which was up hill!

“When we got back to centre, we had a quieter evening with a campfire and the children learnt fire building skills and

we all had the chance to reflect on our busy week. On Saturday we went gorge walking, then headed back to the harbour to jump off the jetty into the sea followed by a ride in the power boat. As a group we decided to jump off the boat and swim back to the shore!

“Generally, it was brilliant to see youngsters who were strangers at the start of the week work together so well. I built up a great rapport with them over the week and it was sad to leave them, however, I know that all of us took a lot away from participating in the course.

“Sometimes it can be hard to take a step back from day-to-day life and push yourself out of your comfort zone, but it was a wonderful experience.”

Annington Ambassador Claire with her group



Charlie and Mark deliver the SUPPORT programme



In 2019, we agreed a three-year funding partnership with Scotty's Little Soldiers, the charity which supports bereaved children of British Service personnel. Our funding enabled Scotty's to make significant improvements to how they support military children and their surviving parent through the bereavement process - and in doing, the charity has dramatically enhanced its ability to help these deserving youngsters.

Any bereaved service child aged 8-25 can access the SUPPORT function. Its overall aim is to help prevent bereaved youngsters from making the riskier life choices that are more prevalent in children and young children who have experienced the death of a parent as they grow into adulthood.

The SUPPORT function provides guidance to adults to help them support their child through bereavement as well as providing specialist 1:1 bereavement support directly to their children. Thanks to our continued funding, two members of staff are employed specifically to run the SUPPORT function.

Mark is Scotty's Bereavement Support Worker and has extensive experience of mentoring young people, having previously worked with a child bereavement charity. He works closely with Charlie who as Family Support Worker provides support and guidance to the parents and carers of Scotty's members and helps them navigate how best to help their child with their bereavement. The subject matters covered in the sessions with the children and young people range from bereavement itself through to self-harm, self-esteem, and the suicide of friends to anger management and not having a memory of the deceased parent.

Worryingly, one of the most startling and disturbing developments in 2023 was the rise in the number of children and young people joining Scotty's because of their parent dying by suicide. Suicide and death through illness accounted for 52% of new memberships in 2023 and Scotty's ended the year looking at how to tailor its SUPPORT function to deal with this issue.

## 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Our funding of £50,000 delivered a social value impact of £719,677.

The charity's overall membership grew to 659 members in 2023, surpassing their goal for the year.

52% of new members joined Scotty's as a result of either parental suicide or illness.

67% of young people reported a reduction in feeling **Anxious** or concerned.

67% reported improved feelings of **Connectedness, Belonging and Communication**.

67% reported improved **Coping Skills**.

67% improved **Self Esteem**.

33% reported improvement in engagement with education.

\*As measured by the TOMS framework using NHS spending as part of their outline metrics.

# MILITARY YOUNGSTERS – FOCUS ON EDUCATION



**The Service Children's Progression Alliance (SCiP) is a UK-wide partnership of organisations focused on improving educational outcomes for children from Armed Forces families. It is hosted by the University of Winchester and supported by the MoD. The Alliance's mission is to bring together practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and funders to build a stronger evidence-base, better policy, and enhanced support for Service children's education and progression.**

In 2018 the Alliance began developing The Thriving Lives Toolkit, the quality standard for evidence-based support for Service children in schools throughout the UK. Four years on, The Alliance were keen to run a repeat of a research project aimed at assessing the impact of the Alliance, the Toolkit and to gain a

renewed understanding of the priorities of those working with Service children and we agreed to fund the consultation project.

One of the main recommendations resulting from the research project was the development of an integrated online suite of support, which would complete the Alliance's original vision for the Thriving Lives Toolkit. The online portal will provide a bank of case studies and resources providing inspiration and guidance for effective practice, as well as training tools tailored to the unique circumstances and priorities of each school.

We met with the teaching staff at Gosport and Fareham Multi Academy Trust to hear first-hand how the Thriving Lives Toolkit benefitted Service pupils and about the expected impact of a fully integrated online portal. This led to the Charity Committee agreeing to fund the project in full with a donation of £35,000 over two years. The portal will go live in 2025.

In September, we were invited to attend the SCiP Alliance's Sector Development Event in Leeds at which those working with Service children had the opportunity to further identify what was needed from a new online platform, as well as to discuss the ongoing educational challenges for Service youngsters.

"Annington's support has been invaluable in engaging the entire SCiP Alliance community of over 1,000 professionals in evidence-led work for Service children and now through this new project in enhancing the quality of that support for Service children themselves. The Thriving Lives Toolkit is already helping schools support almost 20,000 Service children and we look forward to enhancing that support through the online training funded through our partnership with Annington" said Phil Dent, Director, Service Children's Progression Alliance.



## LORD KITCHENER NATIONAL MEMORIAL FUND

Established in 1916, the Lord Kitchener National Memorial Fund provides scholarships to the children of military personnel going on to tertiary education. Our second year of support of the LKNMF saw us make a donation of £25,000 which provided seven undergraduate scholarships and two postgraduate awards to students studying a range of subjects from Music to Mechanical Engineering.

More than 100 young people apply to the Fund every year and the selection process is rigorous with around 50 making it through to the interview stage. Applicants are judged based on academic and extra-curricular achievement as well as their potential to take positions of leadership in whatever their professional field might be.

Two of our Charity Committee members, James Hamand and Stephen Reeves, sat in on the interviews and were extremely impressed by the standard of the candidates and the breadth of subjects being considered.

## SCiP event in Leeds



Stephen Reeves, Charity Committee member sat in on the undergraduate scholarship interview panels. "This was my first year of involvement with the LKNMF and I was delighted to be asked to play a small role," said Stephen. "What still resonates with me was the commitment and vigour shown by the applicants in demonstrating their range of interests, aspirations and clear capacity to become future leaders in their chosen fields. Of particular interest, was the resilience shown in this cohort whose academic life to date included the manifest challenges posed by COVID 19, making their achievements all the more impressive."

"A tremendous effort was evidently put in by both the LKNMF and the experienced panel members to create an encouraging environment for all the candidates. That said, the interviews were uniformly challenging and designed to support the rigorous process to ensure the valuable funding was provided to the most worthy applicants. This year's scholars will not only receive financial support in their further studies but will also have access to opportunities in the future as part of the Kitchener Scholars Association for alumni."

# MILITARY FAMILIES



One of our longest standing partners is Reading Force, the tri-service shared reading charity founded by army wife and mother of four, Dr Alison Baverstock. Reading Force was inspired by her family’s experience of parental separation on her children and how sharing a book helped them remain connected with their father during his frequent absences due to deployment and training.

The charity provides free books and scrapbooks to military families and has proven to be hugely effective at helping families feel connected, despite the absence of the serving parent. Once again, our donation of £50,000 was put to effective use and helped the charity gift 4,900 books (a 7% increase on 2022) to 2,631 military families.

Our funding supports the work of the charity’s North of England and Scottish Ambassador, Fiona Maxwell



Fiona with a Royal Marine family at the Service’s Winter Deployment event

who having now worked for the charity since 2017, is a familiar face on the Army barracks and Naval bases on her patch.

Navy mum Simone had this to say about the importance of feeling part of the military community “There’s only one other Forces child in our school. So you cling to the things that make you feel part of the community – with Reading Force I don’t feel my son has been forgotten about. It might be just a book to some but to me it’s so much more – it’s recognition of William as a military child and that someone is thinking about him, and it’s reassuring that you’re there,

**2,631**  
MILITARY FAMILIES  
SUPPORTED

and because you’re so inclusive – you don’t mind if a family are going through deployment, or where you live, or how old the children are. It’s a ray of light when the parcel arrives.”



The Kings Active Foundation run Kings Camps, the UK’s leading sports and activities holiday camps for children aged 5-17. With over 30 sports and activities designed to get children active, having fun and learning together, the camps provide invaluable Monday-Friday childcare during the school holidays.

Having launched our inaugural one-week camp for Army youngsters at Tidworth Garrison in 2022, we were delighted to be invited back by the Army Welfare Service to deliver the same high-quality experience for the families living at the Garrison. What we didn’t expect was the huge explosion in interest as word of mouth spread the news that camps were returning for 2023.

A week’s camp usually cost £220 but Army families pay just £85 which we match and the remainder is covered by Kings. This means that parents get 45 hours of childcare for just £1.89 an hour!

The camps therefore are a huge help to working parents struggling with the costs of childcare during the holidays, as well as the challenge of solo parenting whilst the Service person is away.

Thanks to the support of Wellington Academy, the large secondary school at the Garrison, we were able to run a total of three weeks at Tidworth – one week at Easter and two in the summer holidays. But word of mouth didn’t stop with the parents – at the same time, the AWS team at Aldershot Garrison got in touch to see if we could provide a summer holiday camp for the Army youngsters there too.

119  
ARMY FAMILIES  
SUPPORTED



### Army Youngsters at Tidworth

By the end of the summer, we'd provided subsidised places for 139 children across the two venues. The Tidworth camps welcomed a total of 60 Army families across three weeks and the Aldershot camp saw 29 families take up the offer of a place. In addition, we made funds available for dispersed Army families wishing to join their local Kings Camp and 30 families utilised our donation to send their children to Kings Camps close to their home.

Jane Harsham, Sustainability Manager went down to Aldershot Garrison Sports Centre on the third day of the camp to meet the children and the Kings staff. "It was the most glorious day and as I got out of the car I could hear the laughter – it was just wonderful. The smiles on the faces said it all and the excitement levels

were through the roof! I was invited to become a judge on an impromptu 'Kings Got Talent' and as ever, the Kings staff, really put their heart and soul into ensuring the children had fun, were looked after, and felt included."

Full credit must go to the incredible Red Tops, the Kings team that make the camps such fun and so memorable. It takes a special individual to wear the Kings uniform and the teams running the Annington Kings Camps were no exception. Sam, the Site Manager for the Aldershot camp clearly had as much fun as the Army youngsters! "Aldershot was great fun to run! The parents were incredibly complimentary at the end of the week and would love us to return for even more weeks next summer!"

Army parents too were equally as positive.

"One of my children said he would've given it 10 stars! One was a little unsure at drop off but was made to feel welcome and once he saw the timetable, he was so excited. Both boys have had a fab first day, loved it, can't wait for tomorrow and staff were helpful and friendly for me too."

"I had two children attend Kings Camps and right from the off the children were greeted by Megan who was an absolute delight with lots of information. She was very enthusiastic and keen and gave me every confidence that the week would be lovely. My children came home every night with lots of stories."

For 2024, we are planning our inaugural camp at Catterick Garrison and another for the c1000 families living around Colerne, Corsham and Lyneham in Wiltshire.



Life for military families comes with its own set of unique challenges. Throw in the added complication of having a child with a special need or disability and life can become even more difficult. For instance, frequent house moves can make accessing specialist services more challenging, placing an additional burden on families dealing with life in the military.

SSAFA's Short Breaks programme for families with children with disabilities or special needs aims to give these families the opportunity to spend quality time together in a new setting watching each other achieve and gain skills. The programme also enables SSAFA to introduce military families to other pathways of support which they may otherwise be unaware of, such as access to the Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum, support groups and welfare/financial assistance.

In 2023, we once again supported SSAFA with a donation of £50,000 towards their Short Breaks programme for this deserving group. Our donation allowed the charity to lay on an extra week in this oversubscribed programme. Thirteen families consisting of 53 individuals enjoyed a week at the Calvert Trust in the Lake District where they spent time together enjoying a range of specially adapted activities.

Some of the children attending the break have full care needs and some have additional needs which require close support and supervision of their behaviour. The disabilities experienced by the children on this break included ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, speech delay, chromosome disorder, adverse childhood experience trauma and learning disability. Sadly, some of the parents also had additional needs including cancer, scoliosis and chronic fatigue and depression.



RAF spouse Sam Kendall (second right) and other military families on SSAFA Short Break

**RAF spouse Sam Kendall and husband Chris attended the Short Break with two of their three children. She describes it as the best holiday their family has ever had.**

Their teenage daughter, Bethany, has autism and because of this, some of her behaviours and needs make it difficult to take trips that the whole family can enjoy together.

'We don't really do much as a whole family because Bethany gets very overwhelmed and will have outbursts of shouting and screaming.' Sam says.

When Sam heard about SSAFA Short Breaks, she decided to apply with the hope of attending.

'The whole thing from getting all the information honestly was great,' praises Sam. 'When we got the email, there was a little attachment for the kids. It explained it all, talking directly to them: "This is what it's going to be like. This is our team. This is the kind of food that we do."'

This level of information was perfect for Bethany. As Sam says, "They answered the questions before Bethany asked them! Because she's very much 'How? When? Where? Why?' This was fully drawn out, which was brilliant."

"Normally even a happy change for Bethany is just too much but because she'd had that introduction,

she'd seen the pictures, and it was a holiday, she just took it in stride. She managed the whole trip with relative ease and any worries or problems that resulted in tears of anger, the staff handled it so well and worked with her," says Sam.

Without having to be concerned with other people's judgment, the lack of pressure was freeing, encouraging people to participate as they wanted to.

'I think that's why Bethany gave it all a go,' says Sam, 'because there was no pressure. If she wanted to sit out, she could. No one judged.'

Apart from the structured activities, Sam also enjoyed talking freely with other parents who shared a connection of having a child with additional needs. Sam's husband, Chris, who is based away from their family, was able to connect with other serving parents. 'He quite enjoyed being able to openly talk about how hard it can be living away from us all and knowing that I've got to manage all of this on my own,' Sam shares.

In 2024, we will be once again supporting a week in August, this time at the Calvert Trust on Exmoor. In addition, we have made funds available to support an additional, shorter weekend break in May.



## GRASS ROOTS SUPPORT FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

**We wanted to understand how we could further support military families and turned to the three Service Families Federations for guidance.**

The Families Federations work tirelessly for the military families they represent, ensuring the issues that affect them are heard and understood. They provide reliable information and support to Service families as they deal with problems that can result from service. Having heard about some of the issues impacting their families, we donated £15,000 to each of the Federations.

**£45,000  
DONATED**



The **Army Families Federation (AFF)** represents Army families across the UK, a high proportion of whom live in Service Family Accommodation. For many of these families, poor quality broadband is an ongoing issue – something that was first highlighted to us in 2020 during the Covid pandemic. Back then, we made funding available to support the purchase of wifi dongles for Army families to help ease the strain on those working from home or home schooling.

So, when we asked AFF CEO Collette Musgrove how best we could support Army families during the cost-of-living crisis, she recommended a second round of provision of free mobile wifi devices. We donated £15,000, and 200 Army families received a TP-Link device which provides a mobile wifi hotspot which can be shared with up to 10 devices.

The offer was inundated with applicants, including one Army spouse who said “We’ve had poor broadband for five years. It’s a continuous struggle. Thanks for the opportunity to improve it.”



Research by the **RAF Families Federation (RAF FF)**, Community Development Officers, and leading charities has identified a gap in provision and support to dispersed RAF families - those living away from Service Family Accommodation and/or the workplace of the serving person. In addition, there are locations where personnel work, but where there are no MOD delivered community facilities.

The RAF FF requested a donation of £15,000 to allow Units/Regions to directly bid for funding for initiatives specifically designed to bring families together, including dispersed families and families without children.

Our funding will fund three events across the UK between April and September of this year and other charities, local MPs and Armed Forces Covenant Champions will be invited.



**Naval Families Federation (NFF)** – Recognising that separation can be difficult, and that ships’ programmes and operational requirements continued to be demanding – not only for serving personnel but for families too – the NFF launched their Take Time Out campaign which we supported with a donation of £15,000.

To help those families overwhelmed by the huge amount of online advice available, the NFF designed a handy Take Time Out leaflet to stick on the fridge that included QR codes linking to a host of relevant and timely online information. As a ‘thank you’ for their ongoing support to the naval service, families received a thank you card and a £25 gift voucher to spend how they wished.

When the campaign launched, over 700 applications were received in a 24-hour period and as the gift voucher and thank you cards began to arrive, the NFF advocacy team received dozens of thank you calls and emails.

As Sarah Clewes, CEO of the NFF said “The team deal with other 100 calls a month from families who feel overwhelmed when lone parenting and need a listening ear. The impact of separation on our families is diminished quality of family life and is often the reason why Naval personnel choose to leave the service. The impact of this unexpected act of kindness is both heartwarming and immeasurable.”

One email from a naval spouse summed it up “This was a wonderful idea. It was the first time that I have felt acknowledgement for the sacrifices we have made and continue to make as a military family.”



# FAMILIES DAYS 2023

“BECAUSE FAMILIES SERVE TOO ...”

**In 2023, Annington made £10,000 available to military bases up and down the UK in support of Families days and homecoming events.**

We received over 35 applications which included:

**1st Battalion The Royal Yorkshire Regiment at Catterick Garrison**, who received a donation in support of their planned family day. In the Regiment’s bid for funding Lt Col Tim Exton explained the importance of these events.

“The strength of our Battalion depends on the strength of our families. Supporting them must be one of our top priorities, because families serve too. None of what we do can be done without the unwavering support of our families, who are the backbone of the Battalions community.

Families play a crucial role in the wellbeing and effectiveness of our personnel. By taking the time to connect with their families through events like a family day, soldiers can build stronger relationships with their loved ones and feel supported in their personal lives, which can have a positive impact on their performance and morale while serving.”

My intent is to give back appreciation to all my soldiers and in particular their families who suffer the most when their partners are deployed. I have tasked my Unit Welfare Officer to organise a Family Day in July 23 which will involve a number of entertainment stands and events in order to provide a great opportunity for increasing serving personnel and family cohesion within the Battalion.”

**RNAS Culdrose, Helston, Cornwall** received funding for their Family’s Summer Fete event. This whole station event for c1500 people gave each section the opportunity to demonstrate what they do each day both to the families, other service personnel and contractors who work on the tri-service base. The organising committee provided a ‘fair’ for the under 10s plus food and drink.

RNAS Culdrose Families Day



In a nice touch, Annington were invited to attend the event to meet the families. Instead, we thought it would be the perfect opportunity to introduce the families on the base to our charity partner, Reading Force.

Reading Force’s Judith Burke volunteered to travel to the UK’s most southerly base and her feet did not touch the ground! “It went well with a huge amount of books and scrapbooks given out. Most families hadn’t heard of us, but all were very excited and enthusiastic. It was very, very busy – we did not stop for the whole event. We have since had enthusiastic emails from the event organisers thanking us for our presence and commenting on the successful day. We feel we have launched Reading Force in Cornwall, an area not previously targeted, and are grateful to Annington for making this happen.”

**RAF Henlow Families Day** received a donation towards their planned Families Day which was designed to bring families and the Whole Force together. The base is scheduled for closure in 2026 and work being done in preparation of this event has led to an atmosphere of impending closure.

The day provided an occasion for families to come together, especially the dispersed families who were directly encouraged to attend.

The event aimed to enhance the spirit of community cohesion, gave visibility to the Community Support staff and



the welfare support available. As WO Sarah Tuckwell explained, “delivering a key event such as Families Day lifts the cloud of closure and demonstrates the importance the Station Commander gives to the welfare of personnel, including families, and his intent to ensure they are supported until the gates close.”

Reading Force in Cornwall



# VETERANS

NEW PARTNER

£75,000  
DONATED



**In August, we agreed a new two-year partnership with Building Heroes, the award-winning military-to-work programme for veterans and Service leavers.**

Building Heroes is the only UK charity providing all Service leavers/ veterans with a comprehensive tailored combination of free technical and vocational training, wraparound welfare support, positive employment outcomes and ongoing support for up to six months post-graduation. The programme puts approximately 2000 participants through a variety of construction skills training courses each year and the courses are delivered in Building Heroes Academies, often sited on live construction sites.

Courses are intensive– typically covering 12 months of study in five weeks – and are taught by highly skilled tutors from FE, employers, and industry. The charity currently has a 100% pass rate across all courses with 70% of learners progressing into employment, self-employment or further training. A ‘typical’ learner is aged around 35 and of junior or NCO rank. 80% have served 15+ years in the Forces. Learners tend to have been 7-10 years of more out of service or are in the last 6 months of service and 90% are male with 80% from Army, 10% from Navy/Royal Marines and 10% from the RAF.

Service leavers find construction is a good fit – they enjoy the discipline, rigour, teamwork - and they report that the precision required and the general camaraderie helps them flourish personally and professionally. This, coupled with the widely reported shortage of qualified construction workers\* together with the explosion in demand for the charity’s courses, led the Charity Committee to agree to the partnership.



**Ian meets veterans at the Basingstoke Academy**

Our donation of £100k over two years will support three current Academies – Coggeshall in Essex, Basingstoke in Hampshire, and Darlington in North Yorkshire. In addition, our support will help the charity open planned centres in Welbourne, Hampshire and develop two plant and street works training centres in Manchester and Somerset.

In November, Ian Rylatt, CEO visited the Academy in Basingstoke, which is located on a live residential development site run by Vistry. There he met the veterans and Service leavers as they tackled plastering.

With over 289 years of service between them, the group consisted of individuals from all three services, including Wing Commander Ashley Cudlipp who was full of praise for the course. “Building Heroes really helps with transition out of the armed forces. The banter between us all has been great – on the first day we tackled bricklaying and I put on gloves to huge laughter and the observation ... ‘you must be RAF’”.

Their instructor from the local FE college was also clearly enjoying teaching the group and repeatedly commented on their attitude and determination. “I’m in awe of how quickly they learn and the respect they have for each other. If only we could bottle it and give it to school leavers!”

## GREEN SKILLS TRAINING

Thanks to a small surplus in the charity budget, the Committee also agreed to an additional donation of £25,000 in support of the charity’s Green Skills course.

The courses offer Service leavers and veterans the chance to work towards qualifications that will lead to employment opportunities as Retrofit Surveyors/Assessors. These are jobs which will play a key role as the UK works towards reducing its carbon emissions by improving energy efficiency and retrofitting the UK’s national housing stock.

The role of a Retrofit Surveyor is laid out in PAS 2035 and their job is to visit properties and carry out the surveys required to inform decisions about implementing measures needed to improve energy efficiency. The inaugural course launched in February at Gateshead College and Jane Harsham, Sustainability Manager was invited to meet the very first graduates of the course at the end of March.

“Between them, the group had over 125 years of Service experience which was impressive. However, what struck me more was just how well informed they were about the need to reduce carbon emissions, and their very real desire help the UK meet its Net Zero ambitions.”

\*266K jobs to be filled from 2022-2026 according to CITB’s Construction Skills Network.



## WATERLOO UNCOVERED

Annington staff member Bindu (right) on 2023 Dig

**Our headline sponsorship of Waterloo Uncovered, the mental health charity that supports veterans through the power of archaeology continued in 2023 with a donation of £65,000.**

Thanks to Annington's support, Waterloo Uncovered were able to run a total of seven programmes in 2023 - the largest number of programmes in its history, supporting over 100 veterans and serving personnel.

Regardless of the programme chosen, participants were supported by the charity's expert wellbeing and support team who worked with them towards their own set of personal goals – as well as having the chance to immerse themselves within an important part of history, with a like-minded group of people. The highlight of the year for the charity is the bi-annual Dig at the site of the battle in Belgium.

As in previous years, the Waterloo Uncovered team extended an invitation to us to join the Dig and meet beneficiaries. As 2023 marked the 25th work anniversary of Bindu Ruotolo, Accounts Administrator and former member of the Charity Committee, Ian felt it was fitting that Bindu be offered the chance to travel out to Belgium and immerse herself in life at Waterloo.

**Bindu spent a week with the Waterloo Uncovered team and veterans participating in the 2023 Dig. She shared her experience with Ian and the other members of the Charity Committee.**

"The chance to experience the Waterloo Uncovered Dig in 2023 was simply amazing!

"On Day One I took part in an excavation training session with an archaeologist with 35 years' experience. He taught us how to set up a site, how to measure and tape off an area. I was in an all-woman group with Marina an Army officer, and we did really well to put into practice what we were taught."

"During dinner that evening a military veteran called Moose shared a story about an archaeologist and a veteran who had participated at an earlier Waterloo Uncovered dig. After spending some time digging together, they realised they had both served in Northern Ireland, albeit at different times. Over four nights they shared stories that they had not spoken to anyone about, and Moose said you could see the physical change in both as they offloaded their experiences.

He made the point that the amazing thing about the Dig is that participants are so mentally and physically occupied during the day and the group is so supportive, that people start sharing their stories of the horrors of war, about lost friends."

"On another day I did some detecting with Gary in the larger trench. The French team of archaeologists had dug down about a metre to get to the soil that would have been ground level at the time of the battle. Amazingly, Gary and I had two very strong signals from the metal detector! While someone filmed me and with an audience watching, Gary allowed me to dig up the items. The first item was a perfect musket ball, and the second item was a buckle, probably from a French uniform at the battle - it was declared the best find of the day."

"I got far more out of the experience than I ever could have imagined. I learned lots, I heard so many stories from people who had struggled with their life experiences. I laughed so much that I pulled a muscle, and I made some lifelong friends. I was so proud of being from Annington, sponsor of the Dig."

# LIFEWORKS

Since 2012, Royal British Legion Industries has helped nearly 6,000 veterans through its award-winning employability and training support programme, Lifeworks. A partner since 2017, we were once again delighted to support the programme with a donation of £60,000.

SOCIAL VALUE  
OF OUR SUPPORT  
**£1.99**  
MILLION\*

Lifeworks equips participants with the tools needed to find their desired career outside the military. 79% of the people supported by RBLI LifeWorks have either a physical or mental health condition, making it difficult for them to find a new career to suit their individual needs.

From employment advice or information on career pathways, to confidence courses and CV writing, Lifeworks aims to provide the skills needed to succeed in the civilian job market. The programme delivers life-changing support, specifically addressing skills gaps and boosting confidence within the veteran community. The Lifeworks team encourage the self-development of the course attendees, whether the desired outcome is full-time employment or assisting them in finding work experience or further training in their desired career pathway. Lifeworks also provide ‘forward assist’; an element of the programme that entails ongoing support over a period of a year after the course, ensuring additional assistance is on-hand should it be required.



Nicola (left) and Holly (right) with Lord King and Lisa Farmer, CEO of RBLI

## SOCIAL VALUE

Having met and read about the impact of the courses on the lives of hundreds of veterans we have supported over the years, we have long been impressed by the programme. However, it wasn't until publication of the results of a year-long assessment into the effectiveness of Lifeworks that we fully appreciated the social value of our support.

The report, compiled by Community Enterprise was launched at an event in November at the House of Commons and was hosted by President of RBLI, former Governor of the Bank of England, Lord King. The report details the effectiveness of the Lifeworks programme and measures the social value of placing 50 veterans into employment, through their resulting contributions to society.\*

The report concluded that Annington's support of 50 veterans into paid work resulted in £1.99m of social value.\*

Patrick Okla, aged 39 from Hampshire, who served for four years in the Army, and six in the Royal Navy, spoke at the launch of the evaluation

about the challenges he faced after leaving the Services.

Patrick spent eight months without a job and described it as a state of mental oblivion. Despite having served in the Armed Forces, job hunting, and interviews were daunting. Consumed by negative thoughts, he didn't know what civilian life held. Determined to work in cyber-security, Patrick completed self-study courses.

Taking up his story, Patrick, said, "The first email from the Lifeworks team was life changing. I attended the four-day residential programme and felt at home with the other veterans. I took everything onboard, it changed my mindset, and within three weeks I got the job in cyber that I wanted."

At the event Lord King spoke movingly about the individuals helped by the programme. "So many of the veterans who attend the Lifeworks programme who have been out of work for a long time say that they can't work in an office. Or they tell us that nobody will employ them in an office. They have limiting beliefs, and we help to break those down. We do it individually while they think they're in a team environment. If they thought, they were the sole focus it

would become too overwhelming, so it's disguised as a team environment. That way they feel confident to undertake the course and stick with it over the four days."

"Lifeworks is not a light touch programme. You don't get the results we do with a light touch programme. This has been developed through years of careful planning and design of the programme, along with experienced delivery. We're grateful to our funders as this is a very special programme and I think you'll agree that the evaluation shows the success of the programme."

Charity Committee members Nicola Paley and Holly Miller represented Annington at the launch event and Lisa Farmer, CEO of RBLI paid tribute to our support. "Annington's support for Lifeworks has helped hundreds of Patricks over the years, and spouses too. You should feel incredibly proud of the impact you have."

\* Calculations utilised government metrics from a ROI tool used by Public Health England.

# ANNINGTON IN THE COMMUNITY

**Preshute C of E Primary School**



Once again, our refurbishment of former MoD military housing took us all over the UK and gave us the opportunity to support a whole host of community projects and initiatives.

In Windsor where we are in the process of refurbishing 53 two and three bedroomed homes, we supported a range of local groups including **Windsor Lions'** prostrate screening event day at Windsor Racecourse which was attended by over 1,000 men from the local area. We donated £350 to **Clewer Green's C of E First School** for their Coronation party and gave £400 to **Rock the Rec**, a community event held in Clewer Memorial Recreation Ground in Windsor in July. **Windsor Allotments and Home Gardens Association** received old pallets from our site which they turned into composters and flower beds. We donated to the **Windsor Homeless Project** and supplied a Buddy Bench to **Oakfield First School** where pupils can sit when they are feeling sad or anxious, signalling to others that they need a friend to talk to.



**Windsor Allotments and Home Gardens Association**

In Devizes, Wiltshire where we are refurbishing five former Officer's homes, we hosted a visit from **Preshute C of E Primary School** who spent the day learning about sustainability – and trying their hand at bricklaying!

At Scampton, in Lincoln we donated new scripts for **Pollyplatt Primary School's** nativity play, as well as books and learning resources for the junior year's focus topic of oceans and **Lincoln County Hospital** received a memory tree. The hospital created cherished memories of loved ones by hand-writing messages on decorative wooden baubles which were placed on the tree in time for Christmas.

**Medway NHS Foundation Hospital Trust** also received a memory tree and the **Medway Home Start Group** received a donation of £400 towards Musical Bumps sessions for local Service families, allowing children to learn and share new musical skills.



**Medway NHS Foundation Hospital Trust**