

# Delivering the Armed Forces Covenant in Staffordshire

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# What is the Armed Forces Covenant?

- Promise by the nation ensuring those who serve / have served and their families, are treated fairly
- 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:
  - Recognising the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces
  - That it is desirable to remove disadvantages faced by the Armed Forces community
  - That special provision for some members of the Armed Forces community may be justified
- Support is provided in a number of areas, including: healthcare, education and starting a new career
- The Armed Forces Act 2021 will further incorporate the Covenant into law (expected to come into force later this year)

# The Armed Forces Covenant in Staffordshire

- The Staffordshire Armed Forces Covenant was first signed in 2012
- Staffordshire is home to MOD Stafford and the Defence Medical Service in Whittington
- 1,000+ military personnel and their families moved to Stafford from Germany – Staffordshire County Council along with health partners were commended for the resettlement process in 2015
- The Staffordshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership brings together key partners and the armed forces to work with, help and support current and former service personnel and their families in the local area
- The partnership ensures the principles of the Covenant are upheld locally through priorities based upon local and national insight with a clear focus on practically supporting the Armed Forces community through delivery of a Partnership Action Plan

# The Armed Forces Act 2021

- Act received Royal Assent in December 2021 / new duty comes into force in late 2022 (Renews Armed Forces Act 2006 - this time further incorporates Armed Forces Covenant into law)
- Aims to increase awareness among public service authorities of the Armed Forces Covenant and the unique obligations and circumstances of Armed Forces community – ultimately to improve public service delivery
- Public authorities will be *expected* to consciously consider the Covenant when developing, delivering and reviewing policies and decisions which may impact the Armed Forces Community
- Key areas of focus for new duty – healthcare, housing, and education
- Staffordshire County Council have helped influence and shape national guidance, working with the West Midlands Armed Forces Covenant Network
- Work also underway to understand and prepare for implications - It will be important to ensure consideration of this more broadly across wider partners

# Staffordshire Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) Action Plan - 2022 / 23

- Builds on the success of Armed Forces Covenant delivery in Staffordshire to date
- Recognising, supporting and integrating Armed Forces community as an integral part of Staffordshire society is essential - and underpins this all. Working closely across the partnership there is significant opportunity to:
  1. Support our Armed Forces community to explain what they do and why on behalf of the Country; and
  2. Enable former service personnel to enjoy full and rewarding careers and lives with their families after their service

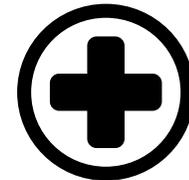
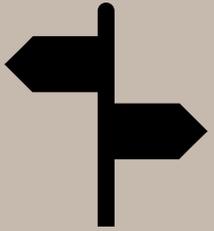
# Staffordshire Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) Action Plan: 2022 / 23

**Building on the success of delivery to date,  
this sets out how we will ensure the  
principles of the Covenant are upheld locally  
through priorities based upon local and  
national insight**



## **INSIGHT / DATA AND INFORMATION, ADVICE & GUIDANCE**

Understanding key issues / needs and working across partners to ensure support is easily accessible



## **PROVISION OF & ACCESS TO HEALTH**

Working across partners to ensure appropriate care and treatment is available, accessible taking account of the specific Armed Forces community needs

## **ARMED FORCES ACT 2021**

Ensuring the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant are fully considered and informing decision making



## **PROMOTION & AWARENESS OF THE COVENANT / ADVOCACY**

Raising awareness / increasing support of organisations, businesses and individuals for the important mutual support between our civilian and Armed Force communities

# Insight / Data, and Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

- Gain a greater and more granular insight of Staffordshire local Armed Forces community, including:
  - Veterans Gateway data
  - Armed Forces Census 2021 data
  - Any other available Armed Forces community insights
- Identify key national and local organisations who support the Armed Forces community to inform IAG approach
- Review and update Staffordshire Armed Forces Covenant webpages
- Review and Improve signposting for Armed Forces community (for example through Staffordshire Connects)
- Explore opportunities to build on Enhanced Two-Tier working and explore a consistent 'Staffordshire Offer' for our Armed Forces community

# Provision of and Access to Health

- Explore and identify opportunities with health partners, to ensure the right care and treatment is available to the Armed Forces community, and take account of specific needs (as part of the developing Integrated Care System). For example through:
  - increasing the number of veteran-friendly GP practices
  - increasing the number of veteran-aware hospitals
  - encouraging veterans to register with their GP /identify themselves as a veteran
  - exploring how to further encourage GPs use of the 'veteran status' read code
- Ensure our Armed Forces community are considered/ engaged through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, helping to inform health and social care commissioning / wider decision making
- Explore further ways to promote health and well-being information, support and services to the Armed Forces community (for example through Staffordshire Connects and online directory/ Community Helplines etc)

# Armed Forces Legislation

- Promote/communicate MOD Armed Forces Act 2021 guidance/online resources across networks
- Work across public sector partners to ensure relevant decision making considers key policy areas. To include:
  - Healthcare: engage with health partners to ensure implications/best practice is considered alongside developing Integrated Care System / healthcare provision
  - Housing: consider implications/best practice alongside exploring a consistent Staffordshire offer around housing policy/support
  - Education: consider implications/best practice, alongside Staffordshire's Education and Skills Strategy and MOD Local Authority Partnership (SEND transition)
- Review wider decision-making practices to enable consideration of the Act/Armed Forces community, for example, through relevant Impact Assessments

# Promotion and Awareness of the Covenant / Advocacy

- Promote 'Armed Forces Covenant Fund' programmes to organisations and support eligible bids that can aid local delivery of the Covenant
- Promote and expand recruitment / employment opportunities, recognising the transferable skills and experience of ex-service personnel
- Support the Army Cadets' young persons' scheme, including:
  - Staffordshire County Council support to build a network of partners that can identify children who may benefit from joining
  - Promote Army Cadets to Children and Young People services staff , to identify children who may be more vulnerable and would benefit from Army Cadets support / engagement
- Celebrate and promote recognition and remembrance of Armed Forces community
- Adopt and promote emerging new Armed Forces Covenant e-learning modules to partners

# Recommendations/ discussion points

The Board is asked to:

- a. Note : 'Provision of and access to Health' is a key priority within the Action Plan, and note the emerging Armed Forces Act (2021) focus on 'healthcare'
- b. Consider and endorse the suggested action plan focus across partners, particularly around health and public health, including to:
  - Increase the number of 'veteran-friendly GP practices' and the number of 'veteran-aware hospitals'
  - Ensure our Armed Forces community are considered through the 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 for the Board 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