

REACH AND IMPACT OF THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT: LOCAL GRANTS PROGRAMME

Summary and case studies



CONTENTS

Summary	2
Case Studies Introduction	3
Hampshire Cultural Trust – 100 Thank You's	4
Curzon Ashton Football Club - Nash Alternative Sports Project	6
RAF Association - Increasing The Employability Of RAF Spouses And Partners	8
Lisburn Sea Cadets - Boating Activities For All	10
Nottingham Forest Community Trust - Nottingham Forest Forces.....	12
Outfit Moray - Community Adventure Links	14
Wigan Warriors Community Foundation – Rugby Memories	16
Walking With The Wounded - Veterans In The Community Scotland	18
Lincolnshire County Council - Wings To The Past	20
The Advocacy People – Military Integration And Training	22
The Fighting Chance – The Fighting Chance For Veterans Project	24
Mount Street School - Outdoor Classroom	26
Trends Across The Case Studies	28

SUMMARY

This is a companion document to the *Reach and Impact of the Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme* report.

That report reviews the grants awarded under the ***Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme***, and analyses key emerging data from the programme. That report, along with annual reports on Covenant Fund expenditure for every year since 2015/16, and a review of the first three years of funding through the ***Armed Forces Covenant: Local grants programme***, can be accessed at www.covenantfund.org.uk.

The ***Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme*** awarded grants of up to £20,000, which supported the aim of Community Integration and/or the Local Delivery of Services.

The programme ran for five years from 2015 to 2020 and delivered 712 grants worth £11,525,200.

The Armed Forces has been at the heart of the programme, with nearly one in 10 projects being led by local Armed Forces units. Charities, eligible CICs and schools have also been able to deliver projects which have brought Armed Forces and civilian communities closer together through the Community Integration theme or delivering support for those Armed Forces communities with needs through the Local Delivery of Services theme. These grants have made a significant difference to Armed Forces communities through local projects that address local needs and present local solutions.

Community Integration grants aimed to integrate Armed Forces and civilian communities so they could better support, understand and live/work in harmony with each other.

Local Delivery of Services grants were to provide better direct support to Armed Forces

communities in the local area. This could be in any number of ways, from housing, financial, mental health, childcare or social activities.

There was wide distribution of grants throughout the UK, with projects funded in all four nations, and within different geographic areas in England.

Across all the grants, funding was made available between the two funding strands. While, overall, more funding was awarded to projects that addressed Community Integration needs, a significant amount of funding also went to projects that met both of the funding strands.

Charities were most likely to be delivering services and were the largest category of grant holders, receiving 62% of the overall funding. Community Interest Companies (CICs) that met the eligibility requirements received 11% of the overall value of grants.

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust continues to support smaller local projects through the Armed Forces Covenant: Force for Change programme, which has a core focus on projects supporting Armed Forces communities to become less isolated and engage more in their local area.

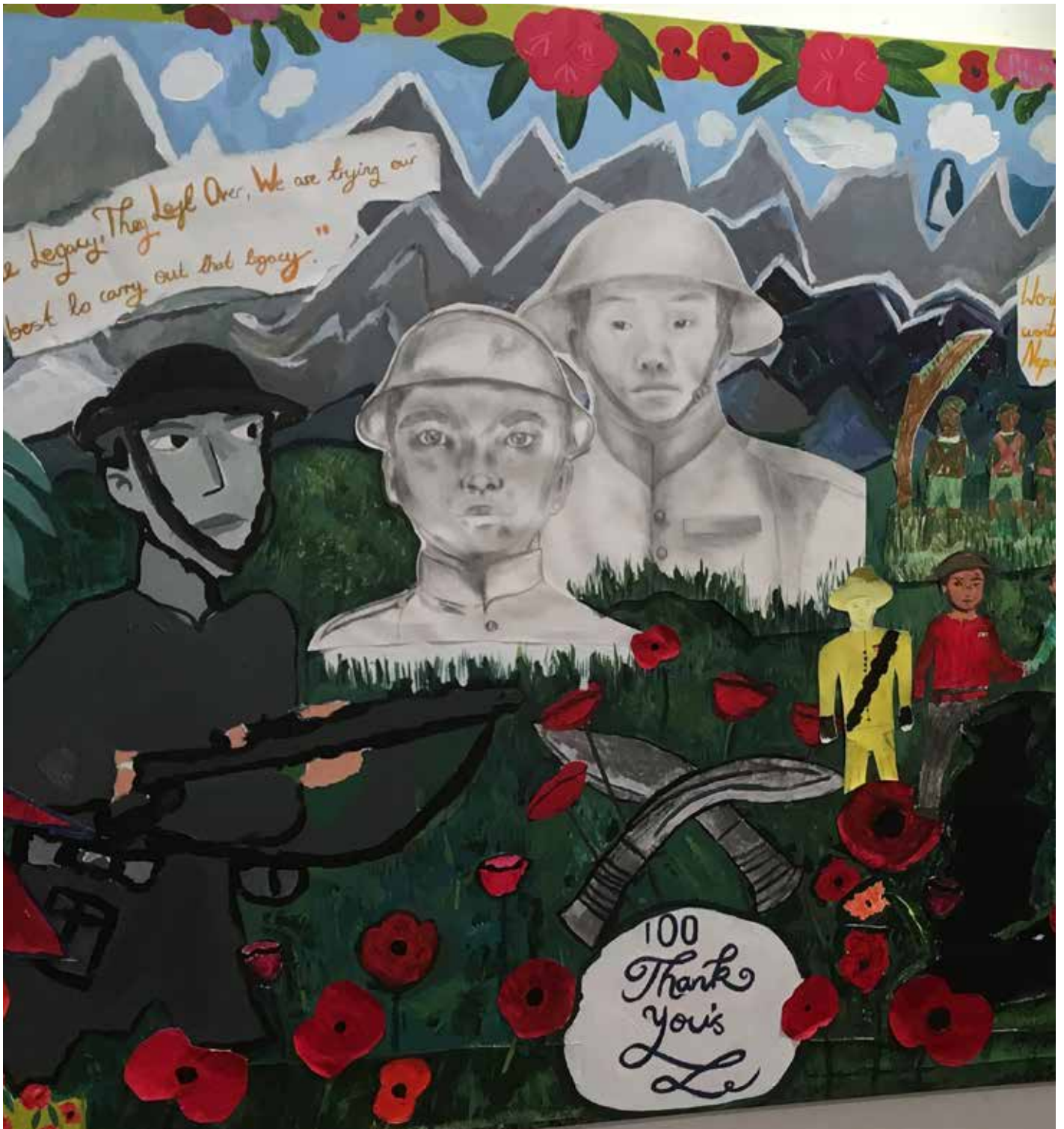
CASE STUDIES

The Trust has compiled a collection of 12 projects from across the UK, that delivered projects using a grant from the **Armed Forces Covenant Fund: Local Grants** programme.

Local Grants Case Studies

Where are our grant holders?





HAMPSHIRE CULTURAL TRUST - 100 THANK YOUS

AWARDED £20,000

Hampshire Cultural Trust was awarded £20,000 for the '100 Thank Yous' project, by the Covenant Trust, as part of the **Armed Forces Covenant Fund: Local Grants programme** in 2018.

As well as building an understanding of the role of Gurkha soldiers in World War I in its centenary year, the project aim was also to increase cultural understanding and integration between the Nepalese community and the local community in Aldershot and the surrounding areas.

The project worked with young people from local secondary schools and a sixth form college, members of the Nepalese community from Maddhat Shamuha/Nepalese Help, and serving members of 10 The Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment (10 QOGLR).

The young people met with both the Gurkhas and the Nepalese community, spent time with them and interviewed them to gain greater knowledge and appreciation of their customs and traditions, and their pride in serving in the British Army.

The young people also spoke to serving Gurkhas about their predecessors in the regiment, and what it meant to be a soldier in World War I. One serving Gurkha told the young people "The legacy...we are trying our best to carry out that legacy they left."

The young people then visited The Gurkha Museum in Winchester, to further their understanding of the regiment and the role that the Gurkhas played in conflict in the past, and in modern day warfare.

Project participants then took part in creative workshops, led by professional artists, musicians and poets, to produce creative work based on their experiences of speaking with the Gurkhas and spending time with the Nepalese community. Some students created poetry and artwork; others composed pieces together with professional musicians. A series of ceramic rhododendrons, the national flower of Nepal, were also created. A group of other students made a film depicting the lives of the Gurkha soldiers and their families.

One of the staff at Cove School, near Farnborough in Hampshire, whose students took part in the project, commented: "The students have thoroughly enjoyed themselves and learnt so

much! They have touched upon some aspects of the project during their history lessons but nowhere near the level of detail that is covered in this project. The students have such a positive work dynamic in how they are supportive and encouraging everyone to participate - it has been a joy to observe!"

After completion, the exhibition of creative works was then shown to a private audience to celebrate the culmination of the project, and then displayed at Aldershot Military Museum. The project was also shared online via YouTube, so a wider audience were able to view and enjoy the pieces of creative work.

As well as creating links between the local and the Nepalese community, and forging greater understanding and friendship between the two, the aim of the project was to inspire greater confidence and self-esteem in the young people who took part in the project.

18 students took part in a self-assessment questionnaire at the beginning and the end of the project. At the end, 13 students scored themselves more highly on confidence, speaking in front of a group, working in a group, feeling part of a community, sharing ideas, knowing skills and strengths, sharing ideas, being creative and artistic, having history skills and having research/interviewing skills.

Following on from the project, Hampshire Cultural Trust have now made a commitment to all the communities and individuals that took part in this project to continue the relationship and to ensure the connections between the communities remain and thrive.

**“HAMPSHIRE CULTURAL TRUST
HAVE NOW MADE A COMMITMENT TO
CONTINUE THE RELATIONSHIP AND TO
ENSURE THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN
THE COMMUNITIES REMAIN AND
THRIVE.”**

CURZON ASHTON FOOTBALL CLUB - NASH ALTERNATIVE SPORTS PROJECT

AWARDED £18,760

The Nash Alternative Sports Project received £18,760 in 2018 as part of the **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme**. The aim of the grant was to help alleviate loneliness and isolation in 'hard to reach' veterans via sporting activities in the Tameside military community in Greater Manchester. 53 veterans participated in the project, who otherwise would not have engaged with any other activity.

The project aimed to provide a sporting programme, but with a difference. Each veteran was given the opportunity to participate in four different sports, with each course lasting 12 weeks. After the 12 weeks had concluded, the veteran was offered the opportunity to train in a coaching qualification for that sport.

As Andy Cheshire, director of the project explains:

"We were faced with a GDPR nightmare, obviously we didn't have access to direct records. However, we were able to get results via word of mouth. We engaged with the Welfare Services Officer at Tameside Armed Services Community, and a sports organisation called 'Moving Forces' for Armed Forces personnel and veterans. They all knew people, who knew someone else...you can see how it worked."

Since the conclusion of the project, the benefits of its engagement can still be seen in the participants. There was lots of interest in the climbing activity, and 30% of the project users progressed to achieving their Level 1 and 2 coaching qualification in climbing. It is hoped that





the climbing centre will re-open shortly following the coronavirus pandemic, and that coaching sessions will resume.

Yoga and archery are still extremely popular among the project users who took part. After the four-week trial period, the archery participants joined the organisations' Archery Club, and are still keen members.

The yoga enthusiasts brought a new dimension to the project as they brought their partners/families along to participate. Yoga sessions continued via virtual means throughout the pandemic, and it is hoped they will resume in a face-to-face scenario as soon as restrictions allow.

Now that the sports project participants are continuing to engage with the activities as lockdown restrictions allow, the organisation (now Curzon Ashton Community Foundation) has turned its attention to another project.

This project will also engage with extremely

isolated and vulnerable veterans by providing a horticultural therapy service in conjunction with the Defence Gardens Scheme. The services will be targeted at very vulnerable veterans referred via TILS.

It is hoped that, again, this project will be joined by veterans who have not reached out before.

**“THE PROJECT WAS
ABLE TO REACH
TRADITIONALLY ‘HARD
TO REACH’ VETERANS
THROUGH THEIR NETWORK
OF OTHER ORGANISATIONS
THAT THEY ENGAGE WITH.”**

RAF ASSOCIATION - INCREASING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF RAF SPOUSES AND PARTNERS

AWARDED £20,000

The RAF Association received £20,000 from the Trust in 2018, to provide 32 RAF spouses and partners with the opportunity to participate in training to enable them to become an OFSTED registered childminder. This sought not only to increase their employability, but also to increase the amount of high-quality childcare around RAF stations located in the South East of England.

The courses were well attended and very popular, with 11 beneficiaries benefiting from RAF Benson and 23 beneficiaries benefiting from RAF Brize Norton.

The Association decided to deliver the pre-registration element of the training online, which made the training more flexible to meet beneficiaries' needs. As a result of this, more beneficiaries were able to sign up to the training individually, rather than as a group, which meant two further RAF spouses / partners were able to benefit from the training.

Beneficiaries were able to complete the online element of the training at their own pace and in their own time, so that spouses / partners didn't face any barriers such as travel expenses, getting time off work or sourcing childcare.





However, although the training was online, beneficiaries were able to contact a member of the training provider team if they needed help and support.

Beneficiaries also attended induction evenings delivered by the training provider, with two sessions delivered at RAF Brize Norton and one at RAF Benson. The two-day paediatric first aid training was also delivered face-to-face (as this was a mandatory requirement of the training). All 34 beneficiaries who enrolled in the course successfully completed their training.

One beneficiary described the project as a “lifesaver” as she no longer has to “sacrifice time spent with her son”. Another stated that “if it wasn’t for the support offered, I wouldn’t have been able to afford the training”. Following the course, one beneficiary used the essential skills gained on the childminding course to secure a role at a school as a teaching assistant, and another has become a nanny.

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic,

some of the project users were unable to complete their OFSTED registration as new applications are currently suspended; but they are keen to commence their new career as childminders once restrictions allow them to complete their registration.

Following on from the success of the project, RAF Brize Norton and RAF Benson have asked the RAF Association to investigate the possibility of funding for future training, due to the amount of interest that was registered for the courses and the high standard of training that was provided.

Due to its popularity and also the key employability skills it provides participants, they hope to relaunch in 2021.

LISBURN SEA CADETS - BOATING ACTIVITIES FOR ALL

AWARDED £20,000

Lisburn Sea Cadets (TS Ulster) received an **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme** award of £20,000 to help fund the purchase of a Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) to and offer their cadets a unique power boating experience and associated qualifications. The group already had a small power boat, but this was unsuitable for use as a safety boat for sail training.

Before applying to the Trust, the organisation was already fundraising to raise the necessary money required to purchase the RIB. The group had already raised £7,500 from a range of grantmaking organisations when they became aware of the Trust's **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme** via the Veterans

Support Office (VSO) in Northern Ireland. The head of the VSO, Liz Brown, gave assistance and advice to the Sea Cadets with writing the application bid, and they were successful in June 2018 in securing the necessary funding to purchase the boat.

The organisation also has connections 'behind the wire' at Thiepval Barracks via the Army Welfare Service (AWS). The two organisations worked together both to support the young people and encourage more Service children to join the Sea Cadets.

One such young person was a student who had recently returned from the US with her family and, due to the difference in school years, had limited



contact with people her own age. She was very keen to join and take part in boating activities. A swim test was organised at the swimming pool at Thiepval Barracks – a prerequisite for all cadets to pass before they are allowed out on the water. During the swim test, other students in the Service community using the pool observed the test and asked a volunteer for more information about the group. Through this indirect contact, three other cadets from within the Service/ MOD community were enrolled.

The unit has also been able to reach out across all communities in Lisburn via social media, in particular its Facebook page, to attract the interest of students who wouldn't otherwise have heard of the organisation. Use of the RIB has also benefitted other Sea Cadet units across Northern Ireland by being available to assist with their open water training. They had plans to use the vessel for families' days and other commemorative events across the country.

Prior to lockdown this year, there were some 40 cadets enrolled with TS Ulster, who were able to benefit from using the RIB and undertake powerboat training and qualifications. A comprehensive agenda of activities was planned

for this year, but unfortunately, due to the Covid pandemic and social restrictions, all boating activities have had to be put on hold.

Since restrictions have been in place, the unit has tried to keep up momentum to keep cadets engaged. They've delivered virtual meetings on Zoom, with activities such as a virtual camp (where kit was delivered in a Covid-safe manner), where the cadets enjoyed first aid, seamanship and even drill lessons. They also had the opportunity to highlight their knowledge of knots by creating a 'knot board', some of which were then highlighted on the Unit's Facebook page.

John, one of the organisers of the project, said: "The cadets have stayed with the group, but despite activities continuing virtually, some young people just don't like Zoom and just want to get back out on the RIB."

He is very keen to get cadets back out on the water as soon as restrictions allow, adding: "Everyone gets their cobwebs blown out and they will remember what it's like to be back out at sea. We will see the big grins on their faces, as who doesn't like travelling at 17 knots on Belfast Lough?"



NOTTINGHAM FOREST COMMUNITY TRUST - NOTTINGHAM FOREST FORCES

AWARDED £20,000

Nottingham Forest Community Trust received an **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme** award of £20,000 in 2018 to facilitate a project that provided support to older veterans who were socially isolated and lonely. Calum Osborne, Chief Operating Officer of the Community Trust, said the organisation decided they wanted to offer something different to veterans; and that the civilian community within the football club fan base wanted to “give something back” to veterans and their families.

The Community Trust wanted to offer an “uplifting, feel-good programme” to veterans, but it was also very important for it to be designed and led by the veterans themselves, as they would know what they wanted or needed. The idea was to place something in front of local people, and from that, work with them to develop the content of the programme.

The Forest Forces programme began with an intense period of research. Together with the local Nottinghamshire Covenant Partnership, the Community Trust launched a series of open evenings, questionnaires and surveys to find out from the veteran community what sort of support would benefit them the most. Nottingham Forest FC has a huge veteran affinity, and from its fan base, family and friends were able to refer veterans on to the project and get them involved.

Following this consultation, the overwhelming agreement was that veterans simply wanted to get together and be social. However, the Community Trust also wanted to provide support where it was required, so they also sought assistance from Armed Forces charities such as SSAFA, ABF The Soldiers' Charity, Forces in the Community, FAFA, RBL, DMWS, Career



Transition Partnership and also the local Age UK branch. This partnership with other organisations meant the project was able to provide wrap-around support and assistance, or signpost veterans on to other organisations if this was required.

A monthly social group was organised, and from that came other activities such as walking football, play on the pitch, matchday experiences and other commemorative events. As Calum explained, the Forest Forces project was always going to be “all about the veterans” and the Community Trust’s role was to “do the legwork and facilitate the services they required.” Continuous feedback was sought from the veterans as the project continued, and they refined their services and activities accordingly.

Since March, due to Covid-19 lockdown

restrictions, the Community Trust has had to move its social events online. However, they are still keen to keep the momentum going due to the success of the project. Instead of the monthly social events, the project organised weekly phone calls, Zoom bingo and quiz sessions, plus face-to-face meetings outside, where social distancing restrictions allowed this to take place.

The challenge for the organisers, says Calum, has been keeping older veterans engaged with the project. Unfortunately, some of them do not have the access to IT or the computer knowledge to be able to participate in online events. Because of this, a priority for the project was meeting with older beneficiaries in a face-to-face setting as soon as they were able, to keep them engaged and help counteract the loneliness and isolation the lockdown brought to many.

As Calum explained: “We have had regular 1:1 meetings with some veterans, we have even spoken to people through their garden gates. This has certainly not stopped us.”

Although the initial project funded by the Trust has come to an end, the Nottingham Forest Community Trust hopes to keep the initiative going due to its success, either via other funding or self-funded means. The Community Trust are delighted that the Forest Forces project engaged with 165 veterans over a period of 12 months, which vastly exceeded their initial estimate of 60, showing its popularity and need within the veteran community it serves.

**“WE WANTED TO OFFER SOMETHING
‘DIFFERENT’ TO VETERANS, AND THAT
THE CIVILIAN COMMUNITY
WITHIN THE FOOTBALL CLUB FAN
BASE WANTED TO ‘GIVE SOMETHING
BACK’ TO VETERANS
AND THEIR FAMILIES.”**



OUTFIT MORAY - COMMUNITY ADVENTURE LINKS

AWARDED £20,000

Outfit Moray received £20,000 of **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme** funding in March 2019 to deliver a 'Community Adventure Links' programme in conjunction with Kinloss Barracks. The funding was to provide outdoor adventure activities to local Service families in connection with local sports clubs such as Moray Mountain Bike Club, Moray Coast Youth Climbing Club, Moravian Orienteering Club and Moray Canoe Club.

The idea behind this collaboration with local organisations and clubs was to enhance the activities that Service families could get involved

in within the area, and to forge connections and friendships with local civilian young people. Consultation suggested that Service families were very keen to participate in outdoor activities given the beautiful natural locality of the Scottish countryside, but were not sure how to get involved. Subsequently, the project also offered Service children the opportunity to volunteer with the group and gain coaching qualifications, thus enabling further integration with the local community.

The project was also planned in collaboration with the local Army Welfare Service, who helped





organise and schedule the activities, and who also helped Outfit Moray measure the impact and outcome of the activities upon the young people in terms of engaging with others outside their peer group, confidence and personal happiness, among other attributes.

Not only did the activities score very highly (with top scores for happiness scoring over 97% for one activity), but the willingness to try new activities also scored extremely positively at 98%, which showed the success the project was having with engaging the young people.

Tony Brown, CEO of Outfit Moray, commented that the level of engagement and willingness to try new activities meant that “the likelihood of Service beneficiaries enrolling in the other programmes that we offer once they have completed the first, is extremely high”.

The organisation offered a selection of affordable outdoor activities during the summer holidays, with a high uptake from Service families who had already completed another programme offered by the organisation. Outfit Moray estimates the repeat booking from Service families is around the 60% mark.

Unfortunately, during the first lockdown in March 2020, the centre had to close by law; but as

restrictions began to ease into spring and summer, Outfit Moray were in the enviable position of holding all their activities outside, which was permitted under social distancing legislation. As soon as they were able, all their outdoor instructors returned to work. The organisation has been busy throughout the summer, offering mountain biking courses and bike repair workshops - all manner of outdoor activities and team building days to family bubbles - but ensuring that all participation was conducted in a Covid-19 safe manner.

Tony remarks that their outdoor activities offered a much welcome “antidote to the digital provision” that was on offer during lockdown, and that the organisation was pleased to see enthusiasm and greater renewed interest in all manner of outdoor activities despite organised events being cancelled.

At present, the organisation is pleased to report that five young Service / veteran family members are being coached for a competitive climbing competition (currently, sadly, on hold due to Covid restrictions), and three of those have qualified for the Scotland youth team. Another young Service family member who joined in activities through the organisation previously, now fundraises for Outfit Moray via sponsored mountain biking challenges.

WIGAN WARRIORS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION - RUGBY MEMORIES

AWARDED £8,000



Wigan Warriors Community Foundation received an **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme** award of £8,000 in 2018 to fund the 'Rugby Memories' project. The project aimed to bring together older veterans (who may or may not have dementia), serving personnel and their families, in a social setting to forge friendships and ease loneliness through a shared experience and love of rugby.

Social groups were run every week for two hours per session. They included talks and interactive sessions with Wigan players past and present, bingo, dances, or just simply time to sit and talk to likeminded people about rugby and reminisce about life in the Armed Forces.

The project was assisted by external partners. This included Wigan Warriors Rugby Club itself, and several other organisations, such as local care homes, the Royal British Legion, and local housing and dementia support services, who referred participants on to the project and assisted with advice and onwards support to those who needed it.

Project volunteer Sue got involved when her dad was diagnosed with dementia in 2017. During an NHS Memory Service home visit, as well as advising Sue and her family on the progression of dementia, the clinician was able to signpost them to the Rugby Memories project as a means of additional social support. As Sue's mum and dad are Wigan supporters, she and her family were sure her dad would benefit. Sue says the group was a lifeline to her dad. As well as the rugby, he was able to participate in many different events, such as casino evenings, equine therapy, and he even got up singing and dancing when bands were performing.

Sue explains the effect the project has had on her family: "Having these groups means Dad has structure to his life, as there are set days where he has an activity. This means Mum and I do not have to try and occupy his days and we all get the benefit from this group. We have all developed a



new circle of friends, some on different stages of the journey. We all find this reassuring to be able to talk to and support each other. For the time we are at Rugby Memories it means Mum and I can relax knowing Dad is safe.”

The project also tried to provide as many physical activities for its members as possible. From carpet bowls to ‘Motown Aerobics’ sessions, or the athletics track lap challenge, there was something to physically and mentally challenge everyone.

Claire Taylor, Health and Wellbeing Manager for Wigan Warriors, said they were “very keen” to provide a variety of activities for their members. She said: “People presume they don’t want to do the things they used to do any more – but they do. People surprise you!”

Claire talked about the member who attended with his wife – and they participated in the athletics track lap challenge: “He got to the track – and he was off! We later discovered, via his wife, that he was a marathon runner when he was younger.”

The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic has created new issues for the project users and organisers. Claire explained that for some participants, the progress of dementia speeded up during lockdown, as their minds were not being stimulated as much as before. There is also the issue of some beneficiaries not having internet access, which means that reaching people

digitally was not possible.

However, the project has tried to keep things alive and active for their participants via virtual means with recorded relaxation and yoga sessions, question and answer sessions with Wigan players and other online activities, to reach as many participants as possible. The project is hopeful that with their new project ‘Moving Memories’ they will be able to provide a much-needed service, as before.

“WE HAVE ALL DEVELOPED A NEW CIRCLE OF FRIENDS, SOME ON DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE JOURNEY. WE ALL FIND THIS REASSURING TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER. FOR THE TIME WE ARE AT RUGBY MEMORIES IT MEANS MUM AND I CAN RELAX KNOWING DAD IS SAFE.”



WALKING WITH THE WOUNDED - VETERANS IN THE COMMUNITY SCOTLAND

AWARDED £15,000



Walking with the Wounded received £15,000 of **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme** funding from the Trust for their 'Veterans in the Community Scotland' project, which was a one-year veteran-led endeavour, commencing in December 2018.

The project focused on building key confidence, leadership and employability skills in veterans, as well as boosting their mental health by organising volunteering projects that focused on doing positive work within their own communities. The volunteering projects were shaped by the veterans' own interests and priorities, and the veterans themselves were a critical part of the thinking and planning process ahead of any events taking place.

All volunteering placements were prioritised in terms of the impact their work would have on the

community, be it local, regional or national; their work aimed to reach as many people as possible.

One project was organised at the Cranhill Development Trust, which is a community-centre-based organisation in the east end of Glasgow. Historically, it serves an area of high socio-economic deprivation, as well as an extremely diverse community, including a refugee population. Approximately 100 people use the centre every day and it hosts a number of activities, such as clubs for children and elderly people, as well as hosting employability and adult education clubs.

The veterans decided to give the centre a much-needed makeover (although there were logistical difficulties in that they needed to paint the ladies' facilities). However, this challenge was overcome as the volunteers worked at night so as not to

disturb the service users.

The group of veteran volunteers also helped raise funds at short notice for the Cranhill Development Trust's children's' Christmas party once they heard the news that one of the trusts' corporate sponsors had withdrawn funding. Dressed in their elf finery, they did a collection at a local shopping centre, which raised enough money for the party to go ahead.

Other projects the veteran volunteers got involved in included a response to a Facebook plea by the Marie Trust, a homeless charity based in Glasgow. The Trust were asking for donations of warm clothing to help homeless people in the local area. The veterans organised their own collection effort via Gumtree and managed to amass a collection of over 200 warm winter items and, importantly, 50 warm coats, for distribution to homeless people. The poignancy of this volunteer effort is that many of the veterans organising and taking part in the collections were living in supported accommodation, and before this, sadly had experience of living on the freezing streets during winter.

Another group of veterans decided to encompass some mental health and wellbeing time with community service and organised a litter pick from Dumbarton to Balloch, on the banks of Loch Lomond. 6.5 miles later (in unkind weather

conditions) they had over 20 bags of rubbish and had helped transform a section of their local countryside that has over four million tourists per year. As a result of this, comments Project Manager William, "they kept the bonny Banks of Loch Lomond looking bonny again once more".

The impact of this volunteering work has led to employment opportunities for many of the veterans, and over half of them now have their own accommodation. None of the veterans who participated in the project returned to homelessness status; an overwhelming majority reported an increase in their own mental health and wellbeing. One remarked that there "is more happiness in giving", which reflects the project outcome as a whole.

**“AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY
(OF VETERANS) REPORTED
AN INCREASE IN THEIR OWN
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING.
ONE SAID THAT “THERE IS
MORE HAPPINESS IN GIVING”
WHICH REFLECTS THE PROJECT
OUTCOME AS A WHOLE.”**





LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - WINGS TO THE PAST

AWARDED £20,000

Wings to the Past was awarded £20,000 as part of the **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme** in 2018. An RAF steering group worked with Lincolnshire County Council on a project aimed at bringing down personal barriers, allowing RAF personnel and their families to get closer together and forge connections through archaeology.

15 families worked together to research, dig and excavate a Roman ruin in Riseholme, near to several RAF bases in Lincolnshire. The nine-month long project had several long-lasting effects on the lives of the families who took part.

One of the main organisers of the project, Brian James, explained how mental health issues were taking their toll on the RAF personnel and their families who were serving in the area. The strain of deployment and the subsequent isolation of

the families from their loved one was having a negative effect on all their lives. Brian became involved in a local archaeology group and, during a dig near RAF Waddington, discovered the mindfulness and positive feelings that being involved in an archaeological excavation could bring.

From this, the concept of Wings to the Past was born. Through collaboration with Lincolnshire County Council and a local archaeological company, funding from the Trust was then applied for. The project also included assistance from staff at the University of Lincoln. Families taking part also participated in classroom sessions, workshops and other theoretical activities before the three-week dig commenced.

For Brian, seeing how the families benefited by bonding with each other and the other participants

was the highlight of the project.

He explains: "It was the hidden things that were the success of the project. One lad said that being with my daddy was the best part (of the dig), and that hit me like a steam train."

Another participant in the project, Sandra, said that when she first signed up to take part, she wasn't sure what to expect. However, she confirmed that "for her, the project was so much more than archaeology, there was such a sense of community and peacefulness during the activity".

Leigh, another participant said that for him, the project was "very, very special". Having had five different jobs and three operational deployments during his last four years in the RAF, family time was something that had been put on the back burner. He has two children, now aged 9 and 12, and admitted there was "lots of turbulence" in his life. He agreed the best part of the project was getting to spend time with his family and to bond with his children over archaeological finds. His daughter found a Roman coin, which caused much excitement, and this spurred the family on to do their own research.

Leigh surmises that this project on its own would have saved the NHS a great deal of money in mental health provision. He reflects: "If the project

saved just one marriage in the process, it would have been worth it. I signed up to do archaeology, but it was a lot more than that."

Due to the overwhelming success of the project and the effect it had on the 15 families who took part, Brian's initial idea was to roll it out on a national basis. Unfortunately, due to Covid, this idea has now had to be postponed for the next year or so. However, the group intend to research and apply for further funding, so the model can be rolled out to other military groups, not just at RAF bases.



THE ADVOCACY PEOPLE - MILITARY INTEGRATION AND TRAINING

AWARDED £19,439

The Advocacy People received a grant from the Trust of £19,439 as part of the **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme**.

The grant funded their 'Military Integration and Training' project, which was held in 2018/2019. The project aimed to provide specialist support for veterans in the Devon and Torbay area, by organising integration events and awareness training for the veteran community's employers and civilian frontline delivery staff working with veterans.

16 Veteran Awareness training events were held across the region in Plymouth, Tavistock, Torbay, Newton Abbot, and Exeter, with over 160 participants benefiting from the sessions. Any organisation in the area could sign up to receive the free training, and housing providers, veteran

support charities, the NHS and local councils were all very keen to engage. Each training session focused on the specific needs of the veteran in a civilian employment setting; the aim was to deliver the content in a light, humorous way, without detracting from any meaning.

Focusing on how veterans' lives are socially constructed while they are in the Armed Forces, the course offered civilian employers an insight into the professional mindset of a veteran, and why they might think or act a certain way in the workplace.

Kevin Bunt, a senior advocate for the Plymouth office, and himself a Royal Navy veteran, delivered the training for the majority of the sessions funded by the Trust grant. He explained the importance of the training and how it gave an insight into the former life of a veteran and how it affects their civilian career once they have left the Armed Forces:

"When you are in the military, your life is socially constructed—you become almost institutionalised. This social impact affects your entire life and can explain the difficulties that veterans have in adjusting to civilian life outside the Armed Forces. During the training, we talk about that social impact; the language that veterans use (which can differ between Services) and even the nicknames they have for each other."

Kevin said that The Advocacy People had received positive feedback from the training course, and, in fact, one local employer found it "illuminating, and it now influences the way that we as an employer engage with veterans".

Although delivered to many organisations, the project worked closely with Teignbridge Borough Council, aligning with their Armed Forces



Covenant statement that “veterans and mental health do not equal PTSD”. The training aimed to move organisations away from a commonly held belief that all veterans must have been to Iraq or Afghanistan, or have experienced conflict or war in some manner. In this way, the focus on PTSD and “debunking the myths and assumptions” that people have surrounding veterans and mental illness, were discussed and realised by course delegates in a safe and supportive manner.

Due to the success of the training course, The Advocacy People hoped to deliver a further six sessions across Torbay and Plymouth as the demand from employers was there. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, these have been put on hold for the foreseeable future. They feel it is important to deliver these training courses face-to-face, so it is hoped the organisation will be able to re-engage with their training courses once restrictions and funding allows.





THE FIGHTING CHANCE - FIGHTING CHANCE FOR

AWARDED £19,843

The Fighting Chance received £19,843 from the Trust in 2018 for a one-year project as part of the **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme**. The Fighting Chance for Veterans project funded an intensive employment support project, which links health and wellbeing with employment support, to help extremely vulnerable veterans get their lives ‘back on track’. The project is for those veterans who are the furthest from entering the labour market, and those struggling with isolation, housing issues or substance misuse.

The support provided by The Fighting Chance, as explained by Development Manager Bart, “grew from experience of working with veterans over several years”. The project team would

often encounter veterans who had been “round the block”, some of whom had had unsuccessful encounters with other organisations or NHS services.

The Fighting Chance’s unique offering of boxing training, together with one-to-one support, works on the principle of improving motivation and wellbeing.

Bart explains: “When you take those first steps to feeling better, you’re much more likely to put the building blocks in place of looking for work or training. We don’t badge our programmes as mental health or employment interventions; but once veterans have trained for a few weeks, they start to feel better and will tell us what kind of help



they need - then we can really start to plan what we do next. That might be anything from help with benefits or housing, right through to getting employment.”

The project works closely with Stoll and Veterans Aid, who will refer clients to them. They often get referrals by word of mouth from other project users, as well as the Department of Work and Pensions and TILS. Veterans are encouraged to bring their families along to the sessions, as it is felt this can also help with a positive mindset.

The project has had further challenges due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The project team felt their users suffered greatly during lockdown, struggling with isolation and other issues.

The Fighting Chance adopted new ways of working, with online support, outdoor exercise sessions in smaller groups during the summer and options for training and support online, should Covid restrictions increase.

Satisfaction with their services is extremely important to the Fighting Chance team, with their

outcomes survey proudly showing that 95% of clients felt their mental wellbeing had improved. 23% of project participants are currently employed and 36% have moved into some form of training and/or education to further their employment prospects.

Bart says the key to supporting the veterans is to focus on the one thing that is holding them back: “We even ended up driving one veteran to his new accommodation after he was made homeless. Once we sorted that, it meant we could focus on finding him suitable work.”



MOUNT STREET SCHOOL - OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

AWARDED £10,460

Mount Street Infant School in Brecon has a regular intake of military children into the school community all year round. The school received an **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme** award of £10,460 in 2018 to build an outdoor classroom in recognition of the school's commitment to the military community.

20% of the children on roll at Mount Street have Service pupil status. Of these, 14% speak Nepali as a first language. The school Estyn report, published in January 2020, shows that the school has an "exemplary" level of support for Service children.

Head teacher Shan Kenchington explained the school's inclusive approach:

"Our teaching staff are very skillful in welcoming the children in. Military families choose our school because they can feel the warmth and inclusion that happens inside the building. We don't feel that there are 'military' or 'non-military' children here, they are all part of the school community".

Outdoor learning has been embedded in the culture of the school for the last 20 years, as the school is fortunate to have its own woodland and extensive grounds. Seeing the positive benefits the Forest School curriculum gave to the children, the school decided they wanted to offer them an outdoor classroom facility that could also be used by the wider civilian and military community.

The facility was opened in August 2019, and the school was able to enrich the lives of the students by organising many activities. These included open-air concerts, learning events and events that embraced the Nepalese culture of many of the military pupils.



With current social distancing measures in place, the outdoor classroom is in high demand as both a teaching and a community facility. Groups are strictly timetabled and offer the community a much needed outside resource. Small Forest School groups are taking place, and local groups, such as the Brownies, can meet in a Covid-secure environment.

to offer something without being inside. It also strengthens our links with the wider community. This facility is one positive thing that we can offer in a time of anxiety.”

Shan added: “There is much uncertainty in the local community, so it is great for us to be able



TRENDS ACROSS THE CASE STUDIES

Within the 12 qualitative case studies, four themes were identified during the evaluation. Each theme was clearly evidenced in the series of case studies.

The four themes are:

- Collaboration
- Communities
- Mental Health Support
- Referrals/Signposting

The graphic below shows the four main themes and the 10 sub-themes that ran alongside them.

Projects were able to show benefits for those participating, and provide evidence of collaboration and providing meaningful support to communities, while complementing the wider programme themes.

The four themes identified in this research complement the overall **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme** objectives of Community Integration and Local Delivery of Services.

These findings are discussed in depth in the *Reach and Impact of the Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme* report.

Further details on grants awarded under this programme can be found at: <https://covenantfund.org.uk/projects-supported-by-the-armed-forces-covenant-fund-trust/>

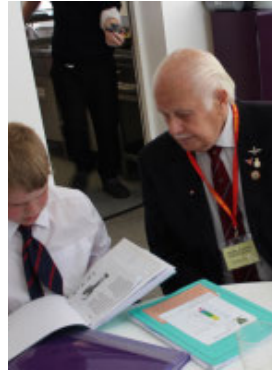


About us

The Armed Forces Covenant Trust manages the grant programmes funded by the Covenant Fund.

We also run wider funding programmes that support the Armed Forces community.

You can find out more about our work at www.covenantfund.org.uk



Contact us:
info@covenantfund.org.uk
www.covenantfund.org.uk

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact us.