



PRESS RELEASE

Veteran Friendly Framework: One year impact

As communities mark Armed Forces Day on 29th June, a project which supports veterans in care homes celebrates its first anniversary.

Designed for use in residential settings for older people, the Veteran Friendly Framework (VFF) helps providers to offer appropriate support for veterans living in care homes across England. It will deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes for over 25,000 veterans, plus partners of veterans.

The Framework supports care home staff in identifying veterans and their wellbeing needs, addressing social isolation and providing signposting to statutory and charitable services. It is a quality improvement programme and is free to care providers.

The VFF 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.



St Mary's Riverside Home Manager Laura Barnsley, with resident and RAF veteran Keith. St Mary's Riverside was the first home from the St Mary's Care Homes group to achieve VFF status

One year on and the programme has had a huge impact already. Thirty-eight care homes have achieved VFF status, and of these five have also successfully undergone their first-year review. Eighty homes are currently working towards VFF status, and nearly 100 more are engaged in discussions about taking part. Estimates indicate that the programme is already supporting 1,500 veterans and partners, and benefitting the wider residential care community too. The standards align

to the Care Quality Commission's assessments, helping care providers to produce evidence of quality improvement and demonstrate to relatives and new enquirers their commitment to evolving their care.

St Mary's Care Homes runs seven nursing, residential and dementia homes in Yorkshire, all of which have achieved VFF status within the past four months.





Operations Manager Adam Ward said its impact was already being felt in this short time. "It's allowed us as a care team to understand a little bit more about the resident and what they've been through," he said. "This improves our approach - it's important to us that everyone's care is person-centred, to give them the best possible outcomes."

Mr Ward said the VFF programme has opened doors to local communities, with visits from cadets and Royal British Legion branches, and it has been good for business: "Some of our veterans don't see themselves as ex-military, because the Armed Forces never really left them. It's really important that we appreciate this in the care we provide, and that we build links with the wider community, to support our veterans and help us understand what they've been through."

"Our homes haven't been VFF-approved for long, but it's already generated a lot of activity and interest from people visiting the homes and in the wider community. We've seen an increase in occupancy in some of our homes, especially those which have a big Forces community around it, like Hull and East Ridings. One of our Homes has achieved VFF status despite having no veterans, because we recognised the benefits the Framework still delivers, and there's every chance they will have veterans in the future."



The Veteran Friendly Framework logo

Non-veterans have also benefited from the VFF, through visitors to the homes and in other ways. Mr Ward said: "Non-veterans talk about their own experiences. They may not have served themselves, but a parent may have, or relative or a friend, and that creates a greater level of engagement and communication."

Mr Ward finished: "When I look at it all together, I can clearly see the VFF is starting to have an impact already, and it's going to have a greater impact as we go on. We've learnt we're part of a bigger community than we thought. We've learnt that some staff members are veterans, we've learnt that residents' relatives are veterans or actively serving. It's been a really good journey so far, and we're only at the beginning of it. I'm excited to see where it will lead us, and I'd encourage every other care home to do it too, to help the people they care for."





Andy Cole, Chief Executive at Royal Star & Garter, said: "I'm delighted that the VFF has had such a big impact on the lives of veterans in just one year. The benefits of being involved are many, and I look forward to more care homes joining the VFF family."

Mark Atkinson, Director General, Royal British Legion, said: "It's great to hear some of the many benefits that the VFF is having on veterans across the country. We're proud to be a partner in this important project and that RBL's six care homes have now all been accredited by the VFF scheme. We believe it is making a real and meaningful impact on those members of the Armed Forces community who are living in care homes."

Prof Tim Briggs CBE, National Clinical Director for NHS Improvements and Operational Recovery, said: "We are delighted that together, Royal Star & Garter and RBL have been able to extend the work NHS trusts are doing, accrediting as Veteran Aware, into Veteran Friendly (VFF) care homes. The VFF programme is enhancing the support and wellbeing available to those who have served their country and accrediting via the Veteran Friendly Framework is one way of paying back the debt that we owe them."

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

[ENDS]

For further information please contact:

Goolistan Cooper

Communications Officer

goolistan.cooper@starandgarter.org

0208 481 7669 / 07391 868796

Cally Madden





Marketing & Communications Manager

cally.madden@starandgarter.org

020 8481 7692 / 07881 017299

Editor's notes

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.

