

City Hospitals Sunderland



City Hospitals Sunderland has dedicated champions who work to support the Armed Forces community within the trust, both internally and externally, through engaging with NHS Employers and local NHS organisations.

The role of reservist is actively promoted and the trust has close relationships with the Ministry of Defence's regional employer

engagement director, and local military units who regularly visit the hospital. These relationships mean the units can work with the trust in several ways, including:

- staffing recruitment stands
- working with the trust to develop news articles about reservists in the workforce
- hosting an internal intranet page dedicated to the Armed Forces which includes forthcoming events, access to policies and information on joining the forces.

City Hospitals Sunderland attends several events throughout the year, including the nationally run Reserves Day where they hold a lunch for reservist colleagues, and the annual employee benefits day to promote reservists and the support available to them. The trust also encourages teams to participate in local military team-building training days.

The trust attends military organisation's employment fairs to help service leavers with NHS applications and mock interview sessions. As part of the commitment to signing the Armed Forces Covenant, a personalised pledge was included to offer guaranteed interviews for veterans meeting minimum employment requirements. The trust is now committed and signed up to fulfilling the pledges underpinning Step into Health.

To support the role of reservists, ten days paid leave is offered as part of the HR policy for training commitments and has shared its HR policy for neighbouring trusts to use, alongside other advice and guidance.

“City Hospitals Sunderland recognise that reservists and veterans bring something that you cannot get in a conventional training package; you cannot buy the ethos, self-confidence, resourcefulness or attitude that service in the forces can bring”.

Top tips:

1. Have a dedicated board member who acts as champion within the organisation to advocate the work to support the Armed Forces in the workforce.
2. Consider all members of the Armed Forces community and recognise the values and attitudes they bring.
3. Engage with the local organisations to share knowledge and advice.

Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust



Hampshire Hospitals has an internal team that works on the Armed Forces agenda. This includes reservists and ex-forces members employed within the organisation. The trust is a national advocate for the promotion and support of defence, and the Armed Forces community.

The trust has strong partnerships with local reserve units 243 and 256 Field Hospitals,

where military representatives are invited to staff inductions which include a session from a local unit and a brief from a reservist. A team from the organisation also takes part in a military leadership challenge at Sandhurst each year. They also collaborate with other NHS organisations to encourage involvement and share good practice within the region.

The trust supports nationally-led campaigns including Reserves Day and Armed Forces Week by encouraging staff to wear their military uniforms to work. They also use Twitter and Facebook to promote the Armed Forces within the NHS.

Hampshire Hospitals were one of the first five pilot sites to successfully implement the Step into Health programme, an initiative offering service leavers employment and placement opportunities within the NHS. The trust has now opened this up to provide a mentoring platform for service leavers, veterans and the wider community.

Internally, reservist colleagues and the wider Armed Forces community are supported through the offer of additional leave to ensure reservists are able to fulfil training commitments. To ensure that reservists are supported during their NHS career and during periods of mobilisation, awareness raising sessions take place to ensure that managers are briefed and made aware of the policies in place.

“We are looking to forge even stronger links with the Armed Forces moving forward and are working on a programme that would give serving personnel the opportunity to work with us in our hospitals.”

Top tips:

1. Work collaboratively with colleagues within the trust and local organisations that can support.
2. Ensure you can get top level buy in from your board members.
3. Engage with local organisations and other trusts to learn from each other.

North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust



North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) has a dedicated champion working on the Armed Forces agenda. The trust has implemented a HR policy offering additional leave for training commitments plus extended support to include awareness of veterans, service leavers, partners, and cadets or cadet leaders.

Partnerships with local units have facilitated honorary contracts with the military meaning the trust is able to offer placements and shadowing programmes for military personnel. There are also opportunities for serving or ex-military personnel to shadow colleagues in the trust to establish which NHS roles will be suitable when they leave the Armed Forces.

The trust also supports local education providers by hosting a military paramedic diploma in conjunction with the University of Cumbria. The diploma is designed to support potential service leavers wanting to progress as paramedics through a one-year placement scheme. NWAS is also a part of the Associate Ambulance Practitioner (AAP) qualification for military medic placements, all veteran or service leaver students from the trust have passed to date.

The Step into Health programme is used to promote vacancies for the Armed Forces community and offer placements to encourage recruitment into the organisation. Representatives from the trust attend employment fairs to inform service leavers of the roles available, including information on how they can apply. The trust has also successfully held insight days for Armed Forces service leavers and veterans, which has led to successful employment.

An internal intranet page highlights the support given to the Armed Forces community including, a list of military support networks, blogs from reservists, the internal HR policy, and a list of upcoming events. Four hundred champion posters were distributed across the trust to promote the dedicated NWAS champion and signpost to more information about the Reserve Forces.

“The Armed Forces community has a great team ethos, leadership, professionalism and exceptional communication and resilience skills. Our staff are often faced with distressing and challenging situations which is when these skills prove most invaluable; not only in providing outstanding care for our patients but also when supporting fellow colleagues.”

Top tips:

1. Reach out and network with local units, reservists and support groups.
2. Appreciate how the NHS can benefit from the skills acquired in the military and encourage talent to originate from this unique group.
3. Raise awareness of reservists within your workforce with all colleagues and recognise their commitment.

South Central Ambulance Service NHS Trust



South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) gained board support early as senior members of the trust are ex-forces. The trust was keen to raise awareness of the roles of the Armed Forces community within the trust and have since identified around 100 members of the workforce as either reservists, veterans or a partner of a serving military member.

The trust is part of the NHS champions scheme and attends regular regional network meetings for collective working. Employer Recognition Scheme and Covenant logos are proudly promoted on recruitment pages and across job adverts to promote the trust as an Armed Forces employer in the region. Case studies from the trust's good practice have been shared featured in magazines and a podcast.

The trust holds honorary agreements with local military units and provides a number of Ministry of Defence students with placements on the Healthcare Professional (HCP) tier. SCAS pledged to the Step into Health programme and work closely with the Officers Association and Career Transition Partnership to share vacancies available within the trust for those leaving the military. Military insight days for service leavers and the wider Armed Forces community are often held in the trust, providing a bespoke fast-track recruitment process which has led to successful employment. SCAS has also developed a series of promotional YouTube videos of service leavers who have found employment within the NHS.

Champions have been identified across the service to ensure that military employees, both current and prospective, are supported through a network. Some military staff colleagues may require assistance with post-traumatic events and therefore established routes for access to counselling and therapies are in place to offer help and support as part of the MIND charity pledge.

Staff inductions include information on the support available for the Armed Forces community within the trust, including two weeks additional leave and flexibility around shifts, which is offered as part of the reservists HR policy. Teams from the trust engage with local military events and have recently taken part in the Sandhurst Leadership programme. The trust has also held joint training exercises alongside medical reservists from RAF 4626 Squadron on operating in challenging environments.

“I am extremely proud that the trust has such a positive and flexible approach to allow our reservists and cadets to continue their valuable service to our Forces.”

Top tips:

1. Gain internal support on all levels
2. Data/information gathering is crucial - ensure that you retain all details and evidence
3. Promote positive working within the organisation and encourage support from other departments.

Contact the trusts for further information:

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