



**ANDY STEPHENSON**  
**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY CHAIRMAN**



**County Chairman’s Speech to Hertfordshire County Conference 2024**

**The Way Ahead in 2024**

As you know I am new in the role of County Chair; however I am not here to simply maintain the status quo, indeed our county demands much more than that - it demands immediate and positive action as currently we are not in the position that we were 20 years ago and we should recover our place within our peer group of Counties and if like me, you believe that we can, then collectively we will.

For some time now, I have perceived a disconnect between our branches and the County Committee, that is something I personally wish to draw a line under with immediate effect.

The County Committee is not some hierarchical body sitting above you. It is made up of unpaid volunteers drawn from branches, just like yours, who join the County as additional voluntary work, to add value and make a difference to the operational effectiveness of Hertfordshire. We exist to serve you; not the other way around. To understand your problems and to share the best practice, that you experience.

How we make that effective for you is our problem but I have some ideas which I will now share but I also have thoughts about how all of us need to move forward together as one unit, as we begin to collectively improve.

When I was in military service and began to get involved in delivering training, I was taught the phonemic, as we all were, of the 6 x P’s. Now, I present to you a new one and one for the future of Hertfordshire County during 2024 and beyond, the new 3 P’s:

- **PEOPLE;**
- **POSITIVITY;**
- **PROGRESS.**

What do I mean by that? Well, it has two slightly different meanings, depending upon whether you are on the County Committee or whether you serve upon your Branch Committee, so please permit me to introduce both concepts:

**People:**

**To the County Committee:** It is all about our Branches, how you are doing, what is working and what is not, what is successful and what obstacles are you facing, how can your County Committee help you? It is not about you coming to the County, it is about the County coming to you! What will that look like? Directly after this meeting I will begin to contact every Branch Chairman to open a discussion with each of you, about your own obstacles and opportunities within your branch as I believe it is always better to speak on a 1-2-1 basis over the phone rather than using email for future and regular conversations that will move our relationship forward.

**Positivity:**

This applies to all of us in equal share.

If we remain constantly positive in everything that we do, we cannot fail to foster greater human interaction and openness that brings more people together, instead of pushing them apart.



Remaining positive needs to be an ongoing concept for Hertfordshire Legion members in order that we move steadily forward and make continuous progress towards our progressive future.

**Progress:**

You may not, as yet, feel any positive outcomes from 2023, but we have already begun to succeed. However there is a lot more to do which as County Chairman I accept requires my own strong leadership but I'll highlight the following good news:

- **The Good News:**

**Hertfordshire Branches:**

We currently have 35.

**Hertfordshire Membership:**

**2024:** Today 3,770 **2023:** Was 3,741  
Cynics would say that's an increase of only 28, but this is in a Legion world that is a shrinking membership, in general.

**Hertfordshire Compliance:**

Our Compliance rating for 2022 was **51%**, and for 2023 was **80.5%**. However, my target still remains 100% and we have a plan to achieve just this over the next 3 years.

This huge increase in the turnaround was desperately required but didn't happen by luck; it was generated by firstly the Branch Accounts submissions being increased by a massive effort led by our County Treasurer Pat Jefferies and MEO Clare Pillinger.

Clare then added greater value to the process by pressing branches for their timely submission of their MS1's, again against deadline to complete the picture.

Thank you both.

**Hertfordshire Heroes:**

As chairman, I automatically become a Board Member of Hertfordshire Heroes - the Armed Forces Covenant Group, for our County. This group is sub-divided into 3 sub-groups looking at the promotion of Health, Housing & Education for our wider Armed Forces Family. Today our second guest speaker is Mr Harper Brown, the Chair of the busy Health Sub Group so I have no intention of stealing his achievements now which are many and which I am sure you will be impressed with.

Having become a Board member, I have been made aware that there is a current vacancy for a new Chair for the Housing Sub Group for which I have volunteered my services. If selected, my focus will be upon our veterans who are rough sleeping on the streets or sofa surfing.

**Our Local Service Personal:**

We are not a garrison county but within Hertfordshire we are a home to:

**Northwood HQ**, who accommodate:

- a) HQ UK Strategic Command;
- b) Royal Navy Maritime Operations Centre;
- c) The Permanent Joint HQ;
- d) The UK Standing Joint Force HQ;
- e) NATO's Maritime Command;
- f) HMS Wildfire RN Reserve.

**Army Reserve Centre, Hitchin;**  
Home to:

- a) 162 Medical Squadron,
- b) 254 Medical Regt RAMC.



In addition to the Northwood regular staff, we have a Reservist Strength in our County of 30,560 men & women so in total there are a good deal of currently serving personnel all of whom are also potential beneficiaries of our welfare support services now and in the future.

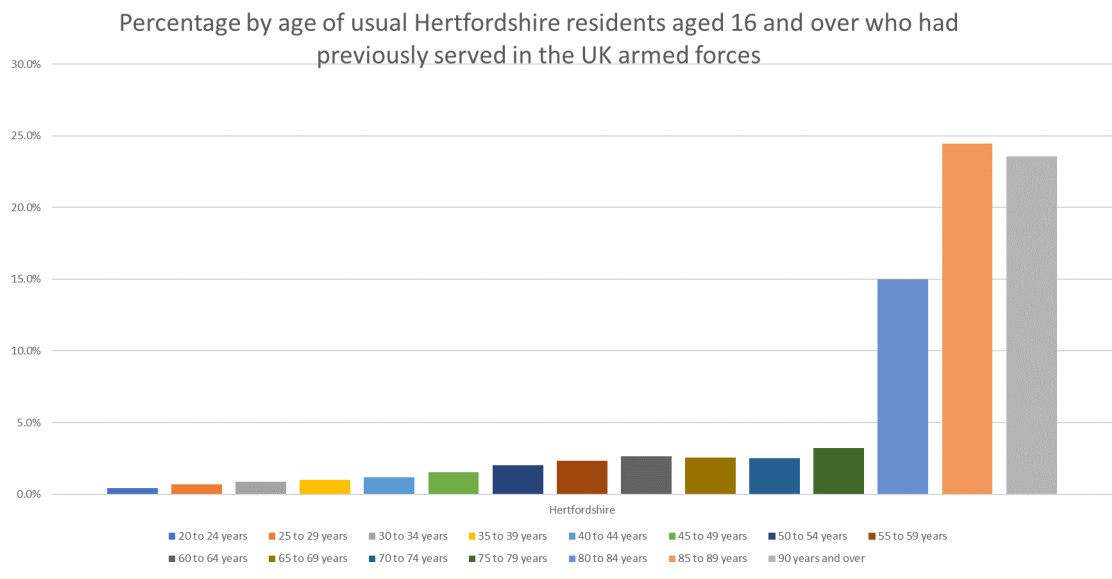
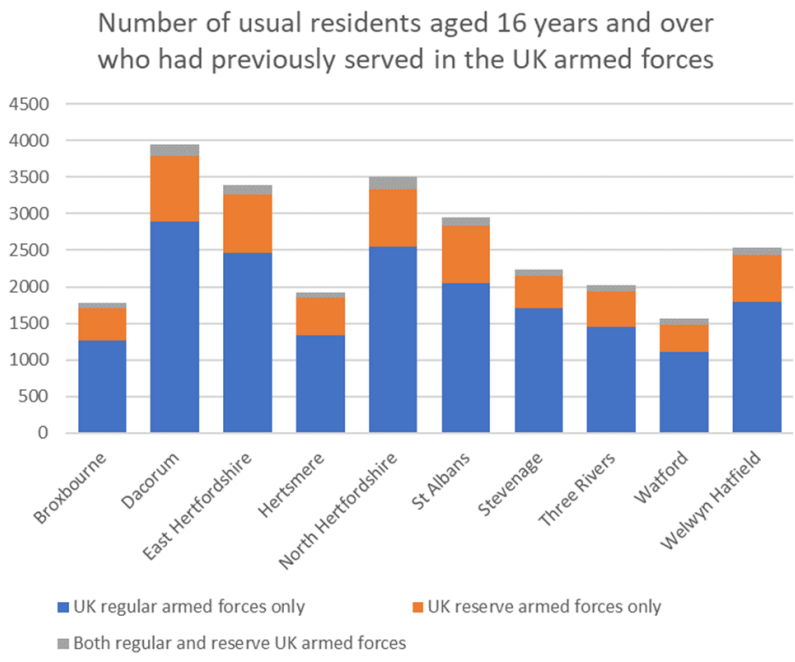
**Our Census:** The Legion’s policy “Count them In” led to the most recent Census adding the question about

“Have you served in HM Armed Services?”

With this new knowledge we can draw from that data to better target our Legion services as a result.

**Census Results for Hertfordshire:**

We have **25,849** service and former service personnel residents in Hertfordshire, the charts below show where they reside and their ages.





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**Welfare Assistance in Hertfordshire:**

During the first half of 2023 our Welfare Case Officers directly helped veterans in the following areas:

TOWN	TYPE OF ASSISTANCE
St. Albans	Brown Goods
Hemel, Letchworth	Crisis Grant
Hitchin, Ware, Waltham Cross	Energy Bills
Watford, Ware, Harpenden	Medical Help
Stevenage, Bushey	White Goods
Watford	Motability

**This amounted to a total expenditure granted in the first 6 months was**  
**£25,668.00**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>The Challenges Ahead:</b></li> </ul> <p><b>County Supported Branches:</b></p> <p>We currently have 6 County Supported Branches which need the closest support and attention from the County Committee; but we need good people within those branches to step up and work with us to achieve the best possible outcomes.</p> <p>We also have a few branches showing the green shoots of recovery and they too need the support and encouragement of the County to make sure they flourish into a fully operational status once again.</p> <p><b>Office 365:</b></p> <p>At last year’s National Conference, a Motion was presented and passed about GDPR and focused upon Branch Chairs using the Office 365 email addresses.</p>	<p>This has now been formally adopted and will become a reality by March 2024.</p> <p>I have been using this system for some years now and in fact once you are set up on it you can access far more than simple emails and apart from the fact that Chairs of Branches are now mandated to use the system, you will find the rest of Office 365 very useful indeed to access all sorts of RBL information. You need to email Clare our MEO [<a href="mailto:cpillinger@britishlegion.org.uk">cpillinger@britishlegion.org.uk</a>], to request this O365 email address if you currently do not have one.</p> <p><b>My Tenure:</b></p> <p>My tenure as County Chair is a co-opted appointment due to the nature of the immediate past Chairman’s premature departure. This means that I can only serve until January 2025 and during 2024 therefore we must hold an</p>
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<p>I fully intend to stand in that election as I already have a three-year plan of action to return Hertfordshire to her former glory within my own mind but this takes time. However, I am more than happy to commence this work now and see how the election develops from July.</p> <p>Meanwhile, it remains both a pleasure and a privilege to serve Hertfordshire Royal British Legion today, ever mindful of our motto <i>Service not Self</i>. I believe that Haig House perceives Hertfordshire County to be currently in the lower quartile of the family of Counties; my intention is that within 3 years we shall be recognised as being in the top quartile. Hertfordshire is fighting back!</p> <p><b>Above all and despite everything else I have just informed you about, the single most important matter to me is the creation of a real cohesion between your Branch and the County Committee during 2024.</b></p> <p><b>Before closing let me remind us all</b></p>	<p>a) to relieve need, suffering and distress of Beneficiaries and their Dependants and to further the education of Beneficiaries and their Dependants;</p> <p>(b) to relieve need and protect the mental and emotional health of the Dependants of Beneficiaries who have died or been severely injured;</p> <p>(c) to relieve suffering, hardship and distress to Dependants caused by the absence of those serving in the Armed Forces;</p> <p>(d) to promote and support schemes for the resettlement, rehabilitation, retraining and sheltered employment of Beneficiaries and their Dependants; and (e) to promote the commemoration for the public benefit of those who have died whilst serving in the Armed Forces.</p> <p><b>These are not my words but the words of our Objects within our Royal Charter which have remained unchanged since 1921, let us redouble our efforts to honour our objectives in everything we do!</b></p>
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*Service Not Self*

