



Doncaster  
Council

Report

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# Armed Forces and Veterans

Annual Report  
April 2017 – March 2018



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# 1. Executive Summary

The Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between the people of Doncaster and our local Armed Forces Community. The Covenant ensures that the Armed Forces community face no disadvantage when it comes to accessing support and services around housing, health, education, employment and welfare and that special consideration is given when appropriate to those who have given the most.

This year the delivery of the Doncaster Armed Forces and Veterans Steering Group (DAFVSG) has continued and has also continued to grow, with Project Nova and Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals joining up as partners to the group.

Success has continued in the housing and employment sectors, with seven additional homes being secured by Help 4 Homeless Veterans exclusively for ex-service personnel. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have worked closely with SSAFA and created a direct dial number for when complex cases arise. They have also held a variety of events throughout the year supporting the Armed Forces community to secure employment.

DAFVSG has been successful in two regional bids; one in South Yorkshire and one in Hull. The South Yorkshire partnership focuses on doing baseline work to identify the size and needs of the military community across South Yorkshire and the provision of training for front line staff. A survey is being delivered by Sheffield Hallam University to investigate the size and needs of the Armed Forces Community in each of the authorities' areas. The Military Human training is being delivered by Nick Wood every month at the Civic Offices and will continue to do so until October 2018. The training is aimed at front line staff and aims to improve the knowledge of the Armed Forces community and the transition from military to civilian life. The training is available to both internal staff and external organisations.

The Hull regional partnership has an action plan which focuses on four key strands; a sub-regional approach, standardised website, training and a regional conference. We are currently reviewing and amending the Your Life Doncaster Armed Forces and veterans' webpage and have also created a dedicated email address. A regional conference is currently being organised to be held in June 2018.

## **2.Introducing the Armed Forces Community Covenant – What is our Mission Statement?**

The Armed Forces Community Covenant (Appendix A) is a voluntary statement of mutual support between the people of Doncaster and our local Armed Forces Community.

It is a statement of our intent to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in Doncaster and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by its members, particularly those who have given the most. This includes those currently serving, those who have served, and their families and dependants in Doncaster.

For the Armed Forces community, the Covenant assists with the integration of Service life into civilian life as well as encouraging members of the Armed Forces community to help in their local community.

Nationally and locally the health and wellbeing of ex-service personnel or veterans has achieved increasing importance with the publication of the Armed Forces Covenant and the mayoral commitment to provide a 'strong voice for veterans'.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Doncaster provides a strong recruiting ground for the Armed Forces, and is also thought to attract significant numbers of ex-service personnel who come to the borough to live. There could be as many as 29,200 veterans living in Doncaster. This population is largely male and significantly older than the general population. The population could fall by half over the next 20 years. Many veterans face some or all of the following challenges; poor mental health, alcohol misuse, long term conditions relating to service, homelessness and offending.

The dedicated DAFVSG brings together key representatives from housing, health, employment and welfare to identify key issues affecting the Armed Forces community and to work together to ensure that these are challenged and changed.

## 3. Key Achievements – The Covenant Reflected

The delivery of the DAFVSG has continued with regular meetings being held, chaired by Bob Johnson. We have seen the addition of Project Nova to our meetings and we have also recently made connections with the Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospital who are striving to become a veteran friendly hospital. They have signed up to become a partner of the DAFVSG going forward.

### ***3.1 Doncaster Armed Forces and Veterans Partnership***

#### Policies and Equality

Armed Forces and Veterans are recognised under the 'Caring' theme of the Doncaster Growing Together plan. Going forward regular updates will be provided from DAFVSG and implemented in the Team Doncaster quarterly update.

An agreement has been reached with DMBC strategy for Armed Forces and Veterans to be added as a protective characteristic. This will sit alongside the nine other protective characteristics.

#### Housing

The Help 4 Homeless Veterans charity has gone from strength to strength, continuing their work with homeless veterans. In April 2018, they received the Duke of York's Community Initiative Award from HRH Prince Andrew.

The charity has seen a big increase in the activities providing help to homeless veterans through the Community Covenant schemes and also working with councils and private landlords in other parts of the country. In total they have helped around 50 veterans during this reporting period.

The charity has signed for a further seven, one bedroom bungalows in the Mexborough and Denaby area of Doncaster. Each property required cleaning, decorating, carpeting and then fully furnishing. This has taken the total number of properties through Doncaster Council and St Leger Homes to 10, with a recent agreement to increase this to 15 properties.

The properties have been able to help a variety of ex service personnel including;

- An Army Air Corps ex SNCO facing eviction rehoused with his wife
- An 80 year old referred from the South Yorkshire Police as a victim of domestic abuse who had served in the RAOC during the Korean war
- A female ex-soldier medic with a 6 year old autistic son
- A former SNCO cook from the RLC who had been sleeping in his car and lost his job. He has since secured fresh employment.

The charity has also set up an office in Mexborough thanks to the generous support of Constant Security Services. The new office will enable the charity to build their presence around Mexborough and Denaby where the majority of their tenants live.

### Employment

The Department for Work and Pensions has dealt with five very complex cases referred through SSAFA where they have been able to offer an enhanced service to resolve complex benefit enquiries efficiently. SSAFA now have a direct dial number and email for complex cases when they occur.

A Support 4 All event was held on March 21<sup>st</sup> 2018 at the Job Centre. A range of military charities attended to talk to staff and customers about the support they offer to veterans and have the opportunity to network with 50 other local organisations. The event was deemed very successful.

Six front line DWP staff have attended and successfully completed the Military Human training delivered by York St John University and more staff plan to attend future training sessions.

### **3.2 South Yorkshire Partnership**

In 2017, a regional partnership was created in South Yorkshire, including Rotherham, Sheffield, Barnsley and Doncaster Council. Representatives from the DAFVSG attend the meetings alongside Cllr Paul Wray, the elected Armed Forces champion.

The main focus of the partnership is for the provision of training and baseline work to identify the size and needs of the military community across South Yorkshire. A South Yorkshire Armed Forces survey is available online and the results of this will be the data used in order to determine the size and needs of the Armed Forces Community in each of the local areas. The data will be analysed by Sheffield Hallam University.

The partnership is also delivering training. The 'Military Human' training course is delivered by Nick Wood from York St John University, who delivers one course per month at the Civic Offices. The monthly training courses started in September 2017 and will continue until October 2018.

The one day training course aims to build confidence when engaging with members of the Armed Forces community, learn more about Armed Forces culture, training methods, military life and families, and the challenges some face when transitioning from military to civilian life. It is aimed at front line staff that may come into contact with members of the Armed Forces Community in their role.

### Additional Funding

The partnership has recently been awarded additional funding for a collaboration project within South Yorkshire to provide a voice for the veterans across the region through increasing awareness of services available to them via the Military Community Veterans Centre's Outreach Trailer. This includes purchasing a towing vehicle for the outreach trailer and recruiting a co-ordinator to manage the project. The outreach trailer will help each authority to publicise the Armed Forces Covenant along with reaching those veterans and their family members who are unaware of the services and support available to them in their own communities. The trailer will be visible at events and activities throughout the calendar year raising the profile of this important area of work. The official launch of the project will be the end of June 2018 with a final evaluation completed for March 2020.

### ***3.3 Hull Regional Partnership***

In 2017, a regional partnership was created in the Hull region between Hull City, Doncaster, North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire and East Riding of Yorkshire Council. Meetings are held every 4-6 weeks, chaired by Tracy Harsley (Hull City Council, Lead Authority) and hosted on a rotational basis between each local authority.

An action plan has been developed and agreed. The action plan focuses on four key 'strands'

1. A Sub Regional Approach
2. Standardised Website
3. Training
4. Annual Conference

Alongside this, each Local Authority has received funding to appoint a co-ordinator to support the Programme Board and drive the delivery of the project in their regions.

#### *A Sub Regional Approach*

The partnership has highlighted the need to investigate the size and views of the Armed Forces Community in each of the local areas. A questionnaire has been agreed, piloted and is currently being circulated by each local authority. DAFVSG will be using the responses from the South Yorkshire survey to aid them with this element of the partnership. The key findings from the Hull region questionnaire suggest that there is a strong support for the Armed Forces Covenant, however it is not widely publicised. In the questionnaire, residents are asked which areas the Covenant should focus on, the highest responses were – housing, mental health and employment (including self-employment and training).

#### *Standardised Website*

A review of current website provision has been undertaken and a best practice guide has been created for the Partnership Board to consider. Each local authority is currently updating and amending their individual webpages.

In Doncaster we are reviewing the Armed Forces support page on the Your Life Doncaster website and are in the process of changing the layout and design of the page as well as amending and updating the content. The page will also include video welcome messages from Mayor Ros Jones, Cllr Paul Wray the elected Armed Forces Champion and Bob Johnson, chair of DAFVSG. The aim is to have the webpage completed for early June 2018. The webpage will be available at – [www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/ArmedForces](http://www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/ArmedForces)

As part of the website work, a dedicated Armed Forces and Veterans email address has been created– [armedforcescovenant@doncaster.gov.uk](mailto:armedforcescovenant@doncaster.gov.uk)

### Training

Doncaster is taking the lead on this element of the partnership and will be using the information from the South Yorkshire partnership to aid the delivery of this element within the Hull Regional Partnership. Members of the regional partnership have attended the Military Human training in Doncaster to assess the suitability for rolling it out in other areas. The cost for providing the Military Human training, as well as Mental Health First Aid training has been evaluated and a training options document has been produced for the board to consider.

### eLearning

During the induction process Doncaster Council new starters undertake eLearning training. Other organisations involved in DAFVSG have highlighted their interest in providing eLearning training for their staff, including Doncaster and Bassetlaw Acute Hospital Trust.

The Armed Forces eLearning package offers an introduction of the Covenant as well as information about the Community Covenant in Doncaster. The dedicated Armed Forces eLearning package is currently being reviewed and re-designed, with the aim for it to be made available in May 2018.

Once the new eLearning package has been developed, the storyboard will be shared with the partners of the Hull regional board.

### Annual Conference

As part of the project, the five authorities are organising an annual conference which will be held on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2018 at the Humber Bridge Country Hotel in Barton-upon-Humber. Each authority will be inviting representatives from key organisations and businesses who support and are involved in the delivery of the Covenant in their regions. The seminar is a great opportunity to hear from the partnership regarding help

and support to our Armed Forces and Veterans Community. The conference will include presentations and talks about a wide range of topics including health, welfare, finance, business support, education and employment.

## 4. Future Focus

- To refresh the Health Needs assessment and recommendations work from 2015
- Improve data collection, quantity and qualitatively across the DAFVSG partnership to create meaningful performance management and impact of Armed Forces / Veterans support.
- To ensure that all GP practices ask new patients about their armed forces history and use the nationally recommended Read code (Xa8Da)
- Improve the knowledge and training of 'front of house' staff and intervention teams across the partnership, so that veterans with service related health issues or other wellbeing needs can be signposted more effectively to the most appropriate services
- Facilitate Doncaster partners to progress to awards and recognition of our Armed Forces support work, including Doncaster and Bassetlaw Acute Trust National "Veteran Friendly" award.
- Partner organisations in Doncaster should undertake reviews of their policies and commissioning strategies to ensure that the needs of veterans are addressed as employers.
- Refresh DAFVSG membership, priority setting and action plan following the production of the local areas Armed Forces Community Research work, being conducted by Sheffield University.

# Appendix A

# THE DONCASTER COMMUNITY COVENANT

27th of June 2015

The People of the United Kingdom  
Her Majesty's Government

and

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown  
And their Families

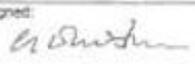
The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, Doncaster citizens recognise that they and the whole nation have a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

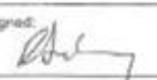
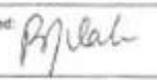
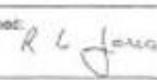
Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration may be appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation is the start of the process involving the whole of Doncaster. It includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty, unites the Borough and demonstrates the value of their contribution.

This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.

**We, the undersigned, agree to work and act together to honour the Armed Forces Community Covenant.**

Signed: 	Signed: 	Signed: 	Signed: 	Signed: 
Name: Lt Colonel Graham Whitmore On behalf of the British Army	Name: Mrs Jo Miller Chief Executive Doncaster Council	Name: Lt Commander Clive Howlin - On behalf of the Royal Navy	Name: Squadron Leader Stephanie Ford - On behalf of the Royal Air Force	Name: Mrs Jo Mason Acting Director of Children & Young Peoples Services

Signed: 	Signed: 	Signed: 	Signed: 	Signed: 	Signed: 
Name: Mr Stacey Austin Doncaster Chamber of Commerce	Name: Dr Rupert Suckling Director of Public Health	Name: Mr Peter Dale Director of Regeneration & Environment	Name: Mr Tim Shaw Non-Executive Director RDASH	Name: Mrs Ros Jones Mayor of Doncaster	Name: Councillor Paul Whay Civic Mayor & Armed Forces Champion

# **Appendix B**

**Community Covenant Action Plan 2017 – 2018**

## Doncaster Armed Forces and Veterans Steering Group

The Steering group was established with the purpose of identifying key issues across partnerships affecting the Armed Forces community and work together to ensure that these are challenged and changed, providing clear actions and outcomes in delivery of the military covenant in that there is a removal of disadvantage (discrimination) against those that are in the armed forces, veterans and families of those that have served in the forces.

The Steering Group are key to providing support to the ex-service community and their families through effective partnership collaboration. Organisations and Representatives include: DMBC, SLHD, Doncaster College, Department of Work and Pensions, The Royal British Legion, Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS (Rdash), Doncaster CCG, Doncaster GP's, SSAFA, York St John's University.

	Key Issues	Actions	Owners	RAG	Status	Comments for Development
<b>Policies and Equality</b>	Embedding a sustainable veteran agenda	Increase take up of Armed Forces E-Learning Module within DMBC	LSw		440+ employees have completed the e-learning.	Need to review and update content
	Inclusion of the ex-service community into council and partner organisations equality policy	Reach an agreement with DMBC Strategy for Armed Forces and Veterans to be added as a protected characteristic	ALL		Agreement reached with DMBC Strategy for Armed Forces and Veterans to be added to all policy as a protected characteristic alongside the legal 9 protected	Need to determine partnership approach
<b>Performance and Monitoring</b>	To determine effective community in Doncaster	Doncaster JSNA	LSw		Completed	Identify further Doncaster reps to take part in the region work
		Review and evaluation recommendations of JSNA	LSw		Work is now within pathways for Health and Wellbeing Board and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion scrutiny process.	Produce evaluation report and next steps post March 2018

		Successful bid to do a research piece on understanding the Armed Force and Veterans Community in Doncaster	LSw - partners		Being completed by Sheffield Hallam University. Questionnaire still available online to be completed.	
	Determine appropriate feedback and measurements across all organisations	Audit – where do we ask the question, what do you report?			To develop – discussion started with partners. Systems developed to count numbers within Communities and Adult Social Care Services.	
	Evaluation of potential financial savings				To develop – reviewing with cost avoidance and Service Planning.	
<b>Housing</b>	SLH – Homeless policy and pathways	SLH working with VSG and housing portfolio member	SLHD		Completed	LSH to produce homeless policy, homeless veteran data and capacity information
	Pathways for Homeless Veterans from criminal justice system	Project Nova			Project Nova representative now attending VSG meetings	Need to develop
	Additional Dedicated Provision and pathways	Help for homeless Hereos	SLHD		Unique agreement for charity letting and dedicated provision for veterans.	
<b>Health</b>	Veteran Registration with the 43 NHS GP Surgeries	LMC Chair to pilot the veteran GP Surgery registration process			To develop	

	Veteran Champions within GP practices	Awareness training and some practices commencing			To develop	
	Veterans Voice in health decisions	To be added to the CCG inclusion scheme with nominated veterans representative	SWA		To develop	
<b>Education</b>	Schools admission policy to be reviewed and amended to remove ex-service disadvantages with admissions	Admissions policy to be reviewed and amended to removed ex-service disadvantage with admissions	LSw		Policy has been amended Completed.	
	Prevent barring of ex-service children from registration with their local schools		LSw		Completed	
	Ensure all schools and academies are aware of the admissions policy		LSw		Completed.	
<b>Employment</b>	DWP Joint-ex-service employment support events		MT		Events held in July and October 2016	Arrange future events

	ERS awards	HR policies amended	ALL		DMBC received award in 2016	
	Guaranteed ex-service interview scheme				Post guaranteed interview scheme in place - DMBC	
	Identify local employers that are ex-service employment friendly	To contact Business Chamber and council investment team				Needs development.
<b>Awareness and Training</b>	Increase dissemination of veteran awareness and intervention training information	Successful South Yorkshire Region bid to include training for all partners, Start June 2017. One day per month for 12 months.	LSw/ ALL		Training has been completed by 800+ attendees. Confirmed dates until October 2018.	Need to determine partnership invites
<b>Promotion and Communication</b>	Information, advice and guidance locally available	Development of website, your life local, checking contact details, sharing with regional work	LSw		Specific Veterans page on Your Life Doncaster	Identify gaps and update information and content
		Development of Single Point of Access / information for Doncaster	Task Group			Identify possible partnership solutions to deliver
	Common database across partnerships	Data warehouse, data sharing in place with CCG. Joint fund bid for digital development	LSw		Unsuccessful in joint bid. However internal processes agreed and sharing of data in place. YLD detail now under pins the community	

					information on GP Find and Navigator systems.	
	Communications and good news sharing plan				Limited releases on funding bids / Gold Award/ Ben Parkinson Key to Doncaster, Forces events, etc.	To develop a forward plan for communications for 2018/19
<b>Events</b>	KOYLI – presenting Doncaster with Colours May 2017		DMBC Exec Office / David Chorlton		Completed	
	Armed Forces Day – June 24 <sup>th</sup>		DMBC Exec Office / David Chorlton		Completed	
	KOYLI statue					