

# [News story: Northumberland Armed Forces Forum](#)

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This well attended event drew over 30 representatives from across the region and reflected the interest in supporting the armed forces community in the region.

The issues of alcohol and veterans was covered by a presentation by Dr Sarah Wigham, Newcastle University, on research funded by Forces in Mind Trust. Her work dealt with evidence based interventions to tackle alcohol abuse in the veteran community. This multinational project drew heavily upon research from around the world and explored how this work can be adapted to meet the needs of veterans.

The forum discussed the complex issues relating to alcohol problems and veterans and the how the Mess/NAFI culture has evolved and the effect of cheap alcohol on serving personnel.

The forum was the opportunity of the incoming Royal British Legion, Advice and Information Officer, Ms Louise Liddell to introduce herself to the community and to brief the community on the Legion's work in the Northumberland region.

The wider veteran support environment was explored, specifically there was an exploration of the Northumberland Outreach Worker Project by its representative Mr Jonny Harrison. Even though he had only been in post 10 weeks he was already working 25 cases, of which 70% involved mental health issues and described their project as being so busy they have had to advertise for another member of staff to help deliver services.

The new [Albermarle Barracks Military Wives Choir](#), formed a year ago and has had a very successful appearance at Hexham Abbey and St Nicholas Cathedral. This Choir was formed with the express purpose of creating a supportive community rather than an award-winning choir and is made up of for wives, fiancées, and co-habiting partners, who might otherwise feel isolated.

The choir is also open to women serving in the armed services and female veterans, plus and wives, daughters of veterans. It is not restricted to Albermarle and is open to all who qualify across the region. It is now one of more than 200 military wives choirs across the UK. The Albermarle choir was set up because the nearest ones were in Catterick and Edinburgh.

The forum was a very useful meeting that allowed the VAPC to meet with other service providers and is an important part of the board's engagement strategy.

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## [News story: £170m competition launched for new Institutes of Technology](#)

Employers, education and training providers can now apply for a share of £170m to establish prestigious new Institutes of Technology (IoTs), which will specialise in delivering the higher level technical skills that employers need.

Today (15 December) the Department for Education has opened the application window for employers, Higher Education and Further Education providers to apply for multimillion-pound capital funding, as outlined by the Education Secretary at last month's [Skills Summit](#).

IoTs will see businesses and education and training providers working together to deliver provision to learners that is highly sought after by employers, in technical disciplines, particularly STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths).

Education Secretary Justine Greening said:

Institutes of technology will play a vital role driving our skills revolution with business and unlocking the potential of our country's young people through better technical education. By bridging the country's skills gaps, these new institutions will drive growth and widen opportunity.

This Government continues to invest in developing our homegrown talent so British business has the skills it needs and so that young people can get the opportunities they want.

These new institutions will help tackle the skills gap at a local, regional and national level and extend opportunity to thousands of people.

IoTs are just one of the skills reforms outlined by the Secretary of State on the 30 November at the Department for Education's [Skills Summit](#) which brought together education experts and some of the country's top employers to forge a new alliance to deliver a skills revolution.

Today we can confirm our aim to achieve a network of IoTs across the country. We expect the first IoTs will be open in 2019.

To apply register [here](#)

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## **Press release: North London rapist to spend longer in prison**

On 20 February 2012, Michael Adjei, 24, who was 19 at the time, attacked the 18 year old victim in the early hours of the morning when she was walking alone to her friend's house after a night out. The victim was approaching the front door when Adjei jumped on her from behind causing her to fall sideways between 2 parked cars and hit her face.

Adjei then kneeled on top of the victim and forced her to perform oral sex on him after which he made several attempts to forcibly remove her leggings to rape her again. The victim resisted and the offender eventually ran off with the victim's handbag after noticing a pedestrian was approaching.

Adjei also slammed the victims head on the ground, pulled at her arms and legs and grabbed her by the throat. The victim had swelling to her face, scratches to her neck, chest and knees and injuries to her breasts and buttocks as a result of the incident. The attack was witnessed by 2 residents who looked out of their bedroom windows when they heard the victim's shouting.

Adjei was convicted of rape and theft at Wood Green Crown Court in October this year. He was originally sentenced to 5 years in prison. The Court of Appeal has today increased his sentence to 7 years.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General, who referred the original sentence to the Court of Appeal as unduly lenient said:

"This was a violent attack that left both physical and emotional trauma, and crimes of this nature must be suitably sentenced.

"I am pleased the Court has seen fit to increase this sentence – the increased sentence better reflects the seriousness of this offending and the lasting impact it has had on the victim."

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## **News story: The second International Fintech Conference confirmed for March 2018**

Following the success of the first conference in 2017, the second annual

International Fintech Conference has today (15 December 2017) been confirmed for 22 March 2018 in London.

Over 100 Fintech firms and over 400 investors attended the first conference in 2017, which resulted in over £5 million worth of investment into the UK Fintech sector.

Previous speakers include the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Governor of the Bank of England.

The Conference will bring together international investors and UK Fintech firms alongside leading industry figures, regulators and policymakers for a day-long programme of talks and pitches promoting the opportunities for global investment in the UK Fintech sector.

The UK Fintech sector contributes £6.6 billion annually to the UK economy, and employs over 60,000 people across 1,600 companies. In the first three quarters of this year the sector received a record £2.1 billion investment.

The Conference will be a highlight event as part of UK Fintech Week 2018, which will take place from 19-23 March. There will be a variety of events taking place up and down the country in recognition of the Fintech sector, beginning with [Innovate Finance's Global Summit](#) in the historic Guildhall on 19th-20th March.

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## [News story: Centenary Cities: 100 years of votes for women](#)

Seven areas across England will benefit from a share of £1.2 million to fund projects in 2018 to mark 100 years since women were first allowed to vote, Minister for Women and Equalities Anne Milton has confirmed today (15 December).

To mark this milestone the government's 'Centenary Cities' – Bolton, Bristol, Leeds, Leicester, London, Manchester and Nottingham – will all host a range of exciting projects to celebrate as well as remember those individuals who helped to make this happen.

Every area was chosen for its strong link to the women's suffrage movement, from Manchester's proud history as the home of the Pankhurst's suffragette campaign to lesser known local heroes like Leicester's shoe factory worker Alice Hawkins who was jailed five times in the fight for women's votes.

The 'Centenary Cities' programme forms part of the government's wider plans to promote this pivotal moment in history, including the addition of the first female statue in Parliament Square – Millicent Fawcett – due to be

unveiled in 2018.

The initiatives and commemorations that will take place across the country next year also aim to help inspire and educate young people about UK democracy and its importance, as well as encourage more women to get into political and public life.

Minister for Women and Equalities Anne Milton said:

Less than 100 years ago, women could not vote and could not stand as candidates for Parliament. By remembering and celebrating those individuals who fought to get the right to vote we are continuing to push for all our political institutions to reflect women's representation in society.

I want to congratulate all seven of our 'Centenary Cities' that have been recognised for their proud connection to the suffrage movement and look forward to hearing more about the projects they are planning next year.