



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Veteran Friendly Framework: Praise for nationwide project supporting veterans in care homes**

A new project is having a huge impact on the lives of ex-Armed Forces personnel living in care homes.

The Veteran Friendly Framework (VFF) launched last year and aims to promote wellbeing and tackle loneliness, by providing resources to care homes in England to better support their veterans.

The managers of two care homes with VFF status – one which provides bespoke care for veterans, and one that doesn't – have now spoken of the tangible impact it has had on ex-service people living in their homes.



*Figure 1 Royal Star & Garter Surbiton Home Manager Helena, with veteran Peter*

Royal Star & Garter provides loving, compassionate care to veterans and their partners, from Homes in Solihull, Surbiton and High Wycombe. All three Homes are VFF-approved, and Helena Maher is the Home Manager at Surbiton. St Mary's Riverside, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, is run by Home Manager Laura Barnsley. Unlike Royal Star & Garter, it is a non-military care home, but currently has seven veterans in its care.

Helena described the VFF as "a priority", while Laura said it allowed her home "to give recognition to the veterans we care for, which they deserve."

In a blog, Helena said although Royal Star & Garter already cares for veterans, the VFF "is about understanding the military mindset and someone's previous military service" and "confirms we are achieving a high level of care." She also highlighted how the VFF leads to improved "joined-up care" with external clinical services, and "raises awareness of our veterans and partners and the challenges they face when accessing care in the secondary healthcare arena."

Speaking about the impact the VFF was having at St Mary's Riverside, Laura said the home is "increasing its knowledge and expertise in how to support veterans," and "improving the care we provide residents." She said: "We're connecting with them on



a deeper level, we have a deeper understanding of their past, which in turn improves their wellbeing and mental health. I think with the VFF we've improved their outcomes and their experiences living in our care home."

She also said the VFF had encouraged St Mary's Riverside to connect with local military groups and organisations, with residents going to Royal British Legion coffee mornings, or Help for Heroes befriending volunteers coming to visit. "This increased standing in the community has directly led to a boost in new residents moving into the home," said Laura.



*St Mary's Riverside Home Manager Laura Barnsley, with resident and RAF veteran Keith*

"I would 100% recommend the VFF to other care homes," she added.

The VFF will deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes for over 25,000 veterans in England, and is a two-year collaboration between Armed Forces charities Royal Star & Garter, the Royal British Legion and the NHS Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA – an NHS flagship Armed Forces programme), with funding support from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

The VFF has been praised by government minister Rt Hon. Johnny Mercer MP and Professor Deborah Sturdy CBE, the Chief Nurse for Adult Social Care in England.

To date, 19 care homes across England are VFF approved, with 78 going through the process and more than 65 are in active discussion.

To read Helena's full VFF blog, go to <https://starandgarter.org/media-centre/our-blogs/veteran-friendly-framework-helena-maher-blog/>.

To read Laura's full VFF blog, go to <https://starandgarter.org/media-centre/our-blogs/veteran-friendly-framework-laura-barnsley-blog/>.

Any care homes interested in receiving more information about the VFF can visit <http://veteranfriendlyframework.org.uk>, email [VFF@starandgarter.org](mailto:VFF@starandgarter.org) or call 07425 326070.

**[Ends]**



### **Notes to editors:**

National census data (2021) identifies direct veteran status;

- Of the 340,355 care home residents in England and Wales, 26520 (7.79%) were veterans, 25,085 of these are in England.
- Nearly half (46.50%) of the 15,765 communal establishments classed as care homes in England and Wales housed at least one veteran.

We do not know the number of partners and widow(er)s of veterans in care homes, so members of the Armed Forces community in care homes will be much higher than the Census data on veterans alone indicates. The Veteran Friendly Framework is designed for this wider Armed Forces community.

The VFF is currently a two-year programme funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, Royal British Legion and Royal Star & Garter, running to April 2025.

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**Royal Star & Garter** provides loving, compassionate care to veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia, helping them to lead happy, fulfilled lives. Their three Homes offer specialist full time and short break residential care, along with a programme of outreach services including Lunch Clubs and telephone support.

**The Royal British Legion** has six care homes providing residential, nursing and respite care for hundreds of older veterans and their dependants. They also support individuals needing specialist dementia care and provide a unique environment that recognises and celebrates residents' service to the country.

**Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance** The NHS in England is committed to raising standards among healthcare providers of Veterans' services. The Veterans Covenant



Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) is a group of NHS providers, including acute, mental health, community, and ambulance trusts that have agreed to be exemplars of the best care for, and support to, the armed forces' community. They do this through their Veteran Aware accreditation model, which has been widened to include the independent sector and hospices, which encourages providers to identify those patients with an armed forces background.