

DONCASTER ARMED FORCES COVENANT BOARD

Quarterly Newsletter



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THE TALK PRINCIPLE CAN HELP WITH STARTING THE CONVERSATION ABOUT SUICIDE...

- Talk:** Start a conversation and show them that you care
- Ask:** Ask the person if they are thinking of suicide - be direct and compassionate
- Listen:** Listen to that person, are they in immediate danger or having thoughts of suicide?
- Keep Safe:** Make a realistic short term plan until you are able to make a connection to a person or organisation that can help.

STAY safe

City of Doncaster Council

Zero Suicide Alliance Because ONE life lost is ONE too many

Suicide Prevention

Having served in the Armed Forces can make somebody more likely to attempt suicide than those that haven't.

In addition, males are 3 times more likely to take their own life than women.

In this issue, we talk to Public Health Improvement Co-ordinator, Sarah Smith who leads on suicide prevention for the City of Doncaster Council. Sarah explains the importance of having the conversation about suicide and what resources and support is available in Doncaster.

FOREWORD

*Councillor Mark Houlbrook
Doncaster's Armed Forces
& Veteran's Champion*



Cllr Mark Houlbrook meeting with the Royal British Legion at the Military Expo organised by Business Doncaster in March

It's been some time since our last Newsletter and there has been plenty going on in 2022/23 so we have a lot to catch up on.

It seems only right to start with King Charles III's visit last November. It was both an honour and a privilege to be part of such a momentous occasion for Doncaster.

King Charles and The Queen Consort attended to officially mark the conferral of city status and I was proud to be able to invite members of the Armed Forces Community to meet them both at the Mansion House. Attendees included representatives from The Royal British Legion, SSAFA, The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, the Rifles, the Coldstream Guards and Doncaster's own Ben Parkinson MBE.

Other events I have been involved with have included the Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday events in Doncaster which are hugely important to me both from my own military service but also in my role as Armed Forces Champion.

In March, I was also fortunate to be invited to a Military Expo arranged by Doncaster Chamber. The event encouraged Doncaster businesses to understand the importance of recruiting from the Armed Forces Community and what benefits veterans can bring to their organisations. It also promoted the opportunity for businesses to sign up to the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) to demonstrate their commitment to the Armed Forces Community.

At the Military Expo, I was also honoured to re-sign the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of the Mayor, Ros Jones. There is more on what this and the ERS Awards mean later in this edition of the Newsletter.

In March, the new Veteran Co-ordinator for Doncaster, Teresa Hodgson started her new role. Teresa brings with her a wealth of experience and I am really looking forward to working together to ensure that we do the very best we can for our Doncaster Armed Forces Community.

New Veteran Co-ordinator, Teresa Hodgson



Veteran Co-ordinator, Teresa Hodgson meeting Josh Bucknall, Health & Wellbeing Officer with Club Doncaster Foundation and Councillor Mark Houlbrook

Teresa Hodgson joined the City of Doncaster Council as the new Veteran Co-ordinator in March 2023.

Doncaster is one of only a few local authorities that has a post dedicated to the Armed Forces and Veteran Community and demonstrates Doncaster's commitment.

Teresa brings with her a wealth of experience, having been raised in a military family, having volunteered for the Royal British Legion and having previously worked for a Project Nova (a charity working with ex-military in the Criminal Justice system) in Humberside.

Teresa has already hit the ground running, having been out to meet several organisations and groups and chairing the Doncaster Armed Forces Covenant Board. Teresa's aim is to make Doncaster the very best place for veterans and their families to resettle and thrive in civilian life and to ensure continued support for those still serving.

Armed Forces Covenant

What is the Armed Forces Covenant?

The Armed Forces Covenant is a pledge that together we acknowledge and understand that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives.

This support is provided in a number of areas including:

- Education and Family Wellbeing
- Having a Home
- Starting a New Career
- Access to Healthcare
- Financial Assistance
- Discounted Services



Cllr Mark Houlbrook re-signing the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of the City of Doncaster Council with Commander Waterhouse from the Royal Navy

In November 2022, the Armed Forces Covenant became a legal duty for Public Services.

In March 2023, Cllr Mark Houlbrook, on behalf of the Mayor, Ros Jones and the City of Doncaster Council, re-signed the Covenant, reinforcing Doncaster's commitment to the Armed Forces Community.

The Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones is committed to encouraging Doncaster people to live healthier lives and to improve their health, ensuring that no-one is left behind and this includes, backing our veterans.



Doncaster Mayor, Ros Jones and City of Doncaster Council Chief Executive, Damian Allen accepting the new Armed Forces Covenant that now proudly sits in the Civic Office Reception area.

The City of Doncaster Council are Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award Holders.

The ERS encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Doncaster Armed Forces Covenant Board meet monthly to bring partners from across Doncaster and to ensure we are meeting our commitment under the Covenant.

Suicide Prevention

There are still lots of outdated myths that talking or asking about suicide will increase the risk to act upon it, along with not knowing how to respond/act should someone say that they are thinking of suicide. Where do they send these people, what language should they use? There are lots of questions that people often don't know the answers to so it can be easier to avoid them but we want to open up the conversation and provide the answers to help.

In addition, there is still lots of stigma around suicide from those who are suicidal themselves but also the loved ones of people who are suicidal or have taken their own lives. This includes the feelings of shame, guilt and rejection and also possible feelings of failure from people trying to support someone who is struggling. All these issues can make it a sensitive subject to broach.

In Doncaster we are trying to dispel the myths wherever possible by reassuring people that it is ok to 'ask' the direct question and share the links to the Zero Suicide Alliance training, which in turn teaches people how to start conversations using different scenarios, for example with a stranger or a work colleague and how to respond. We get really positive feedback from the training and I think it gives people a bit of awareness and confidence to open up about it especially if they are worried about a loved one who may be suicidal.

Most people thinking of suicide, don't want to die and the best way to find out is to ask the direct question. We use the TALK principle as a guide: Tell, Ask, Listen and Keep safe

- **Talk** – Start a conversation and show them that you care
- **Ask** – Ask the person if they are thinking of suicide – be direct
- **Listen** – listen to that person, are they in immediate danger or having thoughts of suicide
- **Keep Safe** – make a realistic short term plan until you are able to help make a connection to a person or organisation who can help. Be realistic

If you're worried about your mental health, or the mental health of a friend or family member, you can use the following webpage to find local help and support:

www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/mental-health



Sarah Smith, Public Health Improvement Co-ordinator

Sarah works within Public Health for the City of Doncaster Council and has the lead for Suicide prevention across the City.

We asked Sarah, what does your day to day job involve?

"Suicide can be a very difficult topic to talk about so part of my role is also to raise awareness of suicide and encourage people to open up conversations about it and seek support if they need it either for those who are suicidal themselves or for those who are concerned about a loved one. To do this we support and promote e-module training developed by the Zero Suicide Alliance, which also shares mental health information and services that can help support someone with mental health issues".

FREE Veteran Suicide Awareness Training

Together with Help for Heroes, the Zero Suicide Alliance have developed an e-learning package specifically around Veterans.

The training can be done on-line using the following link:

www.zerosuicidealliance.com/suicide-awareness-training-veteran-edition

As part of our work for Armed Forces Day in June, the City of Doncaster Council will be opening up their One Stop Shop at the Civic Office in Waterdale, for people to complete the training in a safe environment:

Friday 23rd June, 10am - 4pm in the reception at The Civic Office, Waterdale

Please note, the training only takes approx. 20mins, so you can drop in any time between 10am - 4pm

Recent Highlights & Upcoming Events

King Charles III Visits Doncaster

On 9th November 2022, King Charles III and Camilla, Queen Consort visited Doncaster to officially mark the conferral of City Status.

Doncaster's City Status was one of the last granted by the late Queen Elizabeth II as part of her Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

The visit attracted huge crowds to the streets of Doncaster and following the official signing, the King and Queen met with representatives from schools, Community Groups and Volunteers in the Mansion House.



King Charles III's visit to Doncaster in November 2022

Centenary of Doncaster War Memorial

On Sunday 12th March, Local Veteran Associations gathered to commemorate 100 years since the Doncaster War Memorial was unveiled.

A short parade took place from Elmfield Park, through the gates and gathered at the War Memorial. The parade included representatives from the Mounted Police and the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry as it did 100yrs ago.

A short service was held by Rev Andrew Martlew and afterwards a commemorative tree was planted by Doncaster Mayor, Ros Jones.



Armed Forces Day 2023

Plans are well underway for this year's Armed Forces Day celebrations.

This year, the Parade will commence in Sir Nigel Gresley Square as normal, but instead of culminating in the Market Place, it will instead head to the Doncaster War Memorial on Bennethorpe, with a host of entertainment and activities to then be held in Elmfield Park.

We are absolutely delighted to confirm that this year, the Band of the Coldstream Guards will join the parade and exercise their right to march through the City as part of their Freedom of Entry that was granted in 2021.

Follow the City of Doncaster Council on social media to keep up to date with more exciting news coming soon.



King Charles III's Coronation



As always, Visit Doncaster have done all the hard work for you and put all of the information about events going on in Doncaster to celebrate the Coronation. For all you need to know, visit the following page: <https://bit.ly/3nM6LKu>

We'd love you to get involved with the events and activities. We're particularly excited for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity following His Majesty The King and Queen Consort Camilla's visit to Doncaster in November 2022.

Key dates for you to remember:

- **Saturday 6th May** – King Charles III's Coronation at Westminster Abbey, London
- **Sunday 7th May** – Special Coronation Concert at Windsor Castle by the BBC. Join the Coronation Big Lunch where neighbours and communities are invited to share food and fun together across the country
- **Monday 8th May** – Bank Holiday Monday. Members of the public will be invited to take part in The Big Help Out which will encourage people to try volunteering and support their local areas.



In April, Cllr Mark Houlbrook, Veteran Co-ordinator, Teresa Hodgson and Wellbeing Manager, Natasha Mead were delighted to be invited to the Eco-Power stadium to visit the Fit Forces Programme.

The sessions, funded by PFG and run by Club Doncaster Foundation are held every Saturday morning at the stadium from 9am - 11am.

The sessions give the opportunity for veterans to come together, use the gym facilities, take part in circuit training and enjoy a 'naafi break' afterwards in a safe and welcoming environment.

Teresa, Mark and Natasha all commented on how welcome they were made to feel and how much they enjoyed the military banter.

The sessions are free to attend and regular attenders are then able to use the gym facilities for free throughout the week.

Josh Bucknall, Club Doncaster Foundation's Health & Wellbeing Officer said: "We want to reconnect veterans, as there are a lot who have left the forces and don't have friends. That's what we want these sessions to be about."

To find out more, please contact fitrovers@clubdoncasterfoundation.co.uk



The Fit Forces participants in the naafi break after their workout



Fit Forces participants taking part in the circuit training at the Eco-Power Stadium

LET US KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS

We are keen to get your feedback on the content of these newsletters.

If you have any ideas for future issues or questions on anything included, please contact by either email or telephone.



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