

Staff Wellbeing Microgrants

What is a Microgrant?

NHS Lothian Charity supports Staff Wellbeing Microgrants which are managed and distributed by NHS Lothian's Work Well team. Grants of up to £500 are available to fund activities that support the health and wellbeing of staff. This case study is one example of how a Microgrant was used.



From 2022 - 2024
33 Microgrants have
been awarded
totalling £15,993

Travel Mugs for Armed Forces NAAFI Break

David, a veteran and current NHS Lothian staff member, recently founded an Armed Forces and Veterans Network to foster camaraderie and mutual support among NHS Lothian staff who are veterans, reservists, regular personnel, and military family members. The number of staff signed up to the network is 31 with current membership spanning diverse professional NHS Lothian groups, including porters, consultants, nurses, administrative staff, medical physics, catering, medical records, and senior management.

The initiative aligns with obligations under the Armed Forces Covenant, and the network primarily connects through monthly NAAFI breaks (traditional tea breaks for armed forced personnel). These meetings are well-established at St John's Hospital Canteen, with up to 15 attendees, and are in the early stages at the Western General Hospital. The meetings offer peer support and information on available resources, often featuring guest speakers from a range of charities and organisations.

A staff survey identified group support and branded travel mugs as aligning with military lifestyle. Lacking a budget, David consulted Sheila Hedley, Work Well Facilitator at St John's Hospital, who recommended applying for a Microgrant. Rebecca Caulfield, Evaluation Manager for NHS Lothian Charity, attended a NAAFI break meeting at St John's to discuss the impact of the mugs with staff.



Network members



Travel mugs funded by the Microgrant



NAAFI break at the Canteen, St. Johns' Hospital

Impact of the mugs on staff

Staff feel valued

The mugs represent NHS Lothian's recognition of staff members' service and connection to the armed forces, in addition to their contributions as employees. As one staff member who is a network member explained: "It's only us that gets the mugs, and it shows that we are appreciated by the NHS."

Increased identification of current or former armed forces personnel staff

While some current or former armed forces personnel working for NHS Lothian may not readily disclose their military background, the mugs have become a catalyst for identification and increased access to support. A network member who works in Estates shared: "As it is a travel mug I take it out on site with me, one of the drivers instantly recognised the Tri-colour and logo of the mug as he is a veteran so we got chatting. He doesn't have a NAAFI break meeting at his hospital but he would be keen to attend if it started up there."

Iona's experience – how the mugs have helped me at work

Iona, who works in the Accident and Emergency Department, explained: "I came to the NAAFI break meeting today even though it's my day off because I value being part of something...it's a community. My job is quite stressful, so when I see a fellow network member with their mug around the hospital, we instantly connect. We share a laugh and some banter—we all tend to have a similar sense of humour and use the same language—which is a great relief. I return to the department feeling less stressed and ultimately able to provide better care to patients."



Iona at St. John's NAAFI meeting (with her mug!)

Once a network member has the mug, they are more likely to return, they see it as a symbol of belonging. I estimate the mugs have contributed to boosting attendance at the St. John's NAAFI break by 50%. This is just the start of the project, with the success of the mugs, we hope to expand this initiative to all acute sites and across NHS Lothian."

David, Armed Forces and Veterans Network Lead

Report compiled by Rebecca Caulfield, Evaluation Manager, NHS Lothian Charity

Click the link below to find out more about [NHS Lothian Armed Forces and Veterans Network](#).

Click the link below to find out about [Microgrants or other funding available from NHS Lothian Charity](#).