

## **Staffordshire Health and Wellbeing Board – 01 December 2022**

### **Delivering the Armed Forces Covenant in Staffordshire**

#### **Recommendations**

The Board is asked to:

- a. Note that: 'Provision of and access to Health' is a key priority within the Staffordshire Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan, and note the emerging Armed Forces Act (2021) focus on 'healthcare';
- b. Consider and endorse the suggested focus across partners, particularly around health and public health, including to:
  - i. Increase the number of 'veteran-friendly GP practices,' and the number of 'veteran-aware hospitals'
  - ii. Ensure our Armed Forces community are considered through future Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (helping to inform health and social care commissioning and wider decision making)
- c. Consider and reflect on any emerging joint opportunities to highlight, or further good practice to consider (i.e., practical initiatives to build on, expand, or accelerate);
- d. Support and inform the approach to raise awareness of the covenant (including to maximise promotion through County events and collaboration across partners) - advocating for our Armed Forces community

#### **Background**

##### **National policy context and Staffordshire's current position**

1. Staffordshire is home to MOD Stafford and the Defence Medical Service in Whittington, as well as a number of ex-service personnel / families.
2. In operation since 2011 the Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation ensuring those who serve or who have served in the armed forces and their families are treated fairly. Every Local Authority has signed a 'local Covenant.' This focusses on helping all members of the Armed Forces community have the same access to government and commercial services as any other citizen does, by:
  - a. Recognising the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces

- b. That it is desirable to remove disadvantages faced by the Armed Forces community
  - c. That special provision for some members of the Armed Forces community may be justified
3. Support is provided in a number of areas, including healthcare, education and starting a new career.
  4. The Armed Forces Covenant Fund is a fund administered by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust supporting national and local Covenant delivery.
  5. The Armed Forces Act 2021 became law in December 2021. This renews the Armed Forces Act 2006 (see Appendix 1 for further detail).
  6. Staffordshire County Council, along with military leaders, District/Borough councils, NHS, Police, Fire and VCSE representatives formally signed its first Covenant in May 2012. A Partnership Working Group was established, and an action plan drawn up. In 2015, as additional Signal Regiments were welcomed from Germany, Staffordshire County Council along with health partners were commended for the resettlement process, and the County Council along with partners reaffirmed commitment by re-signing the Covenant.
  7. The refreshed 'Staffordshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Group' was brought together in July 2022. Chaired by Assistant Director for Communications, Staffordshire County Council, this Group has shaped the 'Partnership Action Plan' (see Appendix 1 for further detail), and will also be responsible for driving delivery, and an annual review.

### **Objectives for the Staffordshire Armed Forces Covenant**

8. In summary the (2022-23) Armed Forces Covenant objectives are:
  - a. To re-establish the Staffordshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Group (Chaired by Assistant Director for Communications, Staffordshire County Council), and develop a strengthened and refreshed approach to delivery and coordination.
  - b. To build on practical action and support for Armed Forces community – developing this further with partners and to cut across and inform the below priority areas.
  - c. Focus on four key partnership priority areas (see Appendix 1 for further detail):
    - i. Insight / Data, and Information, Advice and Guidance
    - ii. Provision of and Access to Health
    - iii. Armed Forces Legislation

iv. Promotion and Awareness of the Covenant / Advocacy

9. The Board's further feedback on the recommendations above, and consideration of this all, will further inform opportunities and delivery across the Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Action Plan.

### **List of Background Documents/Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Delivering the Armed Forces Covenant in Staffordshire

### **Contact Details**

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