

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



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Foreword



Melloney Poole

**Chief Executive,
Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust**

I am delighted to introduce this Review, which has been a collaborative piece of work by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust team, led by Sonia Howe, who has been the main driving force, and helped by Rachel Murphy and Nicci Shayler in particular. I am extremely grateful to them for the enthusiasm with which they have worked together, and with our grant holders, and this, the resulting analysis, shows quite clearly that the ***Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme*** has made a difference to Armed Forces communities across all four UK nations.

This programme was designed to be a demand-led, light touch, easily accessible grants programme which, while bounded by the two strands of Community Integration and the Local Delivery of Services, enabled organisations working for and with the Armed Forces community to access sufficient amounts of funding to run a project, try a new way of working and /or develop new relationships across their local area.

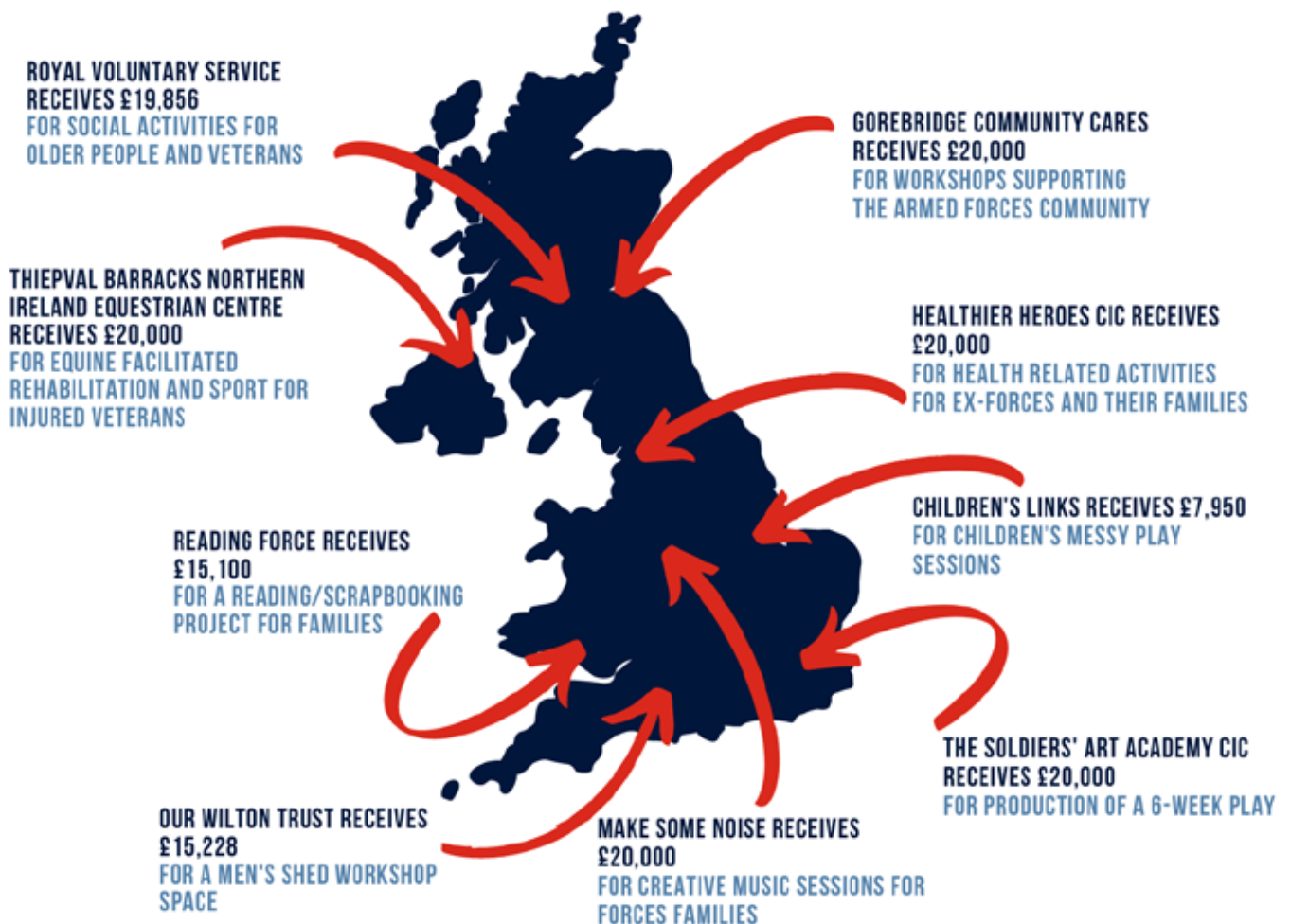
The common bond between all these successful projects was always to support the Armed Forces Covenant and to build stronger links between Armed Forces communities and their local communities.

We are most grateful to our colleagues, the Military and Civilian Integration officers in Regional Command, who set up and coordinated the Regional and Devolved Administrations Panels and provided essential local knowledge, expertise and understanding of the needs of their communities. They have been a continuing source of expert advice, without which these grants may not have had the impact which the Trust can now demonstrate.

The Chairman of the Trust, Helen Helliwell, has been an inspiration to the Trust team throughout and the Trustees of the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust have been outstandingly supportive of this work. Their decisions have shown that small grants can make a huge difference to the lives of so many people and that, together, the impact is substantial. Thank you all and I hope this Review will show the determination, commitment and dedication that exists across the United Kingdom to make the Armed Forces Covenant meaningful for all.

ARMED FORCES COVENANT: LOCAL GRANTS PROGRAMME

UK-wide support for the Armed Forces community...



GRANTS OF UP TO £20,000



**COMMUNITY INTEGRATION
AND/OR DELIVERY OF LOCAL
SERVICES**

 **THE ARMED FORCES
COVENANT FUND TRUST**

Executive Summary

The **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme** awarded grants of up to £20,000, which supported the aims 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.

Community Integration grants sought 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 UK nations, and within different geographic areas within England. Across all the grants, funding was made available between the two funding strands of Community Integration and the Local Delivery of Services, with charities most likely to be delivering services. 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.

The largest category of grant holders were charities supporting the Armed Forces community, receiving 62% of the overall funding. Community Interest Companies (CICs) that met the eligibility requirements received 11% of the overall value of grants.

Armed Forces units received 9% of the overall funding and were the third largest group after charities and CICs. They also tended to ask for slightly smaller grants than the other types of organisations, with an average grant size of £13,540. Projects within Armed Forces units generally provided extra support for Armed Forces families or to improve relations with the local wider community. Schools were the fourth largest group of grant recipients, receiving 7% of the total value of grants for projects supporting

Armed Forces families; with an average grant size of £15,860.

Within a sample of 144, there was evidence that projects that delivered community integration activities contained a mixture of beneficiaries from Armed Forces and civilian communities. When grant spend was analysed within the sample, projects that targeted veterans received the largest overall share of funding, with Armed Forces families receiving the second largest share of funding based on the total amount of grants awarded. Where projects were addressing the Community Integration strand, there was evidence of joint activities between Armed Forces and civilian communities.

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 offering meaningful support to communities; while complementing the wider programme strands of Community Integration and Local Delivery of Services.

The four themes identified in this research complement the overall **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme** objectives.



Figure 1: Themes noted across Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme projects

Introduction

Between 2015 and 2020, the Trust awarded grants of up to £20,000 under the **Armed Forces Covenant Fund: Local Grants programme**.

A total of £11,525,200 was awarded to 712 organisations to deliver projects.

Projects needed to meet one or both of the two programme strands of Community Integration and Local Delivery of Services to the Armed Forces community within their local area.

Community Integration projects needed to create strong local links between the Armed Forces community (i.e. current and former members of the Armed Forces and their families) and civilian communities. Successful applications to the programme could clearly demonstrate how they would make an impact in overcoming barriers to better integration, while improving perceptions, attitudes and understanding.

Programme guidance highlighted the importance of projects rooted in their communities which have grown out of a specific local need, and for shared benefits for Armed Forces and civilian communities, with mutual development, delivery,

and benefits for both communities.

Delivery of Local Services projects were projects which offered financial advice, housing, mental and physical health, employability, or social support for serving Armed Forces personnel, veterans, and their families. Projects had to demonstrate that they would be well connected, both to their beneficiaries and to other relevant organisations, and be able to show how the services they provide would be well publicised, accessible, and joined-up.

Grants made could fund projects of up to one year. The final grants were awarded in March 2020 and it is likely that some of the projects in the final round will need to have an extension to their grant, due to challenges in delivering projects relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. Final completion on all of the grant activities will therefore be in the 2021/22 financial year.

Background

The Covenant Fund was launched in 2015 with LIBOR funding of £10 million per year, taking direction from the cross-government Covenant Reference Group. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) established a National Panel to make decisions on which organisations should receive grants. Robust grant making processes were developed.

The first grants were made in November 2015. These first grants were required to use the Armed Forces Covenant logo on their publicity materials, and all were required to submit at the end of their one-year grants, a report of up to 2,000 words. They were asked to describe their project in full, including pictures, news reports and other evidence of social media engagement, to build up a national picture of what the Covenant Fund small grants, cumulatively, could achieve in terms of supporting the delivery and recognition of the Armed Forces Covenant. This requirement of grant reporting remained in place throughout the programme.

As part of the assessment process, grants officers would send applications to Regional Devolved Boards containing local Armed Forces, charity and local government representatives. These Boards would provide commentary on the fit of the application in line with local needs. Applications were also assessed by grants officers. Unsuccessful applicants were provided copies of their assessment forms to aid transparency and give organisations feedback

on their application.

For the first three years, the Covenant Fund was based within the MOD. In April 2018, following a decision that it should become independent, it moved to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (the Trust).

In the first year of being an independent Trust, a new grant management system was introduced, enabling grant reporting to be done online, and facilitating improvements to the application process. The Trust launched its own website to host application materials and provide access to an online application portal. Decisions on grants were made by the Trustees of the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, who had previously acted as the National Panel.

The Trust has published Annual Reports on Covenant Fund expenditure for every year since 2015/16. These reports contain background and details of expenditure for all Armed Forces Covenant Fund programmes. In 2019, the Trust published a review of the first three years of funding through the ***Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme***. In the first three years, 430 grants worth £7 million had been awarded. The report explored geographic and thematic grant distribution.

All of these reports can be accessed at www.covenantfund.org.uk



What did the programme aim to achieve?

The **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme** had two aims. It would fund projects that either supported Community Integration and/or enabled the Delivery of Local Services that provided some meaningful support for people from Armed Forces communities.

Community Integration projects aimed to create strong local links between the Armed Forces community (current and former members of the Armed Forces and their families) and civilian communities. They had to be able to clearly demonstrate how they would have impact in overcoming barriers to better integration, while improving perceptions, attitudes and understanding. The programme guidance stated that:

“For the project to be truly effective in achieving community integration, there should be shared development, delivery and benefits for both communities.”

The Delivery of Local Services strand provided funding to local projects which offered direct support in some way to members of the Armed Forces community. This could be financial advice, housing, mental and physical health, employability or social support for serving Armed Forces personnel, veterans, and their families.

The programme guidance stated that:

“Projects must be well connected, both to their beneficiaries and to other relevant organisations, and be able to demonstrate how the services they provide will be well-publicised, accessible and joined up.”

Applicants to the programme needed to show they had experience and a track record of working with the Armed Forces community, as well as a good understanding of the issues facing them, as part of the application and assessment process. There was scope within the application for applicants to give evidence of real engagement and partnership working - with either an Armed

Forces charity or an Armed Forces unit.

The programme guidance stated that all applicants should work closely with their Local Covenant Partnerships to ensure their project was properly connected locally, responded to recognised need and did not duplicate other provision. Applicants were required to show the need for their project in their application form.

Projects were required to meet the following criteria.

- How well the project addressed the priority and how it would meet the specific requirements of that priority.
- Evidence of the need for the project.
- Engagement, partnership working and collaboration.
- How well the project was likely to be delivered.
- To what extent the project represents value for money
- To what extent we could have confidence that the project would have lasting impact, delivering changes that last beyond the funding period.

Projects were assessed by staff with grant making experience, and decisions on funding were made by the National Panel (2015-2018) and the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trustees (2018-2020).



How did the Trust conduct this study?

The Trust made 719 **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme** awards between 2015 and 2020. Seven of the grants were later withdrawn at the request of the grant holder as circumstances had changed, and the projects could no longer be taken forward. All grants were required to provide evidence of spend, and produce a report detailing the activities undertaken by that grant, and the impact that this had.

The Trust identified a sample of 144 grants which had completed their End of Grant report online and had submitted a 2,000-word self-impact and evaluation report to the Trust. These grants were awarded and completed within the 2017/2018, 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 funding years. Comparisons between the 144 grants in the sample, and the overall portfolio of 712 grants, are discussed in more detail below.

Grants under this programme were awarded for a year or less, with the last grant awards made for projects beginning in April 2020. Some projects were given extensions to allow longer for a project to be completed. Time extensions were offered to projects that experienced negative impacts because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Projects will therefore still be underway until April 2021 and beyond.

As well as analysing reports to find quantitative data trends, 12 organisations delivering projects were interviewed by the Trust's Policy and Impact Analyst to explore the impact of their work. However, in order to evaluate the awards in this way, a cross-section of grants was identified, which would be representative of the population of awards as a whole.

The same quantitative reports were run on the full 712 grant awards, and then the sample of 144. In this way, the entire grant population was compared to the sample in terms of grant size, geographical location and type of beneficiary served, to ensure they were representative of the grant award population as a whole. Both reports were analysed to ensure that the trends

on both reports were comparable or could be explained through the grant making team's in-depth knowledge on the different types of grants that were awarded each year.

In order to look at the 144 grants more closely and to identify themes that were common to some or all grants, the Trust conducted qualitative analysis by conducting interviews with grant holders and formulating case study reports. A representative cross-section of 12 case studies was chosen.

Case studies were identified based on geographical location (including a spread across the four countries of the UK), grant size and groups that benefitted from the grants. All interviews with the grant holder were semi-structured and explored the impact of the grant for beneficiaries.

The England regions used by Army Regional Command were used for geographical analysis of grant distribution. Each region of the UK has an Army Brigade or Regional Point of Contact, and these are the regions used for grouping projects into regions across the programme as a whole. The regions within England are South West, South East, London, East, West Midlands, North East and North West. The regional boundaries can be seen in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2.



Comparisons between the sample of 144 grants that were looked at in depth, and the 712 grants in total

The End of Grant reports explored within the sample are similar to the geographic distribution of the grant awards made through the **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme**.

Overall, projects funded in Scotland represent the largest amount of grants in the sample of 144; however, Scotland received a significant share of grants within the overall programme.

The North West is the largest area funded within the amount in full grant spread and is represented to a smaller degree within the sample of 144 grants.

Chart 1: Geographical grant distribution across 712 awarded grants

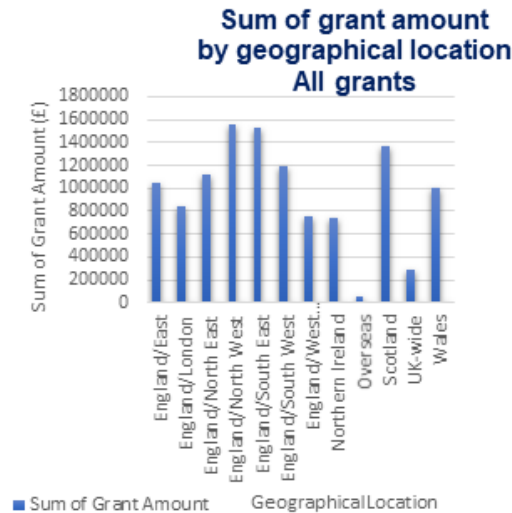
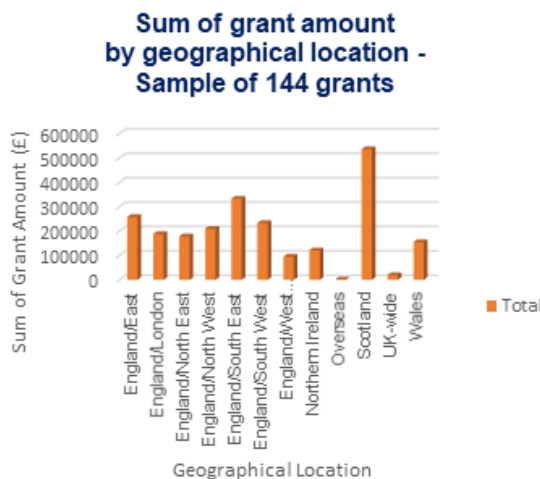


Chart 2: Geographical grant distribution across a sample of 144 awarded grants



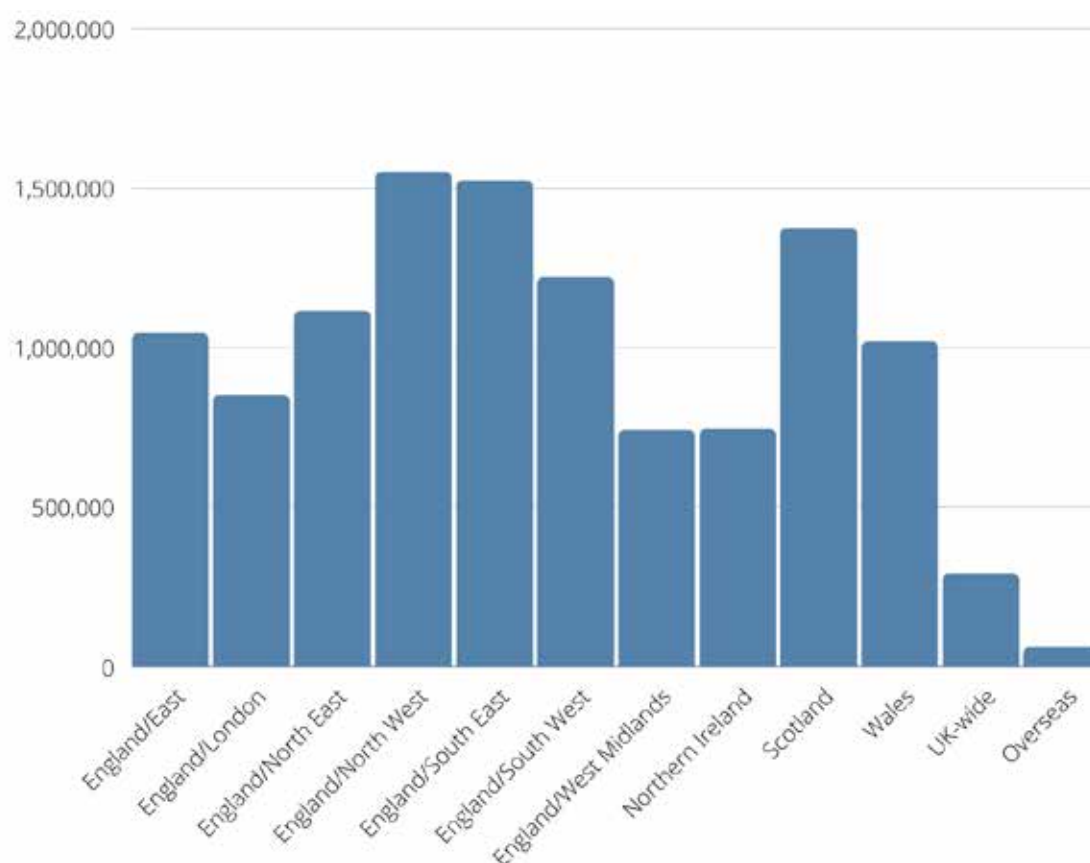
Overview of the Programme as a Whole

712 grants were awarded over the five-year period of the **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme**. Projects were funded throughout the UK, with a small number of grants made overseas.

Geographical Area	Total value of grants awarded (£)	Total number of grants awarded
England/East	1,044,035	69
England/London	849,091	49
England/North East	1,113,331	66
England/North West	1,550,105	87
England/South East	1,522,728	101
England/South West	1,219,095	70
England/West Midlands	740,687	50
Northern Ireland	743,931	45
Scotland	1,373,656	86
Wales	1,017,726	68
UK-wide	290,575	16
Overseas	60,240	5
Grand Total	11,525,200	712

Table 1: Numbers and values of grants awarded split by country and region.

Chart 3: Values of grants across geographic areas.



The smallest areas of funding were for UK-wide projects and overseas projects. UK-wide projects were eligible under the programme, but needed to be able to show how they would impact on local communities.

A small number of grants were awarded to

projects based within Armed Forces units overseas, including £8,560 to the British Forces Cyprus Youth Service for a Healthy Lifestyles Project that used creative approaches to raise awareness of health-related issues for young people living on the Forces base through activities and workshops.



Figure 3: Geographic breakdown of Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme funding

Projects based overseas were awarded smaller grants on average. The largest average grants

were awarded for UK-wide projects, and for projects in the South West.

	Average Grant Size	Percentage of Overall Funding Received
Northern Ireland	16,531.80	6%
Scotland	15,972.74	12%
Wales	14,966.56	9%
England/East	15,130.94	9%
England/London	17,328.39	7%
England/North East	16,868.65	10%
England/North West	17,817.30	13%
England/South East	15,076.51	13%
England/South West	17,415.64	11%
England/West Midlands	14,813.74	6%
UK-wide	18,160.94	3%
Overseas	12,048.00	1%

Table 2: Average grant size per geographic area and percentage of total value of grant funds awarded to projects in that area.

Grants were awarded to projects for periods of up to one year. A maximum of £20,000 could be awarded.

Grants could be awarded for activities which supported stronger integration between military and civilian communities; delivered local services to Armed Forces communities or did a combination of both.

The majority of the grants were awarded for projects designed to improve community integration. These could be projects which encouraged children from Armed Forces and non-Armed Forces families to mix and play together, supported community projects around Armed

Forces bases or encouraged veterans to mix with, or play a role within, their local communities.

325 Community Integration projects were supported over the life of the programme, with a value of £5,051,593.

230 Local Delivery of Services projects were supported, with an overall grant value of £3,787,338.

These projects provided support directly to people from Armed Forces communities and could support serving personnel, Armed Forces families or veterans, or a combination of these groups.



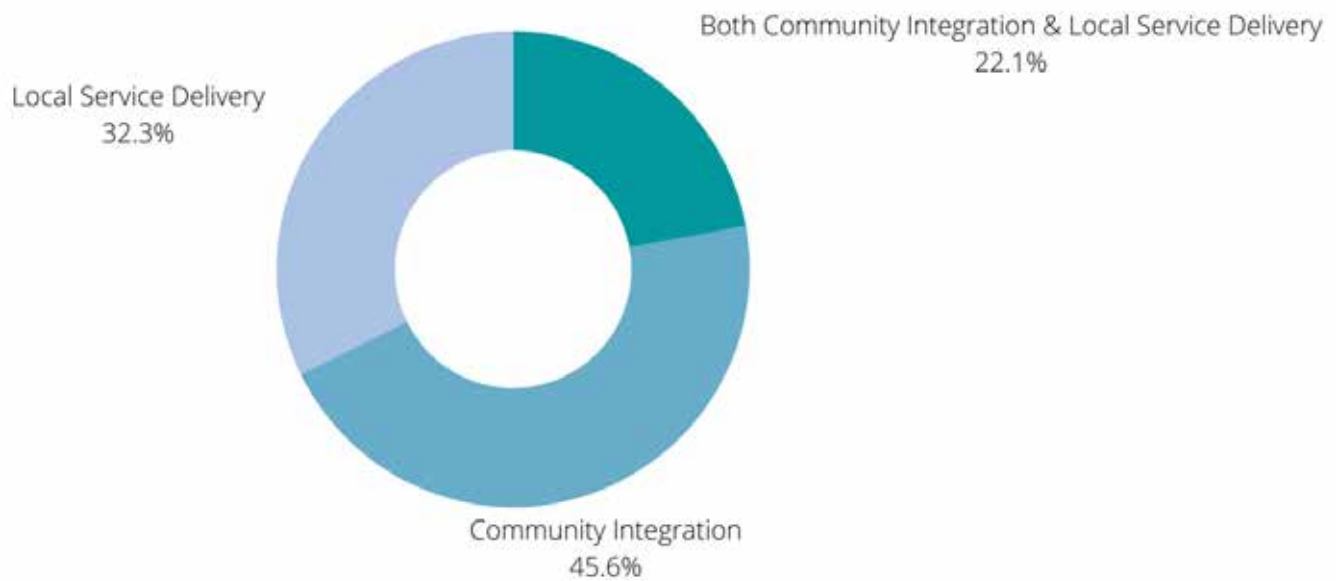


Chart 3: Funding distribution across themes.

Some projects addressed both of the funding strands. These projects would provide direct support to Armed Forces communities, while also encouraging wider integration within the local community. 157 grants were awarded to projects within this category, with a total value of £2,686,269.

The average grant size for Community Integration projects was £15,543, which was slightly lower than the £16,467 awarded on average to Local Delivery of Services projects. Projects spanning both strands had larger grants, with an average size of £17,110.

Local Delivery of Services grants were particularly prevalent within Scotland, and it is noteworthy that this is the only area (excluding UK-wide grants) where the number of Local Delivery of Services projects within that geographic area was greater than the number of awards for Community Integration projects. Within Northern Ireland, the majority of awards were for projects which addressed both Community Integration and Local Delivery of Services strands. Within Wales, there was a particular focus on Community Integration activities, with a much smaller proportion of funding going towards Local Delivery of Services projects.



	Both Community Integration & Local Service Delivery		Community Integration		Local Service Delivery	
	Number of grants	Value of grants (£)	Number of grants	Value of grants (£)	Number of grants	Value of grants (£)
Northern Ireland	20	358,482	16	229,419	9	156,030
Scotland	10	160,509	35	554,354	41	658,793
Wales	14	211,055	41	578,479	13	228,192
England/ East	19	295,069	35	522,170	15	226,796
England/ London	9	154,365	28	479,687	12	215,039
England/ North East	9	165,858	30	481,057	27	466,416
England/ North West	26	487,959	27	456,786	34	605,360
England/ South East	22	374,305	51	776,574	28	371,849
England/ South West	20	359,107	27	449,074	23	410,914
England/ West Midlands	4	64,130	29	415,957	17	260,600
UK-wide	1	18,870	5	98,356	10	173,349
Overseas	3	36,560	1	9,680	1	14,000
Grand Total	157	2,686,269	325	5,051,593	230	3,787,338

Table 3: Grant awards by theme and geographic area.

Applicants to the programme could highlight an additional category that was most relevant to their project, from a list of drop-down options.

Category	Number of projects within category
Education and Employment	152
Health and Wellbeing	87
Social and Community	473
Total	712

Most projects identified that Social and Community categories were the best descriptor of their project. The next highest category was Education and Employment. The programme did not set out to support employability projects,

but would support projects that might improve skills or confidence of people from Armed Forces communities, which could have a secondary benefit of moving people closer to the labour market.

What types of organisations received grant awards, and what did they use them for?

Type of organisation	How many grants were awarded?	Value of grant awards (£)
Armed Forces Unit	77	1,042,572
Charity	426	7,193,115
Community Interest Company (CIC)	70	1,217,143
Local Authority	55	793,963
Other - Public Sector	22	289,864
Private Company	3	55,031
School	53	840,563
University	6	92,949
Total	712	11,525,200

Table 5: Grant distribution by type of organisation

The largest category of grant holders were charities, which received 62% of the overall funding. Community Interest Companies (CICs) received 11% of the overall value of grants.

Armed Forces units received 9% of the overall funding and were the third largest group after charities and CICs. They also tended to ask for slightly smaller grants than the other types of organisations, with an average grant size of £13,540. Projects within Armed Forces units generally provide extra support for Armed Forces families or improve relations with the local wider community. The Army Welfare Service Tidworth received £12,000 for the Larkhill Community Hub Café, which was co-ordinated by volunteers and supported by AWS Community Support, enabling the local community to develop skills and engage in learning opportunities created within the project.

Schools were the fourth largest grant recipients, receiving 7% of the total value of grants for projects supporting Armed Forces families, with

an average grant size of £15,860.

Local authorities also received 7% of the total value of the grants, but with a slightly smaller amount awarded overall, compared to schools. Other public sector organisations awarded grants included Parish and Town Councils, health organisations and Police and Crime Commissioners. NHS Hastings and Rother CCG received a grant for £20,000 for a Ghurkha Community Healthcare Toolkit. A wider Armed Forces network developed a Ghurkha families' booklet on how to use health services, including prevention, and a toolkit to accompany this.

Three grants were awarded to private organisations for projects that would achieve public good, including supporting Armed Forces spouses into employment and a dance project to educate the public about the Armed Forces. These awards were made in the first year of the programme; the programme eligibility criteria was later updated to exclude private companies.

	Numbers of grants awarded	Value of grants (£)
Armed Forces Unit	77	1,042,572
Both Community Integration & Local Service Delivery	20	265,368
Community Integration	41	598,732
Local Service Delivery	16	178,472
Charity	426	7,193,115
Both Community Integration & Local Service Delivery	90	1,617,347
Community Integration	177	2,914,919
Local Service Delivery	159	2,660,849
Community Interest Company (CIC)	70	1,217,143
Both Community Integration & Local Service Delivery	23	408,791
Community Integration	27	443,850
Local Service Delivery	20	364,502
Local Authority	55	793,963
Both Community Integration & Local Service Delivery	6	88,123
Community Integration	32	437,128
Local Service Delivery	17	268,712
Other - Public Sector	22	289,864
Both Community Integration & Local Service Delivery	5	84,764
Community Integration	13	125,100
Local Service Delivery	4	80,000
Private Company	3	55,031
Community Integration	2	35,031
Local Service Delivery	1	20,000
School	53	840,563
Both Community Integration & Local Service Delivery	12	201,876
Community Integration	30	461,708
Local Service Delivery	11	176,979
University	6	92,949
Both Community Integration & Local Service Delivery	1	20,000
Community Integration	3	35,125
Local Service Delivery	2	37,824
Grand Total	712	11,525,200

Table 6: Grant distribution by organisation type and theme.

Chart 4 shows the split between funding themes for six different categories of organisation, showing how the total funding awarded to these types of organisation was distributed across themes.

All of the six types of organisation spent more funding on projects to promote community integration than on projects to deliver services. Armed Forces units, local authorities and schools spent more than half of the funding allocated on Community Integration projects.

Charities were most likely to deliver projects that met the Local Delivery of Services strand, and, additionally, just over 20% of grants in this category were spent on projects that met both strands. An example of this is the £20,000 awarded to Derby County Community Trust for a

Veterans' Club that engaged with the ex-Service community in Derbyshire. The club brought them together with the wider community to share memories, re-connect and improved their physical and mental health.

Local authorities also used around a third of the funding they received through the Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme on projects that delivered local services to people from Armed Forces communities. The City of Cardiff Council received £20,000.00 for the Cardiff Veteran Advice Service. This provided a fast track/priority service for housing and budgeting advice at the Central Library Hub, giving veterans and their families specialist advice on a wide range of issues, including housing waiting list applications and enquiries, housing benefit applications, budgeting and debt advice.



Chart 4: Grant distribution by organisation type and theme.

When considering the whole portfolio of 712 grants awarded through the **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme**, there is evidence that grants were successfully awarded throughout the UK, and that there was a wide coverage of projects supported.

Different types of organisations were able to receive grants, with charities receiving 62% of the overall funding. CICs, Armed Forces units, schools and local authorities also benefitted.

Across all the grants, there was good distribution of funding between the two funding strands of Community Integration and Local Delivery of Services, with charities being the type of organisation most likely to be delivering services. 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.

Exploring grant impact through 144 projects that have completed their grant

As part of the evaluation of the **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme**, 144 projects that had completed their End of Grant reporting were analysed. All of these projects had been previously reviewed by a grants officer, and the grant had been closed. The 144 grants had a total value of £2,268,939. Figure 4 shows the distribution of these grants across the UK.

Which Armed Forces communities benefitted from the grants?

Within the grant sample, the primary grant beneficiary was explored. Armed Forces communities, including serving personnel, Armed Forces families and veterans could benefit from the programme. Civilian communities could also benefit from the programme through activities designed to increase integration between Armed Forces and civilian communities.

Projects could benefit more than one group. For this analysis the primary beneficiary group of the grant was identified using information supplied by the grant holder. For some projects, the focus of the community integration activity was designed to ensure that there was benefit for both Armed Forces and civilian communities, with the majority of these projects focused on developing a better understanding of, and integration with, local Armed Forces communities, through community projects that included civilians from the local area.



Figure 4: A map showing the locations of the projects included within the sample.

Beneficiary group	Total value of grants awarded to projects focusing on this beneficiary group (£)	Total number of grants awarded to projects focusing on this beneficiary group
Armed Forces Families	597,525	40
Armed Forces Families/ civilian communities	84,300	5
Serving Personnel	172,390	10
Serving Personnel/ civilian communities	569,189	38
Veterans	845,535	51
Total	2,268,939	144

Table 7: Numbers and values of grants awarded to projects focusing on different beneficiary groups within the sample of 144 grants analysed.

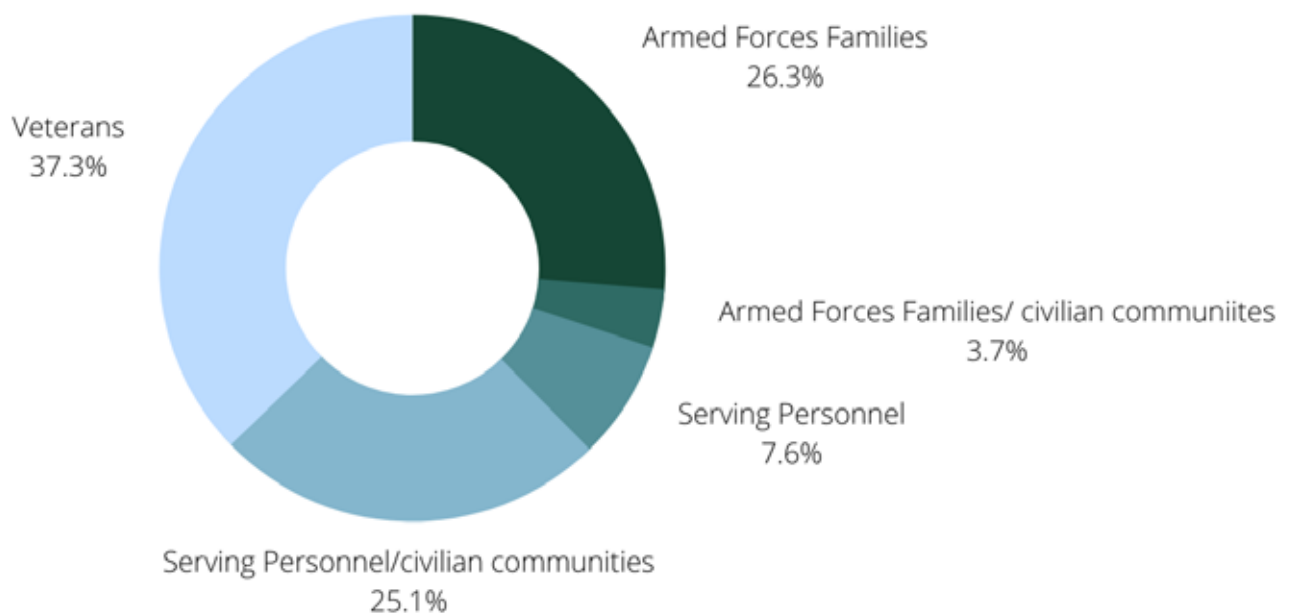


Chart 5: Percentages of grant funding for projects focusing on different beneficiary groups within the sample of 144 grants analysed.

Veteran-targeted projects received the highest amount of funding of the projects included in the sample. Examples of these types of projects include £20,000 for the Nottingham Forest Forces project, run by Nottingham Forest Community Trust, which supported veterans aged 50+ from across Nottinghamshire who were socially isolated, lonely and in need of support to lead a healthy and connected life. In Scotland, £3,416

was awarded to Erskine to carry out a six-month pilot project on how they could better-support veterans with dementia using personalised music playlists.

Armed Forces families received the second largest amount of funding within the sampled projects. Some of these projects took place within schools, like the £10,460 awarded to Mount

Street Infant and Nursery School for an outdoor classroom in the grounds of the school. The school has a mix of children from Armed Forces and civilian families. Families also benefitted from projects targeted at Armed Forces families with very young children.

£17,515 was awarded to Brookwood and Pirbright Children's Centre for a part time Outreach Worker to support families based at the Pirbright Army Training Centre. Their role was to welcome all new families, inform them of services, help to find pre-schools/schools, support both the Homestart group and Rainbow tots that already run at Pirbright and to recruit a bank of volunteer civilian and Service parents to join a 'buddy system' to bring families together and remove isolation.

Projects that supported serving personnel and civilian communities were the third largest group. Within these projects, the activities were highly focused on community integration activities designed to build stronger relationships between Armed Forces and civilian communities. The benefits of these projects were increased integration, and it was therefore not possible to allocate these projects to a single group of beneficiaries.

The Heritage of London Trust Operations Ltd received £20,000 for the St George's Woolwich Transition project, which shared a local heritage building with a cross-section of Woolwich communities, shared the history of the Royal Artillery across the community and undertook additional activities to develop stronger links between military and civilian communities in the local area.

Sustrans received £3,835 towards the Colburn Bridleway Upgrade. Resurfacing the existing bridleway has joined up two existing off-road routes for cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians between Brompton-on-Swale / Catterick Bridge and Catterick Garrison / Richmond creating a continuous safe route nearly seven miles long, which is usable all-year round. The improved path is used by local Walking for Health groups, riders from a nearby Equestrian Centre and by local cycling groups as well as individual cyclists, walkers and runners, of whom there are a large number in the Garrison.

Projects supporting serving personnel were the next largest group within the sample of 144 grants. The 10 grants that fell within this category provided direct support.

The Felix Fund ran a series of mindfulness courses for serving soldiers who are involved with Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) duties. The aim of these courses was to provide tools and techniques to enable individuals to be aware of stress or other mental health issues they may be experiencing.

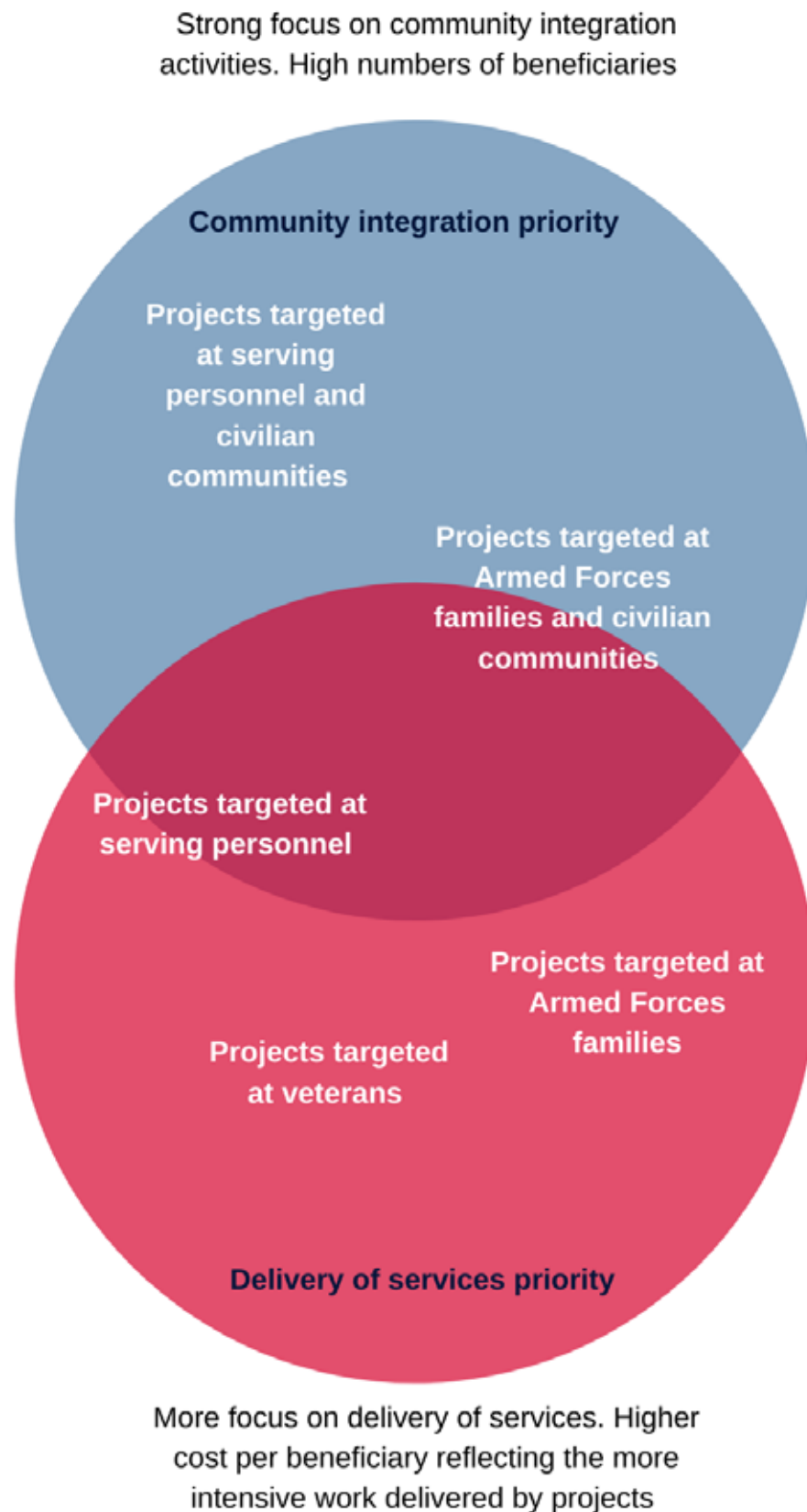
Some of the projects within this category had potential benefits for wider Armed Forces communities including veterans and Armed Forces families. Warwickshire County Council received £20,000 to develop e-learning training to raise awareness of challenges that people from Armed Forces communities can have in accessing services, and seeking to reduce these barriers.

The final category was for projects that support Armed Forces families and civilian communities. Within these grants, activities were mainly in schools and included targeted activities like the 'Reach for Blue Skies' project run by the Jon Egging Trust, which provided opportunities for young people across Yorkshire, often from underprivileged backgrounds, to participate in a targeted programme of support and engagement to boost outcomes. Young people could be from Armed Forces or civilian families, and the project would encourage volunteering from serving personnel.

Across a review of the activities conducted within this sample group, projects that supported Armed Forces and civilian communities had a higher likelihood of being involved in projects that delivered community integration.

This relationship is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: The relationship between project beneficiary category, and the overall programme themes.



Within the sample of 144 grants, all of the projects reported success in delivering their project. Projects within the sample were able to clearly articulate the success of their work and produced detailed narrative descriptions as part of their project reporting.

“We believe the programme contributed significantly towards reducing isolation in veterans and impacted positively on their mental wellbeing. We engaged 164 veterans over 12 months with an average age of 62, significantly exceeding our direct beneficiary engagement target of 60. We delivered regular monthly social events and activities, linking in, where possible, with commemorative events.

Our core focus was around the needs of the veterans and, therefore, we constantly evaluated and consulted with those attending, about what they would like to see more/less of. The responses and comments were fairly simple and reiterated the need for regular touch points each month - simply for a chat and to socialise with others.

Once these were established, we were able to develop additional activities such as walking football, play on the pitch, penalty shoot outs, matchday experiences, commemorative events, job opportunities and information sharing across our network of partners. Our network of partners attended sessions regularly to offer support and guidance in their areas of specialism, including financial and family support.

We are also aware of a number of veterans that attend the programme who have suffered with mental health issues and have regular ongoing support from one of our partner organisations”

Some projects highlighted changes they needed to put in place throughout delivery, that differed from their original plans. These show adaptability, and an ability to be able to draw positively from user feedback.

“In the early stages of our project, we suffered an unforeseen setback (as reported to our grants officer at the time) when our qualified XXXX resigned shortly after our Trainee XXX had taken up post..... This had a direct effect on our ability to achieve the outcomes of our grant during the period in which XXXX was working unsupported. However, we appointed a new XXX who took up post late July 2019, and a degree of normal service quickly resumed.”

“The project has been a success in that we have managed to work directly with 53 military veterans, none of whom were engaged with any services for the veteran community prior to their participation in this project. Some of those involved in the archery have taken their families with them to the sessions and this has assisted in the cohesion of the group – bringing families together and eliminating social isolation and social exclusion, which was a key aim of the project proposal. The sports on offer changed mid-way through the project (with permission from the Covenant Fund) as military veterans themselves wished to try yoga and archery, that were not listed on the original application.“

“Halfway through the project we had to contact the Covenant Fund as it was obvious that the majority of the beneficiaries the organisation were engaging with did not want to progress onto the coaching and instead would rather a further 12 weeks of participating in each sporting discipline (except for table tennis). As such, it was imperative that the organisation continued

with the project and adapted it to suit the needs of the beneficiaries.”

levels of success for projects in delivering their projects. 12 individual projects are explored in more depth in the next section.

Data within the End of Grant forms indicates high

Exploring impact in depth through 12 case studies

From the 144 projects, the Trust chose 12 case studies that were representative of the sample. The 12 case studies were based across the UK, including the Devolved Nations, and were a mixture of smaller and larger grants awarded

under this programme. All had completed their 2,000-word impact report to the Trust. The photographs taken were supplied as part of this, or voluntarily provided to the Trust during the case study information gathering process.

The case studies

Table 8 gives details of the case studies used for this report, which includes the name of the organisation, project title and where their project was based. It also shows the size of grant (maximum award was £20,000) and the type of organisation that benefitted from the grant. All case studies can be found in the companion document: Reach and Impact of the **Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants Programme** summary and case studies publication.

Figure 6: Locations of the case study projects.

Local Grants Case Studies

Where are our grant holders?



	Organisation Name	Project Title	Theme	Geographic Area	Size of Grants	Type of Organisation
1	RAF Association	Increasing the Employability of Spouses and Partners	Local Service Delivery	England/ South East	£20,000	Service Benevolent Fund
2	Outfit Moray	Community Adventure Links	Community Integration	Scotland	£20,000	Charity
3	Mount St Infant and Nursery School	Outdoor Classroom	Community Integration	Wales	£10,460	Educational Trust
4	The Fighting Chance in London CIC	The Fighting Chance for Veterans	Local Service Delivery	England / London	£19,843	Community Interest Company
5	Curzon Ashton Football Club	The Nash Alternative Sports Project	Community Integration	England / North West	£18,760	Sports Club
6	The Advocacy People	Military Advocacy and Integration Training	Both Community Integration and Local Service Delivery	England/ South West	£19,439	Not for Profit Organisation
7	Lincolnshire County Council	Wings to the Past	Community Integration	England / East	£20,000	Local Authority
8	Wigan Warriors	Rugby Memories	Both Community Integration and Local Service Delivery	England / North West	£8,000	Sports Club
9	Nottingham Forest Community Trust	Nottingham Forest Forces	Local Service Delivery	England / East	£20,000	Sports Club
10	Hampshire Cultural Trust	100 Thank Yous	Community Integration	England / South East	£20,000	Charity
11	Lisburn Sea Cadets	Boating Activities for All	Both Community Integration and Local Service Delivery	Northern Ireland	£20,000	Charity
12	Walking with the Wounded	Veterans in the Community Scotland	Local Service Delivery	Scotland	£15,000	Charity

Table 8: List of projects included within the case study analysis.

RAF Association - increasing the employability of RAF Spouses and partners

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.



Mount Street School - Outdoor Classroom

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.

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



The Advocacy People - Military Integration and Training



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 Veterans

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."



Analysis of case study themes

The 12 case studies undertaken were analysed qualitatively for recurring themes, and the following trends were identified.

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

Each theme was supported by several sub-themes, which are illustrated in Figure 7 and will be explored in greater depth within this section.

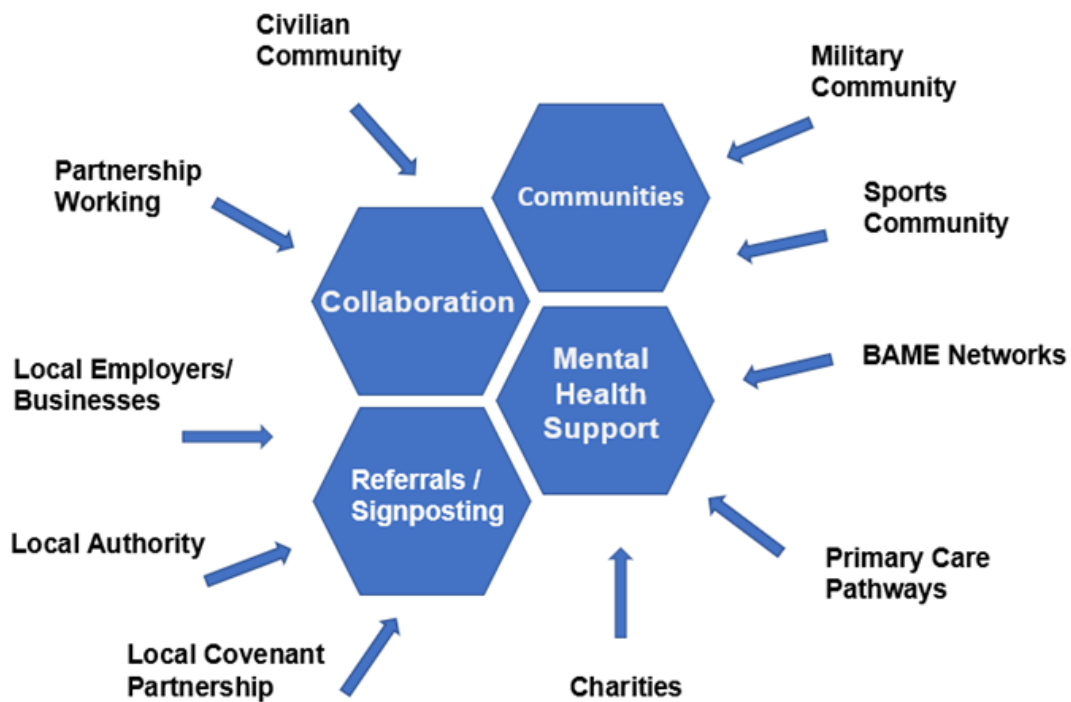


Figure 7: Themes noted across the Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme projects

Collaboration

The benefits of collaborative working have been seen consistently throughout the cross-section of grant holder case studies.

Collaboration could take a variety of forms.

- Organisations partnering with other organisations/charities to provide additional benefits and services.
- Organisations partnering with local authorities or Local Covenant Partnership.
- Organisations partnering with local military or civilian communities.
- Organisations partnering with local businesses.

For their 'Fighting Chance for Veterans Project' the organisation worked in collaboration with two other organisations who provide services to veterans - Stoll and Veterans Aid. These two charities provide support with accommodation to veterans who are suffering from homelessness issues. The support they offer includes everything from providing advice to giving a veteran a placement in supported housing.

As part of a partnership agreement with The Fighting Chance in London, the two organisations provided referrals to them for individuals who were experiencing issues in either finding employment or improving their life to a stage where they were able to think about entering the civilian labour market. As the issues of homelessness and unemployment go hand-in-hand, The Fighting Chance provide employment services in the



form of boxing training/life coaching to veterans, while Stoll and Veterans Aid were ready to tackle any issues regarding homelessness. This dual approach worked extremely well for a number of veterans, to enable them to start getting their lives back on track.

The two organisations, therefore, operated in partnership with each other, providing a one-stop-shop for assistance with two interlinked issues that veteran beneficiaries required support with.

Other projects that collaborated with charities/organisations that supported their aims included Rugby Memories and Nottingham Forest Community Trust, both of whom linked in with other organisations who support veterans and/or older people.

Nottingham Forest Community Trust were able to link in and collaborate with a whole host of organisations and charities who support the military community, including veterans; so if a particular need was found, they were able to refer them on straight away for assistance. Wigan Warriors had the support of these organisations but were also partnered with their local Age UK branch and dementia charities, who were also able to recommend and refer veterans on to participate in their project.

Lisburn Sea Cadets partnered with the Northern Ireland Veterans Support Office (NIVSO) in order to submit their grant funding bid for £20,000 to purchase a new Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB) for use by the cadets. The NIVSO has a wealth of information regarding grant application and management and were able to impart their specialist knowledge and advice to assist Lisburn Sea Cadets with a successful bid to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

The organisation also worked in conjunction with the Army Welfare Service (AWS), who were able to provide support and information 'behind the wire' to encourage more Service children and young people to join the Sea Cadets. As the target audience were living in closed military barracks, this collaboration with the AWS was essential, as they had the specialist knowledge required to be able to link Service children and young people with the Sea Cadets. They were able to reach more young people through their

youth club network and facilitated exposure to the Sea Cadets through a joint BBQ venture. Therefore, with the support and expert assistance of the two organisations, the project was firstly able to gain the Trust funding that it required to be able to operate the project, and then be more successful in its delivery by reaching more young people in Service communities.

Grant holders were very effective at collaborating relationships with both military and civilian communities to strengthen their project aim and reach more people. Mount Street School in Brecon had a successful Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants project creating an outdoor classroom, which benefitted the entire community, both military and civilian. With a large influx of students of a Nepalese background, due to a Gurkha regiment stationed nearby, the school reached out to that military community to help welcome the students to the school and ensure their needs were met.

The school has now hosted many events in celebration of the Nepalese culture, and the outdoor classroom has been used to facilitate these. Due to the current Covid pandemic (pre-lockdown) the emphasis has been on permitted face-to-face gatherings being outside to help prevent the spread of the virus. The school therefore, collaborated with the local community to help clubs for children to keep going. Because of the outdoor classroom, they were able to satisfy social distancing restrictions and meet face-to-face, helping to prevent isolation and loneliness. The outdoor classroom has been used to its full potential due to the collaboration between the two communities and the school, and has been a huge success.

Organisations who partner with local businesses have also seen great success in their projects. Wigan Warriors and Nottingham Forest both had the support of their respective sports clubs and they were able to provide logistical support and personnel that otherwise would not have been available.

The Advocacy People worked in conjunction with local businesses and the public sector to provide veteran advocacy training courses to these employers. These courses provided the organisations who attended, valuable insight into

the lives of veterans while they were serving in the military and provided them with support and guidance as to how to enable veterans working in a civilian working environment. The course discussed the professional mindset and social norms that veterans use, and how to best engage them in the civilian workplace. Workplaces that took part found the training “illuminating” and it enabled them to develop strategies to get the best out of their veteran employee cohort.

How collaboration was a feature among the projects reviewed is of note. Within the design of the programme, applicants were encouraged to explore how they would work with other organisations locally to deliver their projects. The collaboration demonstrated by projects not only adds value to delivery, but is likely to support better project outcomes through developing stronger local networks. There is also a link between the collaboration work discussed above, and the referrals/signposting theme discussed later.

Communities

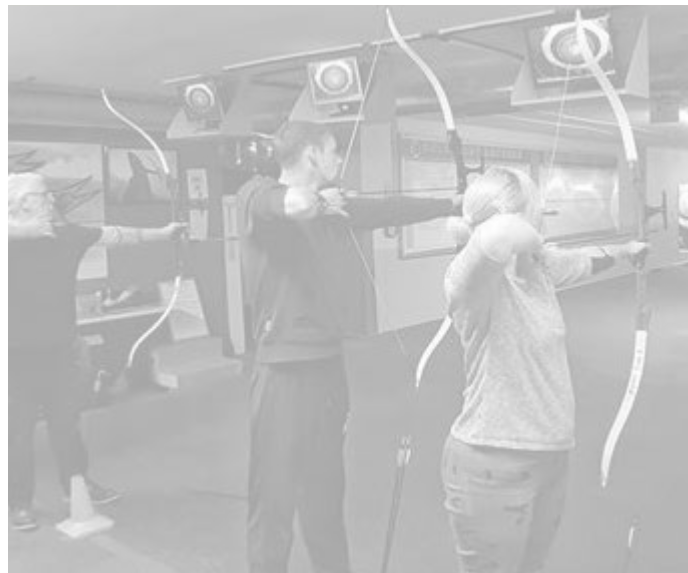
The theme of ‘community’ was evident throughout the series of case studies and each project was able to highlight where a different community either benefitted from the project or were able to work with the project to make it a bigger success. The case studies identified several different types of communities.

- 1) Civilian communities.
- 2) Military communities.
- 3) BAME communities.
- 4) Sports communities.
- 5) Business/charity communities.

The evidence that shows civilian communities working in partnership and alongside military communities is strong throughout the case studies. The strong themes of engagement between Armed Forces and civilian communities have been observed within the case studies, but community interaction was also noted across local communities of interest.

Outfit Moray’s ‘Community Adventure Links’ project sought to link Service children in the locality with local young people, in order to integrate them further into the community as these

young people felt they had limited opportunities to do so. Outfit Moray worked in conjunction with Kinloss Barracks and local sports clubs to offer these opportunities to Service children and young people, with the aim of forging connections and friendships locally and feel more part of the community. The case study shows that uptake for the project was high and repeat booking was as high as 60% in some cases. Also, several young people went on to undertake coaching qualifications in their chosen sport, showing the success of the project.



Hampshire Cultural Trust's project, '100 Thank Yous', sought to link several communities: the local Nepalese community in Aldershot, 10 The Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment (10 QOGLR)) and secondary school/sixth form students throughout the area. The aim of the project was for the local communities to gain a greater appreciation of the Gurkha regiment and their service to the UK in World War I, while at the same time forging a greater understanding and friendship between the communities. The commitment to this friendship between the communities is reported as still ongoing after the completion of the project.

The link between the Nepalese community, the military and the local civilian community is also strong in the Mount Street School case study, where the grant funding for an outdoor classroom seeks to link all of these communities together to provide a much-needed communal outside space. The outdoor classroom has become a vital resource to the community as a whole during the Covid pandemic, ensuring that young people can still link face-to-face, while adhering to social distancing restrictions in place.

Sports communities featured strongly in the cohort of case studies, from the provision of boxing training from The Fighting Chance, through to sports and social projects for veterans from Curzon Ashton Football Club, Wigan Warriors and Nottingham Forest Community Trust.

The Fighting Chance provides employment guidance and life skills coaching in the form of boxing training and 1:1 mentoring and support, to provide veterans with the skills they need in order to get ready for entering the civilian labour market. Working with veterans with a different intensity

of needs, they all have the common interest of boxing to provide motivation and wellbeing to achieve their goals.

Curzon Ashton aimed to provide different sports activities to 'hard to reach' veterans in Greater Manchester, and again, brought together individuals to alleviate loneliness and isolation, with the aim of training the participants to coach others in their chosen sport. With 53 participants, who otherwise would not have engaged with any other activity, and 30% of these individuals moving on to achieve a coaching qualification, the togetherness that a sports community provides achieved this project success.

The Wigan Warriors 'Rugby Memories' project aimed to provide older veterans (some of whom were suffering with dementia-type illness) with a place to meet to discuss their shared memories of military Service and their support for Wigan Warriors. The project was of benefit to the families who joined the project, firstly as support for their loved one, and then as a growing community of carers supporting each other.

Nottingham Forest Community Trust wanted to provide a service to socially isolated and lonely veterans. The club were keen to get a project in place, but they wanted the project design to be completely veteran led. As the Nottingham Forest FC community and fan base already had a huge veteran cohort, it was via a thorough consultation process in conjunction with the Local Covenant Partnership that the project emerged. The emphasis of the group was on social events, but with Nottingham Forest FC-themed events to

keep veterans engaged with football.

Business communities played a considerable role in many projects – from providing veteran advocacy and supporting training seminars run by The Advocacy People, to supporting RAF partners and spouses who wished to change career and run their own childminding business, thus supporting both the civilian and military community with much-needed childcare places.

The Advocacy People linked up with both private and public sector organisations to successfully run their training courses, and interest in these sessions remains strong in the area. The RAF Association partnered with a local childcare training provider to successfully enrol 32 RAF spouses/partners as registered childminders with OFSTED. Consultation showed that ‘approved’ childcare was in short supply around a number of RAF bases, and spouses/partners were looking for work that fitted in around their own lifestyle/childcare commitments, which can be difficult to do when in an often-isolated military environment.

Walking with the Wounded provided another veteran-led project, which enabled the veterans to engage with local businesses, organisations and charities to volunteer their services in order to boost their own experience, wellbeing and self-esteem. The veterans suffered from issues surrounding homelessness and employment and were able to engage with a number of organisations, including community trusts, homelessness charities and the local authority, in order to provide a much-recognised volunteering service.

Mental Health Support

Mental health support features highly in the majority of the case studies featured in this report. There are those projects studied that make mental health provision a core feature of their offering, or it has been shown to be the key impact the project has made on its beneficiaries.

The Fighting Chance for Veterans and Veterans in the Community Scotland were both projects with the key aim of boosting a veterans’ wellbeing and confidence, thus helping to alleviate some of the issues they were suffering, which included

homelessness, unemployment and/or substance misuse.

The Fighting Chance offered boxing training and key life skills mentoring, to help prepare veterans for the civilian working world, or to get them to a stage mentally where they were able to think about doing so. Their project was based around raising self-esteem and mental wellbeing, thus enabling the beneficiary to have the confidence to start tackling other issues in their life.

Veterans in the Community Scotland described their project as “giving back to the community” and giving veterans vital life skills and experience, as well as boosting mental health and wellbeing through the art of giving. The veterans chose their own activities, some of which mirrored the struggles and issues they had experienced in their own lives. The project demonstrated that, through these volunteering activities, veterans were able to maintain their levels of self-esteem and again were able to start tackling some of the other issues they had experienced. As a result of the project, some veterans were able to gain employment or other learning opportunities, and all were reported as being able to maintain their housing status and did not become homeless again.

Wings to the Past took a different approach, as a project aimed at serving personnel and their families, which highlights the different mental health struggles that families have, and the subsequent issues they face as a result of deployment, isolation and loneliness. The project





aimed to get RAF families to participate as a family unit in an archaeological dig project near their local base. The results of this quality time spent together learning new skills, led to reported improvements in self-esteem and mental health of the participants, which gave them the resilience and skills to cope with the other issues they were experiencing.

The sports club case studies also show that boosting mental health can make a huge difference to both individuals and their family units. Rugby Memories was set up as a project for older veterans to relieve loneliness and isolation, and to also assist those who were suffering from dementia-type illnesses. An added benefit of the project is that the family members were able to get involved in the activities, and they themselves were able to form their own support network, boosting their own wellbeing and mental health, enabling them to care for their loved one more effectively.

Nottingham Forest Forces was another veteran-led project, and the consultation into what the project should do was overwhelmingly full of social events – identifying that veterans wanted to socialise, be with other like-minded people, and through this were able to relieve loneliness and isolation and thus boost participants mental health and wellbeing.

The projects that assist with the wellbeing of children: Community Adventure Links, Boating Activities for All, 100 Thank Yous and Outdoor

Classroom, all focus on gaining new skills and building confidence, improving self-esteem, reducing loneliness and isolation and dealing with anxiety, which are all key facets of improving mental health.

Community Adventure Links and Boating Activities for All focused on teaching outdoor sports to young people – with the beneficiaries taking part in an activity that they had not had the opportunity to participate in before. Both of these project aims were focused on reducing loneliness and isolation for Service children and young people, but also had impact by building confidence and self-esteem in the young people, thus boosting their mental wellbeing.

100 Thank Yous involved students from the Aldershot area getting to know members of the Nepalese community and Gurkhas past and present, with the aim of creating an art exhibition to celebrate their culture, and their participation and sacrifice in World War I. The students interviewed the Gurkhas to further their understanding of their culture and what it means to be a Gurkha soldier in the UK. A self-evaluation study undertaken at the end of the project showed the majority of the students scored themselves more highly in key skills such as confidence and self-esteem, showing the effect the project had on their mental health.

Outdoor Classroom enabled the young people using the facility to carry on meeting and socialising face to face during the Covid pandemic, thus reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness during lockdowns and social distancing restrictions. The project said the existence of the classroom “helped reduce anxiety” among the community, particularly among the children and young people who benefitted.

The mental health themes identified within the case studies draw across themes of reducing loneliness and isolation, improving mental wellbeing and developing confidence. These projects are likely to have been significant for the project participants; and in providing appropriate, local support to Armed Forces Communities that were experiencing challenges.



Referrals / Signposting

The projects analysed showed a strong trend towards working with other agencies/organisations, in order to benefit their project users in a more robust way.

Organisations involved could either refer the beneficiary to the project, assist the project organisers in gaining beneficiaries for the project, or be able to benefit the beneficiary in some way once they were engaging with the project.

Lisburn Sea Cadets engaged with the Army Welfare Service when designing their project for young Service children and young people, and as the majority of these individuals live on barracks 'behind the wire' it was vital they had specialist assistance on base to be able to target potential beneficiaries and reach them effectively. The Army Welfare Service were able to use their network of youth clubs to facilitate introduction to Lisburn Sea Cadets and enrol more young people in the project.

The Fighting Chance partnered with two charities that specialise in assisting veterans with homelessness issues. The organisation provides very specialist employment support to individuals in need of more targeted assistance, with the issues of homelessness and employment going hand-in-hand. The relationship The Fighting Chance had with Stoll and Veterans Aid meant that the two organisations could refer beneficiaries

on to each other and provide a more targeted service to those veterans in need.

Wigan Warriors and Nottingham Forest Community Trust partnered with other organisations/charities that provide services to veterans. Although their primary aim was to provide a medium where like-minded veterans could meet socially and take part in activities, the links with the organisations and other military-specific charities were there; so, if a veteran showed a particular need, then they could be swiftly referred to another organisation.

The referrals and signposting category links to the collaboration category but expands more widely on this by detailing meaningful partnerships that are likely to have sustained benefits past the end of the projects.

Conclusions

The programme met its aims in funding projects that support Community Integration and the Local Delivery of Services.

When considering the whole portfolio of 712 grants awarded through the Armed Forces Covenant: Local Grants programme, there is evidence that grants were successfully awarded throughout the UK, and that there was a wide coverage of projects supported.

Different types of organisations were able to receive grants, with charities receiving 62% of the overall funding. Community Interest Companies, Armed Forces units, schools and local authorities also benefitted.

Most grants were awarded for projects designed to improve Community Integration. These could be projects which encouraged children from Armed Forces and non-Armed Forces families to mix and play together, supporting community projects in the areas around Armed Forces units. Projects supported under the Community Integration theme sought to integrate civilian and military communities for mutual benefit; and there is evidence that engagement between these communities took place through the grants that were supported. 230 projects were supported under this theme, totalling £5 million.

230 Local Delivery of Services projects were supported with an overall grant value of £3.8 million. These projects provided support directly to people from Armed Forces communities, and could support serving personnel, Armed Forces families or veterans, or a combination of these groups.

Some projects addressed both funding strands. These projects would provide direct support to Armed Forces communities, while also encouraging wider integration within the local community. 156 grants were awarded to projects within this category, with a total value of £2.7 million.

There was a high level of demand for the grants, and funding was spent consistently across the UK during the five-year period. Local Delivery

of Services grants were particularly prevalent within Scotland, and this was the only area (excluding UK-wide grants) where the number of Local Delivery of Services projects within that geographic area were greater than the number of awards for Community Integration projects.

Within Northern Ireland, the majority of awards were for projects which addressed both Community Integration and Local Service Delivery strands; and within Wales, there was a particular focus on Community Integration activities, with a much smaller proportion of funding going towards Local Delivery of Services projects.

Within the analysis of 144 groups particular benefits for veterans were observed, with projects supporting veterans being the group that received the largest proportion of grant funding awarded to projects within the sample. Projects targeted towards Armed Forces families were the second largest beneficiary group by value of grants awarded. Projects that involved Armed Forces and civilian communities were more likely to be delivering work linked to community integration themes.

The case study analysis identified four key themes that cut across the projects.

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

Funding had significant impact on small communities, and cross-community 'pollination' made projects a bigger success. Collaboration and referrals on to other organisations meant that small grant awards could have significant benefits for individuals supported through projects. Mental health support for both adults and children was a key theme, with impact analysis and reports showing improved mental wellbeing for beneficiaries, either as a direct or indirect result of the project outcome.

Community benefits expanded beyond military and civilian community integration. Within the case studies, there was also evidence that some

projects were able to understand and celebrate the culture of BAME military communities. This was a strong feature in a number of grant awards.

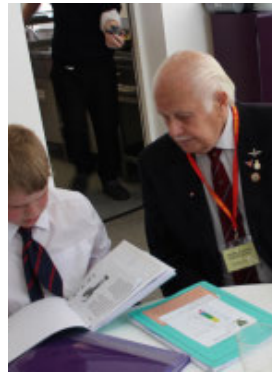
Across the five-year programme of funding, there is evidence that this programme made many small grants that made a difference to their local communities, supporting the programme aims of community integration between Armed Forces and civilian communities, and delivering local services to Armed Forces communities.

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



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