

East Anglia Reserve Forces
and Cadets Association
Annual Report
2023-2024



ABOUT US

Welcome to East Anglia RFCA.
We hope you enjoy reading our Annual Report.



WHO WE ARE

The RFCA's vision is to be the essential, effective and enduring partner that supports Reserves, Cadets and the wider Armed Forces community.

WHAT WE DO

Cadets and Youth

The RFCA provide the professional support staff who maintain and run the Army Cadet county HQs, the equipment and transport that Army Cadets use for their activities, and administer enquiries, new joiners and the adult volunteer membership.



In addition to raising awareness of the positive contribution of Sea Cadets, Air Cadets and Army Cadets in the region, East Anglia RFCA provides regional support for the recruitment of Army Cadet Force Adult Volunteers.

Estates

We manage and maintain over 200 Reserve Forces and Cadet sites across the region, the acquisition and disposal of land and buildings and adapting homes for injured service personnel.

Engagement

We assist the civil community, employers and local authorities with understanding the needs of Defence people and developing appropriate support and services for the region.

We also help to improve the knowledge and understanding of Reserves and Cadets within the wider community.

Members act as local ambassadors across the range of RFCA interests.

The volunteer membership of the Association is the enduring interface between the local community and the Ministry of Defence.

Volunteer Members are drawn from officers of all three services and cadet forces, representatives from local authorities, local business communities and charities. Members seek out opportunities for the promotion of the RFCA's key messages amongst influencers and those who can provide input. That they are prepared to give so freely of their time is a great testament to the high regard in which our Reserves and Cadets are held.

CHAIR

Our strategic vision of connecting Defence with society, ensures we encompass a commitment to the society we serve.

As the Chairman of East Anglia Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association (RFCA) and a proud member of the National Council for RFCA, it is my honour to write the foreword for our annual report, reflecting on the accomplishments and strategic vision of our organisation.

I am pleased that we have been recognised for demonstrating resilience and adaptability over the last year, ensuring the continued support to our Reserve Forces and Cadets across East Anglia. The dedication and commitment of our staff, coupled with the unwavering support of our stakeholders, has been pivotal in delivering great outcomes for the region.

In terms of operational achievements, our focus on maintaining and enhancing the Volunteer Estate for our units has yielded positive results. With partnership and customer focus at the heart of everything we do, we have actively worked with our suppliers to modernise our methods, incorporate cutting-edge and sustainable technologies and innovate at every opportunity.

The commitment of our estates team has not only bolstered our unit capabilities, but has also positioned East Anglia RFCA as a leader in embedding a culture of continuous improvement. Our engagement with the local communities has remained a cornerstone of our mission but we could not achieve this without the strong partnerships that have developed with businesses, educational institutions, and community organisations. This active collaboration helps to link our units to the communities they serve and from whom they recruit, adding to the strength of community spirit, and contributing to the prosperity of the region.



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Looking forward, our strategic vision is one of 'Connecting Defence with Society' and I would suggest that we are uniquely placed to achieve this. We already have great people with a passion for supporting our units, and experience of delivering year after year, but we can, and will, do more. The importance of a well-recruited, well supported reserve, in the era of conflict in Europe, is self-evident. The value to society of young people in cadet forces with a strong sense of community, self-discipline and respect for others has long been formally recognised and is growing in popularity. The overlap between business, education and service in our units is becoming even greater as public spending remains under pressure and the attraction of greater collaboration becomes an imperative.

We are going to need people from all backgrounds, with diversity of experience and thought, to deliver in the coming years and I would like to publicly and sincerely thank all of the current team and stakeholders for getting us to this point, while challenging us all to engage, collaborate and deliver more at every opportunity. I look forward to seeing many of you in the coming year as you continue your support to our Reserves and Cadets.

CADETS

East Anglia has one of the largest cadet cohorts in the UK with more than 14,500 young people being supported by nearly 2000 Officers and Instructors.

Our cadet strength has continued to grow across the region, particularly in Cambridgeshire. Cadet Force Adult Volunteer numbers have plateaued in some areas but continued to rise in others.

With access to the Defence Training Estate becoming a limiting factor especially for summer camps, the emphasis now is on enhancing the cadet experience as opposed to growing numbers, plus exploring ways to share resources more widely across the different cadet sections.



RAF Air Cadets Bedfordshire & Cambridgeshire Wing

In February 2024, Royal Air Force Air Cadets (RAFAC) from seven Squadrons paraded in St Neots to commemorate the 83rd anniversary of the formation of the Air Training Corps (ATC).

The parade was led by cadets of the Sector Band under the guidance of Warrant Officer Ben Ellis from 105 (Cambourne) Squadron. Every year local squadrons meet together for smaller Sector parades, celebrating what is known as "ATC Sunday" on the anniversary of the Corps' formation. Gathering the Sector's many cadets and staff for one parade is a celebrated annual event.

Taking the salute and inspecting the parade was Squadron Leader (RAFAC) Matt Dolton and St Neot's Mayor, Councillor Rob Simon who said: "It was an honour for St. Neots to host nearly 200 Air Cadets for their 83rd anniversary. Every cadet was a credit to their respective squadrons as they drilled on the Market Square and paraded through the town."



Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Army Cadet Force

A remarkable cadet, Peter Cordwell, was named as a recipient of the prestigious British Citizen Youth Award 2023 for his unwavering dedication to caring for his wheelchair-bound father, supporting a local disability charity and excelling in the Army Cadet Force. In addition to being his father's primary caregiver, Peter dedicates two to three days a week to the Herts Disability Sports Foundation and finds time to enjoy cadet training, participating in events such as poppy selling, parades and recruitment efforts.

Hitchin Army Cadet Emilka Styczynska proudly took part in Hitchin's Remembrance Day parade and service, having received a life-saving kidney transplant earlier in the year. Following three tough years on kidney dialysis, Emilka upholds her long-held ambition to become a Combat Medical Technician.



CADETS

Whilst the Defence Training Estate continues to support Ukrainian troops, cadets have enjoyed locally based activities this year.



Cambridgeshire Army Cadet Force

Cambridgeshire ACF had a great year in many respects, including a highly successful annual camp and ongoing fantastic Duke of Edinburgh's Award figures. The biggest success of the year however has been recruitment, adding almost 100 new cadets, meaning the county now has 850 young people training.

They have also seen an expansion of their adult volunteers, with 161 adults currently on strength, and another 65 waiting to come on-board. This success has been great for morale, and has left Cambridgeshire ACF feeling very positive about 2024.



Essex Army Cadet Force

Due to the non-availability of the training estate, Essex ACF's annual camp was run at the Cadet Training Centre in Colchester and throughout the local Friday Woods Training Area. Each Company ran a seven day package of events including fieldcraft, ranges, adventure training and paintball, to name a few.

The Signals Wing had the opportunity over the first week of camp to run CIS Star 2 (Essex being the first county to deliver the new 2023 syllabus), CIS Star 3 and CIS Star 4 courses; all of which were run out of Rock Farm compound within the Friday Woods training area. This worked exceptionally well, with accommodation in AT Tents and ORP Rations making up the feeding plan, the cadre remained self-sufficient (to the great delight of the instructors and cadets). Twelve cadets attended and passed their Star 2 and 3 CIS, and 15 passed the Star 4, which is a brilliant achievement.



CADETS

From the King's Coronation to anniversaries and awards, there was much to celebrate across all cadet forces.



RAF Air Cadets Hertfordshire Wing

In February 2024, Hertfordshire Wing held their annual Cadet of the Year competition from 1187 (Hemel Hempstead) Squadron. There were many different tasks for the 13 Cadets that were nominated. These took the form of a presentation, an interview, a uniform inspection and a knowledge test. All of the nominees came across incredibly professionally, and delivered to the best of their abilities. Congratulations to CWO McCluskey from 2313 (Rickmansworth & The Chalfonts) for placing first in this year's Cadet of the Year awards.

London Eastern District Sea Cadets

London Eastern District Sea Cadets held a very special Coronation Parade in the Old Royal Naval College Greenwich in May 2023. Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns KCB CBE KStJ DL was the Reviewing Officer and a number of senior officers joined the cadets to celebrate this historic occasion (including East Anglia RFCA's Vice Chair Captain Anthony Chapman RD DL VR).

Attended by over 400 cadets and volunteers, the Sea Cadets were joined by representatives from the Army, Air and Fire Cadets, St John Cadets and Scouts. Commander James Nisbet VR RN (London Area Officer) read out a message from HM King Charles III thanking those taking part for their service.



RAF Air Cadets Norfolk & Suffolk Wing

After a three year wait, 40 cadets and staff finally managed to take the trip to France to visit a number of museums and landing zones that were key to the success of the Normandy landings. Organised by the Wing Padre, Reverend Ron Tuck, the trip was an enjoyable but thought provoking visit for all who attended.



During the October half term, Norfolk & Suffolk Wing took 100 cadets to Cumbria to experience a full week of adventurous activity. Based at Castle Head Field Study Centre, the cadets were able to take part in canoeing, hill walking, mountain biking, and ventured into the Honister Slate Mine 'Climb the Mine' trail.



CADETS

Across the region, cadets have enjoyed expeditions, exchanges, annual camps and once in a lifetime experiences.



Norfolk Army Cadet Force

Over the summer, Norfolk ACF conducted a highly successful twin camp where cadets could either choose to attend a local 'green' camp in Norfolk or an Adventurous Training 'AT' one in Chickerell near Weymouth. The green camp consisted of traditional ACF activities whereas the AT camp focused on sports including: kayaking, paddleboarding, mountain biking, trekking and rock climbing.

In July, Norfolk ACF welcomed several international cadet forces to their Cadet Training Centre in Thetford for Exercise Baltic Guard. This is a chance for cadets from Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Estonia to join forces with the UK's Army Cadet Force for an international exchange and to encourage joint working with young people of similar ages but from different backgrounds. Over the two weeks, cadets were put into multi-national teams and conducted several phases of training including shooting and fieldcraft. The exchange also included two days of cultural visits to London and local STEM activities.

November saw an incredible 17 newly qualified adult instructors join Norfolk ACF's ranks as newly qualified Adult Sgt Instructors. Commandant Colonel Malin said "I am hugely proud of this latest recruitment achievement. It really shows that despite the challenging

economic climate, individuals from all walks of life are still joining this amazing organisation for the right altruistic reasons."



Suffolk Army Cadet Force

Suffolk ACF ran its first FoodBank Rideout. The Commandant set a challenge - to collect suitable donations for distribution to local food banks. Cadets organised collections at their detachments and arranged collection points in shops and businesses, asked family and friends and raised funds from tuck sales.

In June, a group of CFAV motorcyclists travelled 250 miles around Suffolk, visiting many of the County's detachments to watch the donations being presented to local food banks and thank the cadets for their efforts. In total Suffolk ACF raised over two tonnes of food! Now an annual event, they hope to make it even bigger in 2024.

Suffolk ACF continued to support the Suffolk County Show in 2023 with 70 Cadets and 14 Adults attending for three days to help the Show organisers. Duties included manning gates and crossing points, helping in show rings, setting show jumps and taking part in the Final Parade.



RESERVES

It has been a busy, fast tempo year providing plenty of opportunity for our units to demonstrate the reserves high levels of motivation and readiness in supporting a host of Defence tasks.



6 Regiment Army Air Corps

Members of the Regiment were mobilised throughout the year on Operation Ilkane, supporting Border Force during periods of industrial disputes. After vigorous training, soldiers were placed into International Airports such as Gatwick and Heathrow to conduct passport checks and assist in securing the UK border during the time of strikes.



With the introduction of the new battlefield attack helicopter, the Apache E model, aviation qualified members of the Regiment had to undergo a 16 day conversion course to prepare them to work with the upgraded attack helicopter. Multiple reservists deployed on Exercise Iron Titan to test the integration of reserve and regular soldiers to supply aviation effect to the battlefield, on both the communications and aviation support roles.



3rd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment

For the past six months, 3 Royal Anglian personnel have been mobilised on Operation Interflex as part of the first Army Reserve Company to support the UK Armed Forces' training programme to develop and prepare Ukrainian recruits to take the fight to their country's Russian invaders. Predominately based close to home on Stanta as part of a multinational task force; Steelbacks personnel worked alongside representatives from Finland, Romania, Denmark, Sweden, Australia and Canada.

The integration within 19th Light Brigade allowed 3 Royal Anglian to conduct training closely alongside other Army Reserve Infantry Units. For the 2023 Annual Deployment Exercise the unit paired with 6 Rifles to run specialist weapon, CIS and driving cadres. By combining resources and instructors, the Steelbacks were given multiple opportunities to conduct interesting and demanding training, whether it be qualifying as a machine gunner or achieving a mortar qualification through live firing.



RESERVES

Reservists have benefited from a variety of deployments and training packages.



36 (Essex Yeomanry) Signal Squadron

Five soldiers took part in the Military Reserve Exchange programme; a tri-Service annual reciprocal exchange of individual personnel between all components of the UK and US reserves. The aim of MREP is to develop bilateral security cooperation and enhanced interoperability through International Defence Engagement. The group joined the Delaware Army National Guard 198th Expeditionary Signal Battalion Enhanced (ESB-E) as they conducted their two week annual training in Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, USA. The troops were deployed with different teams and all learned a considerable amount in terms of trade skills and the broader aspect of interoperability, as did their hosts.



158 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps

158 Regiment RLC have been extremely busy over the last twelve months, deploying a number personnel on operations in eastern Europe and across the UK as part of Operations Interflex and Interlink. Still deployed, the Regiment look forward to their return in the spring. 158 have also been exercising with the Army's Aviation Brigade, providing distribution and supply capability to their combat forces during the 3 (UK) Division Exercise Iron Titan in the autumn. Their soldiers and task vehicles covered a distance of over 14,500km, travelling across the UK from Arbroath in Scotland down to Wattisham Flying Station in Suffolk across to Swynnerton camp in Staffordshire.



254 (East of England) Multi-Role Medical Regiment

Following the Integrated Review in 2021, 254 (East of England) Medical Regiment were directed to re-organise and re-designate as 254 (East of England) Multi-Role Medical Regiment (254 (EoE) MMR) and form on the 1st February 2024. The reorganisation began in September 2023 with the reforming of 162 Hospital Squadron in Hitchin. It also involved losing 222 and 250 Medical Squadron's based in Leicester, Derby, Hull, Grimsby and York. This reduced the Regimental footprint dramatically but allowed 254 to concentrate on the East Anglia region with sub units remaining in Colchester, Norwich, Cambridge and Hitchin.

At the beginning of February, Regimental HQ in Cambridge hosted a flag day with proceedings being led by the Commander 2 Medical Brigade, Brigadier Phil De Rouffignac, supported by the Mayor of Cambridge, Councillor Jenny Gawthrop-Wood, the Lord Mayor of Norwich, Councillor James Wright and Lt Colonel John Kaye Deputy, Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire. With 254 MMR on parade the Commanding Officer, Lt Col Simpson-Hayes, paraded and escorted the inspection party and then marched the Regiment past the Brigade Commander for a salute.



RESERVES

From anniversaries to competitions, our reservists have had much to celebrate in the past twelve months.



32 MI Company, 3 Military Intelligence Battalion

32 Company had a good year with the Battalion running a successful overseas exercise in Cyprus. Making good use of the ranges, taking part in field exercises and an AT package that included sailing, mountain biking and diving, it was a challenging but enjoyable deployment. 32 Company continues to provide ongoing support to Defence Intelligence as its raison d'être.

2620 Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment, RAF Reserves

The Squadron celebrated its 40th anniversary since it was formed on 1 March 1983. It was marked with a formal event within Squadron Lines on 1 April. Over 100 current and former members came together to commemorate this event as well as say farewell to Cpl Jane Jones QVRM who was retiring after 30 years' service.

In July, the Squadron conducted a charity event in aid of East Anglia Children Hospices with 16 personnel walking the 49 miles of the Pedder Way and they raised over £2000.



2623 Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment, RAF Reserves

As part of 2623 Squadrons Annual Continuous Training, 24 members of The Wolf Squadron travelled to Northern Ireland to take part in Ex Shamrock Wolf. A week long range package gave squadron members the opportunity to continue to develop their marksmanship principles over a variety of scenarios and situations as well as their personal skills and drills on an advanced range. During the second week, the Squadron went into the planned exercise phase which saw the squadron operating out of a forward operating base, carrying out a force protection role in the form of section patrols, quick reaction force and base security from tower and main entry point locations.

Cambridge University Officers' Training Corps

Following a successful two week shooting camp, CUOTC attended the Army Reserve Operational Shooting Competition at Bisley. The eight strong team were placed 8th overall and won the University Challenge Cup – which CUOTC first won in 1852. Amazingly five OCdts came in the top 50 shots, and can wear the Army Reserve Top 50 Marksmen Badge.

Cambridge UOTC entered a team into the world famous Cambrian Patrol Competition.

The patrol is a test of leadership, self-discipline, courage, physical endurance and determination. The team had to complete a gruelling 40 mile tactical patrol in 48 hours completing military skills stands along the way. The team lead by 2Lt Friend achieved an impressive Bronze award.



RESERVES

Our Reservists continue to support and deliver high profile national and international events.



Cambridge University Royal Naval Unit

Officer Cadets took part in a wide range of activities throughout the year. Several OCs undertook weapon handling training in order to take part in an Army exercise practicing urban combat. One OC had the opportunity to visit West Point America for the annual Junior Leadership Conference. Other OCs were able to deploy on a multinational maritime exercise in the Baltic, visiting Keil, Prague, Den Helder and more during the trip. Whilst embarked, they were able to receive on the job training as they learnt to navigate HMS Explorer and experience life at sea in a Royal Navy Ship. There were several adventurous training events throughout the year with OCs from Cambridge taking part in the Holdfast challenge which saw them complete several physical challenges as a team including; finning across the lake with logs.



HMS Wildfire

2023 was another busy year for the ship's company at HMS Wildfire. Reservists were deployed on-board Offshore Patrol Vessels both within UK waters and the Falklands. Elsewhere, a medic deployed to the carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth and two Lieutenants completed their staff course at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham.

At their home base (Northwood HQ), the highlight was their annual ceremonial divisions where they hosted HRH Prince Michael of Kent, GCVO. The Prince was able to meet members of the ship's company, along with local Sea Cadet units, as well as present their annual awards.



Military Provost Staff Reserve Company

The MPS Reserve Company deployed to Kent for their annual continuous training. Week one included core combat skills and special-to-arms training where they were tasked with setting up an operational temporary holding facility and tested on their prisoner of war captured persons drills. They also participated in close quarter battle training which culminated in a company attack on the historical Redoubt building in Dymchurch. Week two included a watersports day, a range packet and a cultural day to the Battle of Britain Museum near Hawkinge in Kent.

No.3 RAF Police (Reserves) Squadron

The Squadron has remained actively engaged in high profile ceremonial events including the Coronation of His Majesty, King Charles III. The Squadron was also successful in securing the lead security role for the Battle of Britain celebrations at Westminster Abbey and the annual St Clement Danes Church Service.

Support to the annual Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) 2023 saw Sqn Ldr Gary Martin, Officer Commanding, 3 PS, act for the third consecutive year as the senior security coordinator on behalf Air Officer Commanding Global Enablement. Critically, this duty provides security risk assurance to ensure the safety of in excess of 650 RAF personnel and the protection of Strategic UK air assets whilst simultaneously providing security guidance to visiting foreign militaries. The Squadron further supported via the deployment of 30 RAFP Reserves over an 11 day period where, alongside other policing agencies, they ensured the safety of over 200,000 civilian guests, air assets and personnel.



EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

The Employer Engagement team celebrate another spectacular year for supportive employers in the Employer Recognition Scheme.



It has been an extremely busy year for employer engagement adding 11 Gold Awards, 22 Silver Awards and 94 Bronze Awards across East Anglia. Employer support for our Armed Forces remains strong and we were able to celebrate five employers who revalidated their Gold Award and four employers who revalidated their Silver Award. The commitment to revalidate, after no less than five years' of support, demonstrates the value employers place on the transferable skills and work ethic they're able to access through their employee military cohorts.

Support comes from all areas of the community and we were pleased to witness Bedford Masonic Lodge sign their Armed Forces Covenant and, to reinforce their support, immediately held a Service of Remembrance at the Kempston War Memorial.

Defence is keen to establish open, strategic relationships with employers and, our focus this year has been to demonstrate the tangible benefits to employers who partner with Defence.

First class training, unique experiences and shared values allow Employee-Reservists to learn, grow and develop key skills and qualities beneficial to all: the military, society and business. Using our Reserve Centres, employers and reservists were brought together to hear about life in the Reserve Forces. Witnessing first hand some of the training and skills available, employers were able to 'have a go' at the inter-active stands and really understand the value of military training and leadership, often commenting that they'd be reviewing the roles their employee reservist undertook in the workplace.



EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Our Employer Engagement team continue to work to establish and maintain strong, mutually-beneficial partnerships with employers in support of Defence and the Armed Forces community.

Our Regular and Reserve Forces work in partnership with each other and we're privileged to be able to host employers at our Regular Forces base - Flying Station Wattisham. Guests were able to get up close and personal to the Apache Attack helicopter and to hear about some of its capabilities.

Not to be outdone, Merville Barracks, the home of the Parachute Regiment, saw employers witness paratroopers practicing their 'jump' skills before moving on to the 'state of the art' urban warfare facility; likened to a life-sized video game where troops are able to maintain their world renowned first class military skills at maximum capacity.



We were able to join employers in celebrating King Charles III, Commander-in-Chief, British Armed Forces, first official Sovereign's Birthday Parade at Horseguards, London to experience the full pomp and ceremony the country is known for across the world.



Winston Churchill famously stated that 'Reservists are twice the citizen' and this year's Gold Award employers celebrated their achievement in his Cabinet War Rooms and Museum.



The Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, Mrs Julie Spence OBE QPM, hosted our Silver Award winners alongside Regular and Reserve personnel who recognised the commitment required to achieve a Silver Award. Madingley Hall provided the perfect setting to receive such a prestigious award.



The Employer Engagement Team look forward to another year of collaboration with our stakeholders and to maximising the support from the employers of East Anglia.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

East Anglia RFCA supports and delivers a range of events and local community interactions throughout the year in support of Defence.

We work closely with local communities to increase the profile of our Cadet and Reserve Units and help Local Authorities understand the needs of the Armed Forces community. We are in regular contact with many of our Local Authorities, their officers and elected members.

In the past year, we have continued to deliver briefings to disseminate information on the Association's work and that of the Armed Forces Covenant. Throughout the year East Anglia RFCA attends and contributes to local Armed Forces Covenant Boards across the six counties. The initiatives and projects delivered by these groups are far reaching and benefit not only the Armed Forces community but the civil community as a whole.

Representatives of East Anglia RFCA also hosted a stand at an Army Engagement Group Presentation in Southend on Sea. More than 100 people from the local community gained a better understanding of the Army and what it means to employ a reservist or veteran.

Throughout the year, East Anglia RFCA works very closely with the regional lieutenancy offices to help each of His Majesties Lord-Lieutenants appoint their Cadets and present Certificates of Meritorious Service.

One such event was hosted at Ingatestone Hall in Essex. Five young people were appointed by HM Lord-Lieutenant of Essex, Mrs Jenny Tolhurst, to Lord-Lieutenant's Cadets for the year.



Nominated by their cadet leaders, these cadets were chosen because they stood out as ambassadors for their cadet forces, they are reliable, smart, and have the maturity and confidence to think on their feet and talk to everyone from a Royal visitor to fellow cadets.

The event also served to recognise some of the Cadet Force Adult Volunteers who freely give up countless hours to lead, enthuse, mentor and train the growing number of cadets in Essex. Certificates of Meritorious Service were awarded to five adults this year.



In September, Lord-Lieutenant, Mr Robert Voss CBE CStJ, officiated the opening of a brand new Army Reserve Centre in Hitchin. As President of East Anglia RFCA, he welcomed to site the newly established 162 Hospital Squadron, 254 Medical Regiment; a unit that specialises in providing the very highest standards of emergency medicine and healthcare for soldiers on operations.

Many dignitaries and guests from across region, including the High Sheriff of Hertfordshire, Mrs Liz Green, were all given a tour of the building and had the opportunity to meet and interact with soldiers from 254 Multi-Role Medical Regiment and 3 Royal Anglian (also based at site) and the Hitchin Army Cadets.



COMMUNICATIONS

A small team of communication professionals delivers central support to each department in the Association.



Our Communications team works alongside Estates, Engagement, Secretariat and Cadets & Youth to showcase the work of our fantastic people.

This year, in line with the priorities set by the Board, we've primarily supported our estates department

- We've published content highlighting that the RFCA Estate Optimisation Programme, which is delivering more Joint Cadet Centres, is working well for the end-users.
- We've shared our success with implementing the Defence Related Environmental Assessment Methodology (DREAM) for all our new build projects and refurbishments on the reserve and cadet estate.
- We've encouraged and supported cadet centres, that have been refurbished as part of our modernisation programme, to celebrate their new facilities by hosting opening ceremonies for their local community.

Our reach has expanded significantly via our website and newsletters.

As expected, visits to the East Anglia RFCA website grew considerably this year, in line with the increased content our team secured from colleagues and association members. More people than ever are engaging with our content and sharing their stories with us and with the wider RFCA community.

It's been an exciting year for East Anglia RFCA; we're proud to have extended the reach of those stories

including to key stakeholders in Defence and civic leaders, RFCA members far and wide and people with a keen interest in supporting the wellbeing of reserve forces and cadets forces.

We published 65 new articles this year. Whilst that is a strong 25% uplift in the number of stories, they were viewed 10.5K times, which is a phenomenal 350% uplift on the previous year. So not only have we published more great stories, but we've all done a great job of drawing attention to them. Visitors to our site viewed 44,000 pages in 2023, which is an almost a 250% uplift on the previous year.

Our Communications team is highly skilled and motivated.

Our team is constantly developing best practice, learning and improving. We provide outstanding value for money with in-house delivery of our content and campaigns, support to the leadership team on communications matters and events, website maintenance, SEO, social media engagement and content curation.

Communications outputs are reviewed monthly by senior leaders, including: social media performance, website metrics and campaign evaluation. This year, our media support was equivalent to a £1.238m advertising spend.

In support of wider Defence and the single Services, the communications team is a key partner in campaigns and events

such as Armed Forces Week/ Reserves Day, and strives in everything it does to uphold and grow the reputation of the RFCA, the Reserve Forces and the Cadet Forces in East Anglia.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Our digital platforms provide an essential link for the Association to all of our key stakeholders and our local communities.

Our social media activity is governed by our social media strategy, which is aligned with the Association’s management plan.

Our approach includes:

- Quality content – we prioritise stories with a human interest angle that will engage our followers.
- Knowing the algorithms – each social media platform has an algorithm in place which prioritises which posts make it to users’ news feeds. These algorithms value engagement metrics, so if our posts are receiving likes, comments and shares, they will feature higher up in news feeds and their reach will be extended. All of our social media content is organic, i.e. not paid for, so knowing how the social platforms prioritise posts and shaping content accordingly is vital.
- Being strategic and responsive – we forward plan and schedule posts but also interact in real-time, joining in with relevant trending topics, to keep our content fresh.
- We evaluate our performance by measuring our key metrics including engagement rate and impressions. This helps us know our audience, and what content resonates with them. We also benchmark our performance against other RFCAs. Please help us to be the best and beat the rest by following us [@EastAngliaRCA](#).



Best of 2023/2024



Our digital channels at a glance

TWITTER				Across our four channels in 23/24: 650 posts 8 % average engagement rate Posts served to 28K timelines 8291 total followers
22	4.6%	13k	3.9k	
Average no of posts per month	Average monthly engagement rate*	Posts impressions** monthly average	Total followers	
FACEBOOK				Website performance 23/24 65 articles published 44k total page views 10.5k views of news stories 3.3k views of job ads
16	6.6%	7k	3.4k	
Average posts per month	Average monthly engagement rate*	Posts impressions** monthly average	Total followers	
LINKEDIN				
14	10%	7k	660	
Average number of posts per month	Average monthly engagement rate*	Posts impressions** monthly average	Total followers	
INSTAGRAM				
10	11%	670	259	
Average number of posts per month	Average monthly engagement rate*	Posts impressions** monthly average	Total followers	
*engagement rate = The number of interactions with our content as a % **impressions = the total number of times our content is served to timelines				

WIDER MARKET INITIATIVES

Our Regionally Generated Income provides an essential funding stream for building projects across the reserve and cadet estate.



Our commercial business Alternative Venues continues to grow and support the further betterment of our estate.

Our activity with other uniformed services now includes the National Crime Agency, Ministry of Justice and Border Force alongside various Police and Fire Services. Our estate offers secure, well appointed facilities in which they can deliver personal safety and first aid training, fitness testing, scenario based activities and store operational vehicles. Alongside this we manage a portfolio of private (ex-caretaker) properties and commercial clients across the six counties.

All of the money raised from hiring activity is either given back to the unit as a percentage share or held centrally by East Anglia RFCA in order to fund capital projects. By providing modern, well-equipped, refreshed spaces for our reserves and cadets, we're supporting our units with recruitment and retention. People need professional, appropriate and safe places in which to work and train.

A significant new client for us this year is MPCT Military Academies.

Now operating from our Army Reserve Centres in Colchester and Ipswich, as well as our Cadet Training Centre in Waterbeach, Cambridge, MPCT will continue to grow with us across East Anglia in the future. The Military Academy is a unique training college that helps 16+ year olds develop their fitness, vocational

qualifications, and employability skills to help prepare them for employment; predominantly in a military career.



Their courses are designed to give learners the skills needed to start their journey towards a rewarding career in the British Armed Forces or to progress on to further education or training. Problem-solving and leadership skills are essential in the Armed Forces and civilian employment. Learners take part in a range of problem- solving activities both in the field and in academic lessons.

Founded in 1999, MPCT has 39 locations across England and Wales and partners with ten different RFCAs. Funded by the Department for Education, it is the only organisation to have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.



Our estates team manage a vast portfolio of buildings and projects, delivering highly cost effective maintenance and development projects.

Our estates team have continued this year with the delivery of the RFCA Estate Optimisation Programme (REOP).

This major Defence investment project aims to optimise the Volunteer Estate to be more efficient, and to change Defence's historic footprint to one that supports today's demands. REOP aims to improve the lived experience of reserves and cadets by providing modern, energy efficient, fit-for-purpose training locations, situated geographically

to maintain the visibility of uniformed organisations whilst eliminating duplication of land holding in similar areas to provide better value for money for the taxpayer.



In Norfolk, a Joint Cadet Centre in central Norwich received a major upgrade involving the addition of a new classroom, office and extra storage space to ensure there was ample room for the RAF Air Cadets to welcome Army Cadets to the site. All of the pre-existing facilities were fully refurbished and a great number of energy saving features added; including solar panels with batteries, energy efficient LED lighting, improved insulation, low flow taps and low volume cisterns.

Local Reservists at 3rd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment further enhanced the site's biodiversity by adding pond flora, trees, bird boxes and bat boxes in the grounds.



Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire, Mr Robert Voss CBE CStJ, opened the newly formed Hertford and Ware Joint Cadet Centre. The original building was extended, re-roofed and all timber cladding replaced with composite material. Internally, all areas were modernised and refurbished so the Ware Army Cadets could join 936 Hertford & Ware Squadron.

The team also completed a project to co-locate the Leavesden Green ACF detachment with 2F Watford Squadron. This involved the creation of a new stores building and adjoining outdoor covered classroom. The rest of the site was refurbished throughout.



Direct funding from the RAF Air Cadets led to a full refurbishment of 188 (Ipswich) Squadron and included a new roof, windows, doors, LED lighting, low energy heaters, kitchen units and sanitary ware. Rickmansworth ATC also benefitted from a re-roofing project.



2024 will witness the alignment of the Volunteer Estate with the wider MOD estate generating a 'one Defence Estate' ethos.



In Biggleswade a jointly funded project with the RAF Air Cadets saw the demolition of the old ATC hut and a large extension and refurbishment to accommodate both Air Cadets and Army Cadets.

In Norfolk, Wymondham Cadet Centre was fully refurbished throughout.



In Long Stratton, Detachment Commander, Sergeant Richard Fry from Norfolk ACF said: "The recent upgrade works have made an impressive difference to the Cadet experience. The upgraded building, which includes a new kitchen, new flooring, as well as a complete overhaul of the heating and electrics, provides the perfect environment to deliver Cadet training."



Future Plans for the delivery of Hard Facilities Management Services across the Volunteer Estate

Over the past year, our estates team have been heavily involved in the Volunteer Estate Value for Money Study. Following its conclusion, it has been agreed that Hard Facilities Management services for the Volunteer Estate will in the future be delivered by the MOD Built Estate contracts. These contracts cover key maintenance work, repairs, servicing and Hard Facilities Management, across the Volunteer Estate.

Adopting the Built Estate arrangements will provide the opportunity to transform the approach to maintaining the Volunteer Estate, whilst ensuring statutory and mandatory compliance and providing a safer place for Reserves and Cadets to work and train.

Revised RFCA and CRFCA estate teams' organisational structures will be put in place to ensure the effective management of the new arrangements and we will be working towards an in-service date of 1st August 2024. Across East Anglia, our service partner is VIVO Defence Services whose purpose is to modernise the lived experience for our Armed Forces to achieve, grow and thrive.



MEMBERSHIP

The Volunteer Members of the Association act as local ambassadors in the community across a range of RFCA interests.

With over 160 members across the six counties, our members range from qualified surveyors, accountants and solicitors to industry leaders and opinion formers.

Giving their time freely, without remuneration, their expertise in finance, legal matters, HR policy, estates and employer engagement are core to the success of East Anglia RFCA.



At our previous Annual General Meeting, Brigadier Tim Seal TD DL VR was welcomed as the new Chair for East Anglia RFCA.

He has served East Anglia RFCA since 2014 as Chair of the Cambridgeshire RFCA forum and

latterly as Vice Chair (Military). Tim is the Honorary Colonel of Cambridgeshire Army Cadet Force, Chair of The Ulysses Trust, Chairman of The Army Rifle Association, was honoured to be The High Sheriff in 2020, and has also been appointed His Majesty's Vice Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire.

Alongside a phenomenal Army career, in his civilian roles, he has held senior director posts in health and social care for the past 15 years.



East Anglia RFCA are delighted to have him at the helm alongside our Chief Executive.

Our Association have also appointed Brigadier Mark van de Lande CBE as Vice Chair (Military).

Mark retired from the Army in 2017 after a full 36-year career. His principal appointments included command of the Household Cavalry Regiment at Windsor and Military Assistant to the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. In his final role, as Head of Reserves in the Ministry of Defence, he led at Defence level the programme to revitalise and increase the size of the UK's Reserve Forces. This included leading on the development of the government's Green and White consultation papers, running a public consultation and establishing and co-ordinating delivery of the Future Reserves 2020 programme.

Colonel Andrew Every MRICS MCGI VR was appointed Chair of our Estates Advisory Committee in 2023. Alongside Reserve and Cadet Service, Andrew had a career in commercial teams in the construction industry until retirement in 2022.



Our employer engagement team will be further supported with the appointment of Nadine Wood to Chair of the Suffolk Employer Engagement Group.

Nadine is a seasoned professional and Operations Manager at RT Infrastructure Solutions Ltd. Over the past five years, Nadine has steered the company towards active participation in the Armed Forces Covenant and her dedication has led to the company achieving an Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award.

We welcome two new Commanding Officers to the region.

During Summer 2023, Lieutenant Colonel Matt Helsby assumed command of Cambridge University Officer Training Corps and Lt Col Alice Archer took command of 6 Regiment Army Air Corps.



EA RFCA HQ & REGIONS

East Anglia RFCA are represented by 72 members of staff across the six counties of East Anglia.



This year, we have welcomed several new faces to both our Chelmsford headquarters and regional offices. We would like to celebrate some new appointments and welcome several new Members to the Association.

Back in September, after more than eight years' service with East Anglia RFCA, we all wished a happy retirement and fond farewell to Colonel Ray Wilkinson QVRM TD DL VR.

Our new Chief Executive, Colonel Leona Barr-Jones brings with her a wealth of leadership experience and knowledge of reserve and cadet matters in support of the Association's goals across the region.

Colonel Leona Barr-Jones will be a familiar face to many having served 21 years in the Regular Army and 12 years in the Army Reserve. In the RFCA world, she joined us back in 2017 as a volunteer member, chaired the Hertfordshire County Employer Engagement Group and went on to become an ERS Gold Award holder with her previous organisation.

In the Cadet space, Colonel Leona was Commandant of Essex ACF and then joined the board of East Midlands RFCA as Colonel Cadets East Midlands before being appointed Chief Executive of East Anglia RFCA.

At Headquarters Chelmsford, we've welcomed a new Head of Finance, James Gao who previously worked as a management accountant in the private sector.

Based in Norfolk, our new School Cadet Expansion Officer is William Duggan, known as Jimmy. Having served a full 37 year career in the regular Army, 1st Battalion Irish Guards, his last posting was in the rank of Lieutenant Colonel as the Commanding Officer London Central Garrison. Jimmy's civilian roles have encompassed the offshore wind industry and SEN education.

We welcomed two new Army Cadet Executive Officers to our regions.

Major Brian Gerrard was promoted to Cadet Executive Officer having previously held the Cadet Quartermaster title at Suffolk Army Cadet Force for 16 years. He said: "I'm hugely grateful to my predecessor, Major Keith Humphrey, for his support over the last nine years. This is a great county with great people; it's going to be a good year for the Suffolk ACF community."

After more than 11 years in post, Major Geoff Hammond retired from Cambridgeshire ACF handing the reigns over to Major Justin Spreadborough. 'Spreaders' served in the Army for a total of 37 years within the Corps of Royal Engineers; more recently in the role of a Bomb Disposal Officer. He is looking forward to his new role as Cambridgeshire ACF's CEO, as it was his time as a cadet that inspired him to embark on his long and rewarding career in the first instance.

Finally we have welcomed Brian Chantry to Suffolk ACF as a Cadet Administrative Assistant and Kellie-Marie Lawrence has joined Cambridgeshire ACF as County CAA.



James



Jimmy



Brian



Justin

FINANCE & IT

The forecast for this Financial Year is expenditure of £11.076m.

East Anglia RFCA is funded by several Ministry of Defence and single Services sources to deliver its three mandated outputs of Estates, Engagement and Cadets and Youth.

The forecast for this financial year is expenditure of £11.076m on an income of £9.465m, the difference being supported by income self-generated within the region. This income is from Non Domestic Rates Reliefs (NDRR) for cadet premises, the commercial exploitation of our estate and the interest earned on treasure deposit.

Estates maintenance, revenue and capital projects accounted for 53.4% of expenditure. Soft Facilities Management support to the estate added a further 12.5% to the spend.

Support to cadets, including staffing, represented 14.5% of total expenditure.

Overheads were tightly controlled with the cost of Association HQ staff and IT/general administration expenses representing 19.5% of expenditure.

IT Systems

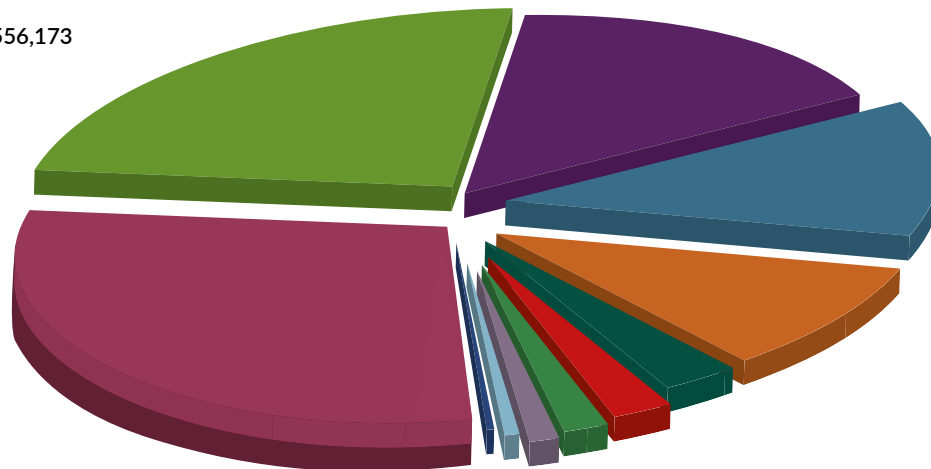
We upgraded the internet connection at several sites, including our HQ and two Cadet Training Centres. This helped enhance the Cadet Experience at the training centres and was completed in time for a cadet exercise involving international visitors which was well received. We have consistently monitored the IT network status and educated staff to mitigate the risk of becoming victims of cyber-crime. This year also saw the introduction of a new telephone system at 250 Springfield Road ensuring increased reliability and that we will still maintain communications after the ADSL/VOIP switchover.

Secretariat

The Secretariat department carries out administrative control and management of HR support, training and MIS administration for 70+ staff. This year we oversaw a number of interview boards that resulted in well-deserved promotions and internal transfers occurring, which then involved some complicated but worthwhile administration to make sure that the transitions ran smoothly for all involved.

Consolidated Expenditure Forecast Financial Year 2023/24 (£11.076m)

Estates Capital Projects, £3,353,449
Estates Maintenance & Minor Projects, £2,556,173
Staff Costs (Assn HQ), £1,787,632
Infrastructure (Soft FM), £1,386,569
Staff Costs (ACF PSS), £1,051,847
Vehicle Replacement, £320,703
Reserves & Cadets Support, £246,180
Administration, £160,321
IT & Communications, £122,993
Recruiting Support, £63,531
Transport & Movement, £26,931



CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The dedication of our personnel has been instrumental in overcoming obstacles and achieving operational success.

I am delighted to have been appointed as the new Chief Executive of East Anglia Reserve Forces and Cadets Association. As we reflect on the accomplishments of the past year, I am excited to share our journey and aspirations for the future.

Over the last year, East Anglia RFCA has demonstrated resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges and change. The global pandemic has over the last few years tested our organisation, yet it has also showcased our ability to innovate and evolve. We navigated disruptions, embraced digital solutions, and maintained our commitment to supporting the reserve forces and cadets across the region.

Our primary focus has been on supporting the well-being, readiness and operational effectiveness of our Reserve Forces through our management and maintenance of the Volunteer Estate and to support the delivery of an outstanding cadet experience. We have implemented programs and initiatives to enhance engagement opportunities, streamlined administrative processes, and fostered a sense of community. The dedication of our personnel has been instrumental in overcoming obstacles and achieving operational success.

As we look ahead, East Anglia RFCA is committed to strengthening its role as a vital link between the Reserve Forces, Cadets and the local communities they serve. We will continue to foster partnerships with businesses, educational institutions, and community organisations to create a supportive environment for our reservists and cadets. Collaboration and engagement will be key as we work towards building a resilient and interconnected network that benefits both our organisation and the community, truly connecting Defence with society.

Furthermore, we recognise the importance of diversity and inclusion and East Anglia RFCA is committed to creating an inclusive environment that reflects the rich tapestry of our communities. We will actively seek opportunities to attract a diverse range of talent, ensuring that our organisation is representative of the society it serves.



COLONEL LEONA BARR-JONES
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

In conclusion, I am really enthusiastic about the future of East Anglia RFCA. Our commitment to excellence, innovation, and community, civic and employer engagement will drive us forward. I extend my gratitude to all of our excellent staff and stakeholders for their continued support. I look forward to leading East Anglia RFCA into a future marked by success and collaboration.



Our Vision

The RFCA's vision is to be the essential, effective and enduring partner that supports Reserves, Cadets and the wider Armed Forces community.

About Us

East Anglia RFCA is an autonomous and tri-service corporate body established by an Act of Parliament.

Our main role is to give advice and assistance to the Ministry of Defence on matters relating to reserves and cadets in our region.

East Anglia RFCA covers Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.



GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES OF
EAST ANGLIA RFCA

Support Us

You can support our work in the following ways:

- Share your knowledge and enthusiasm for reserves and cadets by using your network to create local engagement opportunities.
- Use your local government connections to encourage attendance at events, support for planning applications and assistance with housing and education for service leavers.
- In your business, encourage your HR representatives to follow **@EAEmployers** on Twitter and email us at **ea-empsp@rfca.mod.uk** to find out how to show support for Armed Forces personnel.
- Tell your friends and colleagues that our sites are available to hire for training and conferences. Our sites are secure, often with plenty of free parking, well-equipped and all proceeds are invested back into the estate. Visit **venues-east-anglia.org.uk**

Stay up to date

Sign up to receive our monthly newsletter and stay up to date with reserve and cadet matters across the region.

Email **ea-comms@rfca.mod.uk** and we'll add you to our distribution list.

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