

2022 EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME (ERS) SILVER AWARD NOMINATION

This document replicates the online submission form for the MOD Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award 2022 and can be used as a working document to draft your nomination with colleagues and your Regional Employer Engagement Director (REED).

Once your nomination is ready to submit you can cut and paste your answers into the online portal link which will be provided.

Nominations made after this date will not be accepted.

You will be asked to share your draft nomination with your REED and they will be happy to provide feedback.

Please ensure that the organisation meets the Silver ERS criteria, as follows:

Essential criteria

- Organisations must have signed the AFC.
- The employer must have already stated their **intent** to be supportive by using the ERS website to register at the Bronze Level.
- The employer must proactively demonstrate that Service personnel/Armed Forces community are not unfairly disadvantaged as part of their recruiting and selection processes.
- The employer must actively ensure that their workforce is aware of their positive policies towards Defence People issues. For example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must have an internally publicised and positive HR policy on Reserves. In the case where no HR policy exists this should be demonstrated by specific references in job descriptions or on the organisation's website.
- Within the context of Reserves the employer must have demonstrated support to mobilisations or have a framework in place.
- The employer must demonstrate support to training by providing at least 5 days' additional leave.
- The employer must not have been the subject of any negative PR or media activity that could cause embarrassment to Defence.

Desirable criteria

- *The employer should promote volunteering with the cadet forces by providing additional leave for employees who are Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAVs).*
- *The employer should allow flexibility for employees who are CFAVs to fit their working hours in with their volunteering.*
- *The employer should demonstrate support to the cadet movement as a whole by providing proactive support to individual cadets and/or to local cadet units. This could, for example, be through mentoring cadets in core skills such as CV writing and interview techniques, or by direct investment in equipment or infrastructure for a local cadet unit.*
- *Employers should employ at least one individual from the AFC category that the nomination emphasises. For example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must employ at least one Reservist. In exceptional circumstances where there is outstanding generic support for the Armed Forces community and/or the size or business model of the organisation makes employment of such an individual impossible, the organisation can be considered for the award where they do not employ someone from the AFC category.*

For any questions or guidance you seek regarding the criteria, please contact your REED.

<u>Basic information</u>	
Organisation:	Cheshire East Council
Company size:	500+
Industry:	Government
REED/NAM name:	Janice Cox QVRM
REED/NAM email:	nw-reeds@rfca.mod.uk
Your name and job title:	Richard Stephenson-Evans
Email:	Richard.stephenson-evans@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Phone:	07849147519

<u>Defence People employees</u> <i>(Please provide the number of current employees for each Defence People category)</i>	
Reservists:	2
Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAVs):	1
Veterans:	13
Military spouses/partners:	10

Support for Reservists

Where relevant, please provide examples of how this organisation supports Reservists. For example:

- *Offers an additional 5 days paid/unpaid leave to Reservist employees.*
- *Supports Reservist employees during times of mobilisation and demobilisation.*
- *Partnership with Reserve units on a collaborative manning project.*
- *Holds regular meetings and roadshows that promote Reserve service and provide easy access to information.*
- *Established an Armed Forces Network, supporting employees who are Reservists, Veterans and spouses/partners.*

Only enter up to 250 words

- In accordance with our publicised HR Policy we offer 5 days additional paid leave to our Reservists. We also ensure our reservists are supported during times of deployment –See further examples of support for employee feedback
- We conducted an internal questionnaire to identify our Armed Forces community within the Council. This questionnaire enabled us to establish our Network. We are now able to communicate important and relevant information, including policy updates, and to share the contact details for our Veteran support officer.
- Embracing the feedback gathered from the questionnaire has helped us to shape and communicate appropriate information. Our employees also feel they have been listened to.
- We have gained a fantastic relationship with Crewe & District Military Vehicle Club who have a number of serving reservists and former personnel who are part of this organisation. We are working collaboratively with the club and the charity Help for Heroes for Armed Forces Day 2022 making this a huge showcase event for the public in the County.

We have a very good relationship with LOL Foundation (Life after the Services Charity) who also have a number of reservists working for them. We are working closely with them in preparation for our first Veteran Support Hub opening in Cheshire East. We will be offering 1-2-1 support for veterans at the site. The site will be run by volunteers (mainly veterans) with services onsite to support and accommodate homeless veterans. Due to this, LOL are considering signing the AFC.

Support for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAVs)

Where relevant, please provide examples of how this organisation supports CFAVs. For example:

- *Offers an additional 5 days paid leave to Cadet Force Adult Volunteer employees, plus up to 10 days unpaid leave if required.*
- *Sponsors the local cadet unit and allows the unit access to their main conference hall for parade evenings.*

Only enter up to 250 words

- In accordance with our publicised HR Policy we offer 5 days additional paid leave to our CFAVs
- We currently have 1 long serving employee who has been supporting the cadets for many years whilst employed by Cheshire East Council below is the feedback from this employee showing their service .
- **Quote:** "I volunteer at the local Sea Cadets Corps - Bollington & Macclesfield Unit. I am currently a Chief Petty Officer and responsible for cadet training. I have been an adult volunteer there since November 1999, when I turned eighteen and I have now served over 21 years for this Charitable Organisation.
My partner also volunteers for the Sea Cadets Corps, which is how we met. He is a Lieutenant Commander and he is responsible for cadet training across the North West Area, but he has held various other roles within the organisation. Like me he has been an adult volunteer since he turned eighteen and has served now for nearly 30 years in the Sea Cadets.
My father served in the TA. My nana served if the WRAF during WWII and my grandfather in the Army"
- We work closely with the Town Council who allows the access to their rooms and halls but in the new hub there will be access to this main hall and will have a number of cadets running from this Hub
- I have also attended the Crewe Sea cadets and currently looking at offering support for them with grants and local knowledge.

Support for Veterans, Service Leavers and the Wounded, Injured and Sick

Where relevant, please provide examples of how this organisation supports Veterans or WIS. For example:

- *Supports the employment of Veterans and service leavers by offering an internal mentor/adviser (ex-forces employee), to aid their transition into the civilian workforce.*
- *Actively works with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) to employ service leavers and attend careers fairs.*
- *Established an Armed Forces Network, supporting employees who are Reservists, Veterans and spouses/partners.*
- *Employs a significant number of Veterans and place high value on the skills and work ethic they bring to the business.*

N.B. Only the first 250 words will be considered

- We have a number of veterans within our Council in many roles who offer skills and experience within our departments. We have 3 Armed forces officers/mentors: Andy Keogh, Nick Lane, Richard Stephenson-Evans who work at different areas within our Council and are key contacts for our colleagues. Their details are shared internally so colleagues know where to get support.
- Richard has a very close relationship with the Armed Forces support officer 'Marius Leon' at the DWP. They meet regularly and discuss events and support for the veteran community. We also offer support for CV writing and free training. This relationship has proved successful in many ways including a successful joint Armed Forces jobs fayre that took place on the 23rd September 2021 at the jobcentre in Crewe working with the Veteran support officer.
- We have a regular contact via our veteran colleague network. This enables us to share relevant information including: opportunities and training, plus up to date information around our Hub.
- We have a number of Veteran colleagues in many different roles including our housing/building department, and one who is both a work placement officer and Veteran Support officer/mentor.

Support for Military spouses/partners

Where relevant, please provide examples of how this organisation supports Military spouses/partners. For example:

- *Established an Armed Forces Network, supporting employees who are Reservists, Veterans and spouses/partners.*
- *Support to military families and spousal recruitment by offering employment to dependants of military employees.*
- *Flexibility for spouses to take time off during times of a partner's deployment, injury or during bereavement.*

Only enter up to 250 words

- From our colleague questionnaire we have identified many colleagues have family members who have served in the forces and we are keen to be in contact with them through our colleagues promoting things like the Hub and Events like the Armed Forces Day event so they can gain friendships and support through these channels to enable them not to miss out
- We ensured when we had the careers fayre we communicated this to our colleagues and using social media.
- We have a competitive bereavement policy and managers are flexible around our Veteran colleagues offering flexible options to support at any time of need
- We engage periodically with our network of colleagues and share any relevant activities or events and even services that may be of interest to their spouses and partners some of these include Mental health specific workshops and Veteran job seeking events.

Further examples of support

Provide any further examples of how this organisation supports Defence and the Armed Forces community. For example:

- *Aligned some retail products to suit the needs of the military customers (eg. enhancing the cancellation cover provided under travel insurance where a member of the Armed Forces has had to cancel a trip due to authorised leave being cancelled).*
- *Enhanced understanding and appreciation of the Armed Forces by our non-military staff through active engagement on military-lead leadership courses.*
- *Works with the Navy, Army and RAF Families Federations to understand areas of need.*
- *Supports a specific service charity.*
- *Offer work experiences and employment to Armed Forces Employment Pathway Candidates (AFEP) as part of initiative with the MOD.*

N.B. Only the first 250 words will be considered

- **Leave for Reservists:** We are currently exploring increasing the paid leave to 10 days for Reservists, so we can progress to gold award in the near future.

Quotes from Armed Forces Network:

- “I am currently a member of the Army Reserve (4 Mercian) and have been for the past 8 years. During this time I have worked for Cheshire East Council across schools, Early Help and Social Care. Cheshire East supported a 9 month deployment in 2015. I make use of the Armed Forces policy each year to complete training with the army. I feel supported by Cheshire East in being an active member of the Army Reserve”.

“My family is a military family my father and grandfather have both served”

- In August 2021 we started to provide the wraparound support working alongside the homeoffice and closely with the MOD providing onsite support for the Afghan interpreters and their families who have fled Afghanistan, Our priorities were to ensure the families get the vital support they needed once at our bridging hotel whilst helping them get 121 mental health support and basic daily needs. From this work we were highlighted by the Homeoffice and MOD as a model what good looks like for all the hotels in the UK due to our support for the families and ensuring they had all needs and lifeskills before leaving our hotel to their permanent homes, We instigated a number of initiatives like English lessons plus education for the children, Relevant benefits in place for the families and ensuring the support continued when they moved but the greatest success is that we were able to get a number of the Veterans into paid work by working closely with our partners helping families to complete a CV and relevant training. This work is still ongoing and currently working with a Veteran charity called LOL life after the services who are helping the Afghan soldiers reconnect with their UK soldiers they worked alongside many years ago in Afghanistan and proved very successful so far.
- We have established a great link with Tom O'brien who is the Chair of the NW RFCA and also the Deputy Lieutenant and shared some work we have been doing in Cheshire with meetings arranged to attend their Veteran Breakfast club and visit their retreats.
- We created a link with Nantwich RBL branch and provided them some money to start up a venture they were looking at doing for some time which was their Veterans Breakfast club help once a month providing food and support to local Veterans. This has really proved so successful with 27 attending the last one and now the Town Council noticing the benefit its bringing locally and offered them a grant to continue this long term.
- Our links with LOL and Tri Services Support Centre charities has helped us reach out to many Veterans in the community and we currently have a grant going through to commission the charity to support with a digital isolation project targeting lonely isolated veterans so they can become more involved with the groups and services,

Further comments or quotes

Add any comments or testimonies that you feel would help strengthen your nomination. For example:

"As a Reservist, I appreciate the flexibility that my employer offers. Management are very keen to be as supportive as they can in terms of flexible working arrangements etc. The 10 days annual leave is of particular benefit as it lets me save my holiday for my family, which is very important to allow me to balance my home life with work and reserve service".

Only enter up to 250 words

"I volunteer at the local Sea Cadets Corps - Bollington & Macclesfield Unit. I am currently a Chief Petty Officer and responsible for cadet training. I have been an adult volunteer there since November 1999, when I turned eighteen and I have now served over 21 years for this Charitable Organisation. My partner also volunteers for the Sea Cadets Corps, which is how we met. He is a Lieutenant Commander and he is responsible for cadet training across the North West Area, but he has held various other roles within the organisation. Like me he has been an adult volunteer since he turned eighteen and has served now for nearly 30 years in the Sea Cadets. My father served in the TA. My nana served in the WRAF during WWII and my grandfather in the Army"

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My family is a military family my father and grandfather have both served"

"We are currently exploring an extended 5 days paid leave on top of our already 5 days leave covering all reservists so we can progress to the potential gold award in the near future and this should be finalised in the next few months "