

## Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan 2022 / 2024

The AFC Action Plan 2022 / 24 sets out how we will recognise, support and integrate our Armed Forces as a valued part of Staffordshire's communities. We want everyone in our county to prosper, be healthy and happy.



### **PRIORITY: Armed forces community insight / information, advice and guidance (IAG):**

Providing a better understanding of key issues / needs / support already in place. Includes working with partners to help match providers of services to areas of need, and along with IAG, ensure access to the right support and opportunities as quickly as possible.

Deliverable (We will....)	Date	Delivery Leads	Impact / What does success look like?
<p>Gain a greater and more granular insight of the Staffordshire Armed Forces Community, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore opportunities to gain a greater understanding of the Armed Forces community, bringing together a range of data and information sources, including the Armed Forces Veteran Gateway; and</li> <li>• Prepare for and maximise the value of Armed Forces Census 2021 data, ensuring this insight is used to inform the planning and delivery of services that support the Armed Forces community (available by end of 2022, with exploratory conversations ahead of this) -</li> </ul> <p><b>Census 2021 Armed Forces briefing paper complete.</b>  <b>Draft Armed Forces Veterans Data Summary report complete.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore feasibility / any opportunities for Armed Forces community insights via Healthwatch Staffordshire</li> </ul>	<p>Jan 23</p> <p>Jan 23</p> <p>Mar 23</p>	<p>Insight Team / Amanda Dawson-Blower (SCC)</p> <p>Keith Luscombe (SCC)</p>	<p>Analysis and reporting of Armed Forces data has improved our understanding of this community.</p> <p>Alongside future planned Census releases this will enable more robust Armed Forces data and insight to target services and support.</p>
<p>Identify / initially map key national / local organisations supporting the AF (Armed Forces) community, to help inform wider IAG approach -</p> <p><b>Developed / to be further shaped with Partnership group.</b></p>	<p>Jan 23</p>	<p>Amanda Dawson-Blower (SCC) / All partners</p>	<p>AF community accessing information/ support they need</p>
<p>Initially review Staffordshire AFC online content / webpages, with a view to updating and ensuring a consistent offer / information –</p> <p><b>Review undertaken and new County Council AFC webpage developed and live.</b>  <b>Partners encouraged to develop / update own AFC webpages.</b></p>	<p>Sept 22</p>	<p>Amanda Dawson-Blower (SCC)</p>	<p>Up to date webpages to enable AF community to access support / advice / guidance they need</p>
<p>Review and improve signposting for our Armed Forces community, as part of the wider refresh of Staffordshire Connects online directory –</p>	<p>Apr 23</p>	<p>Amanda Dawson-Blower / Public Health (SCC)</p>	<p>AF community better equipped to access</p>

Deliverable (We will....)	Date	Delivery Leads	Impact / What does success look like?
<p>Exploratory conversations taking place to improve Staffordshire Connects search engine to better enable AF community to access support.</p> <p>Staffordshire Connects to be updated with key AFC support organisations.</p> <p>The use of Community Help points being explored to provide IAG to AF community.</p>			information/ support they need
<p>Identify any opportunities to build on Enhanced Two-Tier working and further explore a consistent 'Staffordshire Offer' for AF community access to support / services (e.g. with District / Borough Councils) -</p> <p><b>Further opportunities to promote consistent support to AF community to be identified with CEOs Group / Leaders Board in 2023.</b></p>	Jul 23	Cristian Marcucci / Keith Luscombe (SCC) / District / Borough Councils	Any member of AF community, regardless of postcode, can access same level of support across Staffs.

**PRIORITY: Provision of and Access to Health**

Working together, partners can help advocate for and ensure the right care and treatment is available to all, also taking account specific needs of the Armed Forces community. As acknowledged nationally, ensuring access to healthcare is crucial and the number of serving and ex-service people and families settling locally likely to increase.

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<p>Explore and identify opportunities with health partners, to ensure the right care and treatment is available to the Armed Forces community and taking account of specific needs (as part of the developing Integrated Care System). For example, through:</p> <p><b>Armed Forces/Veterans expected to be key element of the Integrated Care Partnership Strategy 5 Year Joint Forward Plan when it is published at the end of June 2023, and also to be a key component of the operational plans 2023/4 for each NHS and Local Government organisation who are part of the ICB.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increasing the number of veteran friendly GP practices</li> </ul> <p><b>Report produced setting out location of current veteran friendly GP practices by District/Borough area across Staffordshire and Stoke – update report to be undertaken in September 2023.</b></p> <p><b>Primary care team is continuing to raise the profile and encourage practices to sign up. Next step will be to make direct contact with those practices still to sign up with face-to-face visits if necessary.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increasing the number of veteran aware hospitals</li> </ul> <p><b>North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust have been awarded Veteran Aware Accreditation.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- encouraging veterans to register with their GP /identify themselves as a veteran</li> <li>- Exploring how to further encourage GPs use of the ‘veteran status’ read code</li> </ul>	Summer 23	Paul Edmondson-Jones (ICB (Integrated Care Board) / Cristian Marcucci and Amanda Dawson-Blower (SCC)	<p>Increase in number of veteran friendly GPs and hospitals</p> <p>Armed Forces community accessing the care / treatment required</p> <p>Health partners supported to better understand needs of Armed Forces community</p>
<p>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</p> <p><b>Best practice exercise is being undertaken to inform future inclusion of Armed Forces community in JSNAs.</b></p>	2023	Wendy Tompson / Insight Team (SCC) / Paul Edmondson-Jones (ICB)	Future assessments, including JSNAs, more fully consider AF community issues and needs
<p>Explore further ways to promote health and well-being information / support / services to the Armed Forces community, for example through Staffordshire Connects online directory / Community Helplines</p> <p><b>Exploratory conversations taking place to improve Staffordshire Connects search engine to better enable AF community to access support.</b></p> <p><b>Staffordshire Connects to be updated with key AFC support organisations.</b></p>	Apr 23	Amanda Dawson-Blower (SCC)	AF community better equipped to access information/ support they need, particularly around Access to Health

Deliverable (We will....)	Date	Delivery Leads	Impact / What does success look like?
<p>The use of Community Help points being explored to provide IAG to AF community.  Approach being considered with Public Health to improve engagement with veterans and promote mental health and wellbeing support – consultation with veterans undertaken to produce joint SCC/ICB ‘Good Mental Health in Staffordshire Strategy’  Conversations taken place with Public Health to promote Suicide Prevention training.</p>			

**PRIORITY: Armed Forces Legislation**

This aims to improve public service delivery and the new duty, requiring public services to fully consider the Armed Forces community when shaping decisions. Ensuring Staffordshire is well placed to deliver on this, particularly around housing, education and healthcare, fully considering the opportunities and implications across Covenant partners will be key.

Deliverable (We will....)	Date	Delivery Leads	Impact / What does success look like?
Promote/communicate MOD AFC Act 2021 guidance/online resources across networks <b>Guidance / summary of functions in scope circulated.</b>	Jan 23	All partners	Promoted and partners understand resources available
Work across public sector partners to ensure relevant decision making considers key policy areas (healthcare, housing, education). To include:  Healthcare – engage with health partners to consider implications/best practice alongside developing Integrated Care System and healthcare provision <b>Links with key Health partners / HWBB conversations taken place to raise awareness of the Act.</b>  Housing – consider implications/best practice alongside exploring a consistent Staffordshire offer around housing policy/support <b>Guidance provided to Districts/Boroughs to raise awareness and dialogue begun around Housing policy.</b>  Education – consider implications/best practice, alongside Staffordshire’s Education & Skills Strategy and MOD Local Authority Partnership (SEND transition) <b>Assessment of Education functions including best practice opportunities undertaken and considered with Education Lead.</b>	Dec 22 / early 23	<i>Health:</i> Paul Edmondson-Jones (ICB) / Tony Bullock (SCC)  <i>Housing:</i> District / Borough Councils / Mark Parkinson (SCC)  <i>Education:</i> Tim Moss / Amanda Dawson-Blower (SCC)	
Review wider decision-making practices to enable consideration of the Act/Armed Forces community, for example: - Ensuring Community Impact Assessments etc build in key further considerations <b>SCC updated CIA documentation finalised, further work by partners underway as necessary.</b>	Dec 22	SCC / District & Borough Councils / ICB partners	Our decision-making processes are fit for purpose taking account of Act

**PRIORITY: Promotion and Awareness of the Covenant / Advocacy**

Raising awareness more effectively, helping to increase the support of organisations and individuals for the important mutual support between the civilian and Armed Force communities, to the positive benefit of all Staffordshire residents. Business promotion and engagement will also be key, including to ensure we build on the relevant skills that ex-service people bring.

Deliverable (We will...)	Date	Delivery Leads	Impact / What does success look like?
<p>Promote AFC Fund programmes to organisations/provide support to eligible bids that can help support delivery of the Covenant</p> <p><b>Support provided to organisations to develop applications.</b></p> <p><b>Comms undertaken as and when new programmes are announced.</b></p> <p><b>Two successful Staffordshire organisations in 2023 so far.</b></p>	Ongoing	Amanda Dawson-Blower / Niall McPhilemy (SCC)	Staffordshire organisations can successfully secure AFC funding
<p>Promote and expand recruitment / employment opportunities, recognising the transferable skills and experience ex-service people can bring for local employers, including through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, and West Midlands Employer Engagement Team to identify opportunities and coordinate engagement with local businesses / employers</li> </ul> <p><b>SCC Enterprise Centres offering 50% discount to veterans for 6 months – launched April 2023.</b></p> <p><b>Armed Forces week employer engagement event held in June 2023.</b></p> <p><b>Promotion of Covenant undertaken to Staffordshire Jobs &amp; Careers brokerage employers.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share best practice to enhance recruitment policies / practices across member organisations (e.g. identifying Armed Forces candidates at the point of application and committing to shortlist any Armed Forces candidates who meet the minimum role criteria, time-off policy for Reservists)</li> </ul> <p><b>Best practice research on Armed Forces community recruitment and employment policies in progress to inform expansion of SCC policies.</b></p> <p><b>Promotion of polices to Districts/Boroughs to be undertaken.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend and promote Armed Forces recruitment fairs / events to promote employment opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing – review quarterly</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>SCC / Sara Williams (Staffordshire Chambers) /</p> <p>Karen Woolley (FSB (Federation of Small Businesses)) / Phil Sinclair (REED)</p> <p>SCC Talent &amp; Resourcing Team / All partners</p>	<p>Increase in number of bronze / silver / gold award holders &amp; AF Covenant signatories, raising the profile of the AF community across businesses and organisations</p> <p>Ensuring businesses and organisations are better placed to help increase the number of ex-service personnel employed</p>
<p>Support the Army Cadets’ young persons’ scheme, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SCC support to build a network of partners that can identify children who may benefit from joining</li> <li>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</li> </ul>	Ongoing – review early 23	Natasha Moody (SCC) / Simon Donegan (Army Cadets)	Ensuring a clear process is in place to promote and review Army Cadets Young Persons scheme

Deliverable (We will....)	Date	Delivery Leads	Impact / What does success look like?
<p><b>Engagement with the Army Cadets is taking place to consider promotion of the scheme to young people and partners.</b></p> <p><b>Presentation given to Headteachers forum took place in May – webinar being organised for July.</b></p>			
<p>Celebrate and promote recognition and remembrance of AF community (communication / events to support our AF community to explain what they do and why on behalf of the Country):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armed Forces Day</li> <li>• Remembrance Day</li> <li>• Further key opportunities / dates TBC</li> </ul> <p><b>Comms plan has been produced and key activities are being promoted.</b></p>	Ongoing	All partners	Opportunities are identified to promote Covenant and further celebrate our AF community
<p>Maximise promotion through County events and collaborate with partners to promote the Covenant, advocating for our AF community</p> <p><b>All Staffordshire Local Authorities have joined together to sign the Covenant - Comms undertaken encouraging other organisations / businesses to pledge their support.</b></p>	Ongoing – as and when	All partners	Opportunities are identified to promote Covenant
<p>Adopt and promote emerging new Armed Forces Covenant e-learning modules to partners</p> <p><b>Work to incorporate new AFC learning modules into SCC Learning Hub is progressing</b></p> <p><b>Further modules expected Spring 2023.</b></p>	Spring 23	Amanda Dawson-Blower (SCC) / Hayley Corbett / All partners	<p>All relevant partners adopted training modules</p> <p>For SCC - % of staff completing the modules to be baselined and monitored</p>
<p>Regular communications / key updates across Partnership Group / wider partners and stakeholders</p> <p><b>Comms plan has been developed and key updates are being undertaken.</b></p>	As required	Amanda Dawson-Blower / Niall McPhilemy (SCC)	Opportunities are identified to promote Covenant

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