

PRESS RELEASE – August 20, 2018

**Commitment to supporting armed forces earns South Tyneside
NHS Foundation Trust Silver Award**



South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust is now the proud holder of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award.

The Trust's latest achievement demonstrating its commitment to the nation's armed forces comes after a whirlwind year in which it signed the Government's Armed Forces Covenant in March and then gained the Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award.

The swift progress was made possible due to South Tyneside's links with its partner in the South Tyneside and Sunderland Healthcare Group, City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust. City Hospitals signed the Covenant early in 2017 and, later that year, was among 33 UK employers to be presented by Prince Harry with the Gold award – the Ministry of Defence's prestigious badge of honour for organisations which have demonstrated outstanding support for the armed forces community.

Kath Griffin, Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development for both Trusts, said: "The Silver Award is fantastic news for South Tyneside. Fortunately, we were able to move quickly from Bronze to Silver by drawing on the learning, and sharing policies and practices, resulting from the work at Sunderland. Now, our ambition is to go for Gold."

Reservists and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers at South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust receive an additional 10 days' paid leave for annual camps and training. There is a dedicated HR Policy to support mobilisation and the Trust has strong links with the Careers Transition Partnership (CTP) and the Step into Health programme. The CTP provides resettlement support, career transition advice and training opportunities for those leaving the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. The Step into Health Programme was created because the NHS recognises transferable skills and cultural values that Armed Forces personnel develop when serving, and how these are compatible with those required in NHS roles.

Kath Griffin added: "It is important to us as an employer that we support defence and the armed forces community and inspire others to do the same. Being a forces-friendly employer enables us to benefit from the wide range of skills and experiences of reservists and veterans, coupled with the self-confidence, resourcefulness and positive attitude they gain through service in the forces."

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust wheelchair services administrator and staff governor Jamie Hughes served for eight years with the RAF and was a corporal in air traffic control. He now volunteers with the RAF Air Cadets at 324 (South Shields) Squadron as a Pilot Officer.

Earlier this year Mr Hughes was invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace where he represented the RAF Air Cadets North region and met the Duke of Cambridge. He said: "I'm thrilled that South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust has been awarded the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award. It shows that the Trust is supportive of staff in the reserve and cadet forces who, like our colleagues in the armed forces, do a fantastic job.

"It has been proven that staff who are reservists come back from duty, training or deployments with renewed vigour and different and positive ideas of working that benefit them and, also, their employer. I have been with the Trust for 10 years and I've found that the skills I learned in the RAF are transferable. I would encourage anyone looking to become a reservist to take up the challenge – they won't regret it."

South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust will join other new recipients of the Silver Award for a presentation ceremony at a Military Dinner night in Newcastle on November 1st which will be attended by The Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP, Minister for Defence People and Veterans, and Major General Ranald Munro, CBE, TD, VR, Assistant Chief of Defence Staff.

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Photo caption: South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust wheelchair services administrator and staff governor Jamie Hughes, who volunteers as a Pilot Officer with the RAF Air Cadets at 324 (South Shields) Squadron, pictured at Buckingham Palace

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