



EAST MIDLANDS
RESERVE FORCES AND CADETS ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

The Band of the Derbyshire Army Cadet Force at the Lord-Lieutenant of Derbyshire's Awards.



Cover: Private Sawford, a Reservist with the Royal Anglian Regiment in Leicester, was mobilised on Exercise Rhino Heart, the largest Army Reserves deployment since the Cold War.

responsible for advising and assisting the Defence Council, the Royal Navy, British Army, and Royal Air Force on matters that concern Reserves and Cadets. Our volunteer membership, which includes representatives from across society and the Military and Cadet Forces, helps us achieve our aims. Together, we work to raise the profile of Reserves and Cadets and to raise awareness of the great value our people add to society.

ABOUT US

East Midlands Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) exists to champion, support and enable Reserves and Cadets, because our people add value. We are an essential, effective and enduring partner to Defence, providing essential services since the turn of the 19th century. Our work falls into three main areas:

Estates

We provide key assurance and soft facilities management services for the Volunteer Estate, ensuring our people have safe, fit-for-purpose facilities in which to work and train. In total, we look after 451 buildings across 126 sites in Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire,

Nottinghamshire and Rutland. Our Alternative Venues programme enables us to hire out these spaces, which include facilities for meetings, sports events and functions, to the public. All generated revenue is reinvested for the benefit of Reserves and Cadets.

Engagement

We build strong, mutually-beneficial relationships with businesses and organisations to ensure the value of the Armed Forces community is recognised. Promoting the Armed Forces Covenant and the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, and supporting the Lord-Lieutenants' Awards, are key to our work. As one of the UK's 13 RFCAs, we are

Cadets and Youth

We support and promote the adventures and achievements of the Ministry of Defence-sponsored Combined Cadet Force, Sea Cadet Corps, Royal Marine Cadets, Army Cadet Force and Air Training Corps in the East Midlands. For the Army Cadets, we also provide the Permanent Support Staff who deliver essential logistical and administrative support that enables Cadet activity to take place. We oversee the Government's Schools Cadet Engagement Programme in the East Midlands and support all units with volunteer recruitment.



CHAIR'S WELCOME

An introduction and look ahead from the newly appointed Chair, Air Commodore Gavin Hellard CBE VR.

It gives me great pleasure to be writing this foreword as the new Chair of the East Midlands Reserve Forces and Cadets Association. As a serving Reservist for most of my adult life, I am immensely proud to be your Chair, and I will support your endeavours as we improve the lot of our Cadets and Reservists across the region.

I recently wrote to all unit commanders across the East Midlands to encourage more engagement with our teams across the region, as I am keen that we can maximise the opportunities that exist for all of us in mutual support, understanding, engagement and outreach. Improvement in all these

areas will create an environment in the region that supports all we seek to do with our Reserves and Cadets. One area of increasing importance is that of employer engagement. We collectively need to elevate the message about the importance of Reserves, notably the Strategic Reserve, to them and to Defence.

Across the region, we need to pull together and raise the profile of our Reserves and Cadet Forces, and our newly appointed County Representatives will need your support as we look to improve our outreach. Please do seek them out and support their efforts and activities when approached.

It is important that I also highlight our move to becoming a Non-Departmental Public Body. This change in our legal status was included within the Armed Forces Bill 2026, which was introduced to Parliament in January and which we can expect to be ratified in early 2027. Under the changes, we will become a Regional Council, albeit with our title remaining the same. Outside this, I see minimal change for us all, and our elected Board and wider membership will be as important to us as ever before.

I look forward to your continued support as we champion, support and enable the amazing Cadets and Reservists, our people, across the region.



An Army Reserve passing out parade at the Prince William of Gloucester Barracks in Grantham.

Cadet Corporal Laczny leads a VIP tour of our new facilities at Beckingham Cadet Training Centre.



Over in Northamptonshire, work has begun on another transformational estates project. At Clare Street Army Reserve Centre, we have demolished the existing Cadet huts and are building our region's first 'Super Centre'. The development is so large that it will accommodate seven separate Cadet units. The Centre will feature two drill halls, a covered outdoor training space, and more, helping to create modern, fit-for-purpose facilities that will be used almost every working day. Completion is targeted for the autumn of this year.

ESTATES REPORT

Managing a vast estate of 126 training sites can be as challenging as it is rewarding.

Major projects and change. The two have been central themes to our estates work for several years, and this continued throughout 2025-2026.

Beckingham Cadet Training Centre, the flagship facility for the Lincolnshire Army Cadet Force (ACF), has now been officially opened and will benefit young people across the country. Overseeing a project that will have such a significant impact on the Cadet experience has been, despite a few inevitable hiccups, a labour of love. We are very proud of the site's strong green credentials and even more so of the accolades it has received along the way: a Ministry of Defence

Sanctuary Award nomination, the Graphisoft Award for Sustainable it is on track to achieve 'Excellent' in the Ministry's Defence Related Environmental Assessment Method. Most importantly, this site will enable Lincolnshire ACF and others to organise more weekend training camps, boosting both retention and recruitment.

"We are very proud of Beckingham's strong green credentials and even more so of the accolades it has received"

Towards the end of 2025, we officially marked the end of phase one of the RFCA Estates Optimisation Programme with the completion of work at Ripley Joint Cadet Centre (JCC). Two new offices and an additional storeroom have been added to the site on the grounds of the Ripley Academy to increase capacity and accommodate the Heanor and Codnor Park Detachments of Derbyshire ACF. The completion of Ripley Cadet Centre's expansion could hardly have come at a better time, as the expanded facilities will help the ACF grow, with units catering to local demand. As the delivery agent, we have invested millions of pounds in creating modern, fit-for-purpose JCCs for today and tomorrow. In the East Midlands, facilities have been upgraded or overhauled in Boston, Eckington, Glenfield, Market Harborough, Market Rasen, Skegness and Staveley.



Stakeholders meet at Clare Street Army Reserve Centre to discuss the new Cadet 'Super Centre'.

In last year's report, we noted that VIVO's performance as the hard facilities management contractor in the East Midlands was not meeting expectations. Historically, we have been responsible for all hard and soft facilities management services across our estate, comprising 451 buildings across 126 sites. From August 2024, VIVO – already a contractor for the Ministry of Defence's 'Regular Estate' – assumed responsibility for repairs and servicing. Our team is now responsible for projects that sit outside that contract – such as those detailed above and the new two-storey Cadet hut in Coalville – managing the contractual relationship with VIVO, providing estate advice to Defence and, where budget allows, providing soft facilities management services. Since reporting

those frustrations in 2025, VIVO's performance has improved. We continue to work closely together to deliver the level of service that Defence requires.

In the headquarters team at Triumph Road, we said farewell to former Head of Estate, Martin Capewell, at the end of 2025 after more than 40 years of service to Defence. After seeing a couple of other key personnel move on, the team is now almost back up to full headcount under the leadership of our new Head of Estate, Ben Webster.

From the Cadet Force Adult Volunteers reporting faults, to Permanent Support Staff keeping a close eye on sites and reacting quickly when things need doing, HQ staff building relationships and keeping on top of assurance visits, and VIVO and their

contractors proactively and reactively working on site maintenance, it takes a team effort to ensure the estate is fit-for-purpose. Thank you to everyone who plays their part; without your hard work and dedication, the Cadet and Reserve Forces would not be able to do what they do.



Ripley JCC's capacity has been boosted thanks to new storage and office spaces.

Commodore Tim Green presents to a packed room of employers at the Regional Engagement with Defence.



ENGAGEMENT REPORT

We help to forge strong bonds between our Armed Forces and wider society.

When the Government unveiled its Strategic Defence Review in June 2025, for the first time in the history of root-and-branch reviews of the military, there was a specific reference to the Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations (RFCAs).

Outlining one of the report's five core ambitions – a whole-of-society approach to national resilience – the authors stressed that the RFCAs will be a “valuable organisation” in delivering public engagement.

Day in, day out, our six-person engagement team works hard to bridge the gap between Defence circles and communities here in the East

Midlands. They do this by championing Defence people; raising awareness of the value they add to society; working hand in hand with employers and communities to support Forces-friendly workforces; and by creating and enabling opportunities that increase the visibility and appreciation of our Armed Forces.

The acknowledgement of our work by the Strategic Defence Review's authors was warmly welcomed and a reminder of its importance to enabling the Armed Forces to recruit, retain and develop the skills and character of their people.

We know that our work has a powerful effect here in the East Midlands. In 2025, we

welcomed dozens of new Armed Forces Covenant signatories, directly engaged with hundreds of employers, and reached millions more through our online platforms.

The shift in Defence posture to a whole-of-society approach offers a real opportunity to build on this good work and for the RFCAs to strengthen their integral partnership with Defence.

RED ahead

Chief amongst our public engagements in the past year was the Regional Engagement with Defence (RED) held in Nottingham.

This conference was first launched in 2024 to enable business leaders to hear from and connect with senior military figures. This was followed up by another strong line-up of speakers and more than 100 delegates in 2025.

Last year's conference came hot off the back of the Strategic Defence Review and provided an excellent platform to share key messaging around the vital importance of good industrial relations to the whole-of-society approach. The war in Ukraine has demonstrated that a nation's Armed Forces are only as strong as the industry, innovators, and investors that stand behind them. Commodore Tim Green CBE, Naval Regional Commander, Eastern England, delivered a keynote address that provided critical, real-time feedback on the role and importance of Reserves in Defence and underlined the importance of



employers' support for their people. The conference programme also featured updates on the Strategic Reserve.

Defence-employer relations can be mutually beneficial, and there was a session articulating the value of employing military personnel – many bring desirable qualifications in areas such as leadership, advanced driving, and engineering. Looking to RED 2026, we are working to take this Defence forum to the next level, with hundreds of business leaders invited for a bolstered programme of key updates and networking.

The value of Silver and Gold

A new operating model came into effect for our employer engagement team in spring 2025, introducing a focus on key industries such as cyber, defence, engineering, healthcare, logistics, manufacturing and technology. With a focus on the value of these partnerships over their volume, fewer Silver and Gold Awards were presented in 2025 – seven and 12, respectively. However, collectively, those new award winners employ in the region

of 30,000 people, roles that are now certified as Defence-friendly with specific policies in place to support Reservists and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers.

The Silver Award ceremony took place at the Prince William of Gloucester Barracks in Grantham, timed to coincide with a Reserves pass out parade to show employers the impact of their support. We were delighted to host the Minister for Veterans and People, Louise Sandher-Jones, for the 2025 Gold Awards at Toyota's corporate suite at Burnaston, Derbyshire. Both reminded employers of the value of Cadets and Reserves and provided fitting occasions to celebrate their outstanding support.

Engagement platforms

A critical element of our community engagement efforts is the Lord-Lieutenants' Awards – county-focused ceremonies to invest and celebrate the incoming and departing Lord-Lieutenants' Cadets. Further, we celebrate the volunteers and Reserves who so often inspire our young people with the presentation of special Lord-Lieutenants'

Certificates of Meritorious Service – think of them as regional honours – before a hall filled with friends, families, local employers and select civil leaders. These events perfectly showcase the value of our people and are excellent platforms for strengthening bonds between Defence and society.

Last year, we undertook to deliver these events for Leicestershire for the first time, meaning that in 2025 we organised six Lord-Lieutenants' Awards ceremonies, recognising 26 remarkable Volunteers and Reservists and celebrating 21 outstanding Lord-Lieutenant Cadets, before a combined audience of 700 people.

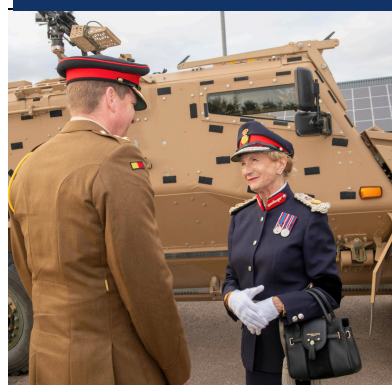
Turning to our communications output, last year we improved one of our key digital platforms by launching a brand-new website. Continuing to innovate, we closely tracked trends and invested further in video output. Our social media performance has continued to deliver impressive views in the millions. These bolstered platforms allow us to better champion Defence and promote opportunities to join both the Reserve and Cadet Forces, delivering dividends for both in our region.

As we move ahead, we will continuously improve our approach and engagement platforms to ensure we are best positioned to support, enable and champion Defence.

IN PICTURES

In the last year, we captured many memorable moments on camera. Here is a selection of our favourites.







The Princess Royal speaks with Corporal Kahari, of Northampton International Academy CCF.

CADETS & YOUTH REPORT

Our team provides vital backroom support that enables volunteers to change the lives of young people.

The youth of today and tomorrow will have more chances to join the Ministry of Defence-sponsored Cadet Forces under a major expansion announced last year as part of the Government's Strategic Defence Review.

We are an essential, effective and enduring partner to the Cadet Forces. We champion, support and enable 12,000 Cadets and 2,500 Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAVs) across a network of 200 Cadet locations within our region, and directly ensure the Army Cadet Force (ACF) and RAF Air Cadets (RAFAC) have safe places and equipment for their training. In addition to raising awareness and understanding, we ensure that young people joining the

Cadets have access to the very best training, facilities, and staff. Working closely with the Ministry of Defence, we deliver national policy at a local level and ensure our regional teams meet the high standards expected of the Cadet Forces

Nationally, the goal is to expand the Cadet Forces – including the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), the Sea Cadet Corps, the ACF, and the RAFAC – by 30% by 2030, with a longer-term ambition to reach 250,000. That's more young people benefiting from the leadership, resilience, and discipline of the Cadet Forces, and, crucially, more lives changed. Discussions with partners are ongoing as to the exact approach to tackle the

'30 by 30' ambition. For Cadet Forces to attract and retain more young people, recruiting more CFAVs and developing suitable training facilities, such as our recently opened award-winning Training Centre at Beckingham, are paramount. We stand by, ready to support.

Permanent Support Staff

Behind the scenes of all this, a dedicated group known as the Permanent Support Staff (PSS) provide critical logistic, administrative, and clerical support to the ACF. From sourcing and transporting training equipment to processing recruits, arranging uniforms, and monitoring and managing sites, our tight-knit group of 44 staff members provides key services to the CFAVs, allowing them to focus on delivery.

One of the highlights of the year is always the Annual Camp. Despite resource pressures and limited availability of training camps, all of our local Cadet Forces delivered incredible, memory-making experiences. Focusing on the ACF, our PSS enabled 1,338 to enjoy life-changing adventures at summer camps held at Otterburn Training Area in Northumberland.

Another key enabling role undertaken for the Cadet Forces is played by our full-time Schools Cadet Engagement Officer (SCEO). We are fortunate in the East Midlands to have an officer who can draw on extensive experience from both regular



Nottinghamshire Army Cadet Force on camp at Otterburn.

RAF Service and the Cadet Forces. Combined with practical knowledge of how to run CCFs in school environments, the SCEO helps our network of 58 sections thrive.

Our Nation's best-kept secret

We play a vital role in connecting Defence with society and organise events that showcase what this country's "best-kept secret" has to offer employers and the wider public.

The Conversation with Cadets employability fairs, which have run over recent years, continue to go from strength to strength. In Nottinghamshire, the ACF's Senior Cadets showcased their skills to employers including Bosch, Gleeds, Sandiccliffe, and Tesla. The event also provides a platform for employers to pitch to future skilled workers. Now in its 10th year, this hugely successful annual showcase has become an unrivalled stage for demonstrating how our people add value.

"The Princess Royal personally commended the Cadet Forces' achievements and praised the organisers, employers, volunteers, and Cadets..."

In Northamptonshire, their Conversation with Cadets event was held at Clare Street Army Reserve Centre, organised by our association members. They were fortunate enough to enjoy a visit from Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal, who spent time talking with soon-to-be job-seeking youngsters from the Cadet Forces, as well as Forces-friendly employers from across the area.

After hearing Cadets share their often life-changing experiences and how they have developed confidence, resilience and leadership skills from being Cadets, The Princess Royal personally commended the Cadet Forces'

achievements and praised the organisers, employers, volunteers, and Cadets alike for coming together to deliver such a unique showcase.

Taking advantage of our close working relationships across all the Cadet Forces, we were delighted to once more organise a Tri-Service drill competition for Cadet Forces across Nottinghamshire. A fiercely fought and professionally delivered competition saw well-earned congratulations going to South & East Midlands Wing RAFAC for being named Best Overall Squad. Looking forward, and after last year's interval, plans are developing with our strong employer network to organise a revised STEM initiative for Cadets.

Whether it is through the provision of vital services, bringing Cadets together to create new and exciting opportunities, or by advocating for them across the civic arena, we continue to actively support, enable and champion all our region's Cadet Forces.



Cadet Lance Corporal Hull was praised for helping to save her mum's life.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

FUNDING

Regional command (RC) - RFCA grant-in-aid	£2,910,570
RC - Vehicles	£27,243
Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) - Soft facilities management (FM)	£1,297,796
DIO - Hard FM	£74,373
DIO - Projects - revenue development (RDEL)	£254,597
DIO - Projects - capital development (CDEL)	£5,622,456
RFC - Defence Relationship Management	£181,447
Funding sundry	£54,436
RAF Air Cadets input	£119,361
Regionally generated income	£424,114
Army Infra - RDEL	£14,477

EXPENDITURE

RC - RFCA grant-in-aid	£2,910,570
RC - Vehicles	£26,436
DIO - Soft FM	£1,297,796
DIO - Hard FM	£74,373
DIO - Projects RDEL	£251,952
DIO - Projects CDEL	£4,694,891
RFC - Defence Relationship Management	£182,362
Funding sundry	£50,665
RAF Air Cadets input	£108,462
Regionally generated income	£702,935
Army Infra - RDEL	£11,888

For 2025–26, our financial position continued to reflect the wider economic pressures facing both the public and private sectors, alongside ongoing changes in how services are delivered across the Volunteer Estate. Despite these challenges, we remained focused on maximising value, maintaining operational effectiveness, and investing in opportunities that deliver long-term benefit for our people, infrastructure, Reserves and Cadets.

The continued transition of hard facilities management responsibilities to VIVO Defence Services has now become embedded across the region. As a result, our role has evolved further towards strategic oversight, assurance, and performance management,

ensuring that maintenance standards are upheld, statutory responsibilities are met, and public funds are used effectively and efficiently.

At the same time, the economic environment remained challenging throughout 2025–26. Persistent inflationary pressures, higher contractor and material prices, and continued increases in employment costs—including the National Living Wage and associated staffing costs—have affected affordability across the organisation. Like all organisations operating in the public sector, we are required to carefully prioritise expenditure, strengthen financial controls, and identify efficiencies wherever possible to maintain service delivery standards. This meant

balancing immediate operational requirements with the need to protect long-term investment in the estate and support opportunities for Cadets and Reserves.

Regionally generated income continued to play an important role in supporting local priorities. Revenue generated from estate utilisation, facility hire, and rebates was reinvested directly to improve the Volunteer Estate, helping fund essential maintenance, modernisation projects, and enhancements to the training environment for both Cadets and Reservists.

The financial decisions taken during 2025–26 reflect a continued commitment to resilience, sustainability, and long-term value.