

Annual Report

June, 2018



SUPPORTING OUR **ARMED FORCES** AND OUR **ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY**

“ As the Community Engagement lead for the region, I am keen to see the partnership delivering on the commitments of the Armed Forces Covenant to ensure that all those who serve our country, past and present, as well as their families, receive the support they deserve. ”

Lt Col M E Casey RLC



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1. INTRODUCTION

This is the first Annual Report, produced by the Sub-Regional Armed Forces Covenant Partnership (SRAFCP), and sets out what has been achieved, working together across the region, to deliver our commitments to the Armed Forces Covenant and support our Armed Forces Community.

The Partnership was formed in April 2017, and over the last 12 months there has been significant progress, through a co-ordinated effort to implement the Sub-Regional Armed Forces Partnership Action Plan.

Working together, SRAFCP has delivered the actions identified in the plan, and more, to strengthen our Armed Forces Covenants and support our Armed Forces Community (those currently serving, reservists, their families and those who have served). However, SRAFCP still has more to do and we cannot achieve everything alone. Support is needed from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to really make a difference within our region.

Together we are focusing on raising awareness, promoting the benefits of supporting all of our Armed Forces Community, and identifying gaps in support.

It is often difficult to provide the right support to residents if they do not disclose their connection with the Armed Forces Community. The SRAFCP have consulted widely and identified priorities for our residents which will allow us to target support. However, data needs to be captured regularly by all partners to assist us to prioritise support.

Together we are improving communications and creating greater consistency in the way that we promote our services. Our websites are being updated and we are preparing training packages for staff in both the public and voluntary and community sectors.

An Annual Conference will take place on 28th June. This event will be the first time a conference has been organised between Hull, East Riding, North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire and Doncaster Councils to focus on support for the Armed Forces Community and partnership working.

The conference will provide an opportunity to showcase the successful work that has been achieved throughout the region and identify the challenges which can be faced by our Armed Forces Community.

2. WHAT IS THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT?

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular, or Reserve, and their families should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.

It is a statement of intent and relies on the people, communities and businesses to actively support it in order to make a real difference. The Armed Forces Act came into force in 2011, and the Government has produced annual reports on implementation and progress of the Armed Forces Covenant.

All Local Authorities in England have signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant and Community Covenants have been produced, to reflect local needs throughout the Country.

Each Local Authority within our sub region has developed a Local Community Covenant which aims to complement the National Covenant and encourage local support. All of these covenants have similar local priorities, but needs may vary between regions, and local Community Covenants have been adapted to encompass local community needs.

2.1 OUR COMMUNITY COVENANT PRIORITIES

Together as a sub-regional partnership, we share the following Priorities:



Housing and Related Support

To ensure the Armed Forces Community are provided with high quality guidance and support when applying for social housing and private rented accommodation.



Health and Wellbeing

To enable the Armed Forces Community to enjoy the same standard of, and access to, healthcare and provide priority treatment to Veterans where it relates to a condition which has resulted from their service, subject to clinical need.



Employment, Education and Training

To ensure children of members of the Armed Forces have the same access to education as any other local resident.

To provide access to training, education and skills support to Veterans to assist them to find suitable employment.



Supporting and Advising Veterans

To provide support and advise service personnel, to assist with their transition from the military into local communities, and ensure that they have access to the same welfare benefits as any other local resident.

3. OUR ARMED FORCES SUB REGIONAL COVENANT PARTNERSHIP

In April 2017 five Local Authorities, Hull City Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, North Lincolnshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council and Doncaster Council joined forces to form a Sub Regional Armed Forces Covenant Partnership (SRAFCP).

SRAFCP secured funding from the Ministry of Defence to strengthen the delivery of local Armed Forces

Covenants and provide a standardised approach to supporting the Armed Forces Community throughout the region.

The Partnership agreed the following priorities, to gain a more detailed understanding of issues faced by the Local Armed Forces Community and together develop solutions to address these issues.

Priorities for Sub Regional Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Working:



A Sub-regional Approach

To create a joined up approach to supporting the Armed Forces Community, and identify their needs and the level of support required.



Standardised Website

To ensure there is a consistent message across all websites and enable all residents to have access to up to date information regardless of where they live within the region.



Training

Public sector and voluntary sector staff will be offered training, to raise awareness of the needs of the Armed Forces Community and the level of support available.



Annual Conference

An Annual Conference is being held to promote the Covenant and showcase the successful work that has been achieved throughout the region. The conference will also provide the opportunity to share best practice and consider the challenges which can be faced by our Armed Forces Community.



The annual conference will take place on 28th June 2018 in Barton-upon-Humber.

4. THE JOURNEY SO FAR

Through the creation of this partnership and support from the Ministry of Defence, all Local Authorities have now dedicated resources devoted to strengthening their local Community Covenants.

Doncaster Borough Council and Hull City Council have been awarded Gold Standard as part of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, and North Lincolnshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council are also striving to be recognised as Gold Standard Defence Employers.

The partnership values our public, private and voluntary sector partners and recognises that partners can both contribute to and benefit from pledging support to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Over 2,000 businesses in the United Kingdom have already pledged support for the Armed Forces Covenant and awareness is being raised throughout the sub-region to encourage more of our public, private and voluntary sector partners to support the Armed Forces Covenant.

As the project progresses, SRAFPC have begun to share good practice with other Local Authorities and Partnerships and similar projects are being delivered throughout the Country.

4.1 A SUB-REGIONAL APPROACH AND RAISING AWARENESS

A survey has been conducted across the sub-region to gauge awareness of the Covenant and identify priorities for the local Armed Forces Community. The survey has received over 1,600 responses and the findings suggest that despite strong support for an Armed Forces Covenant (95%), greater awareness is needed. Only 36% of respondents had heard of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Priorities identified by respondents include:

- Housing (59%)
- Employment and Employability (63%)
- Health and Wellbeing (including Mental Health) (74%)

Conducting the survey has helped to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and the survey continues to be available for residents to complete.

The findings have been analysed and the following recommendations to improve the Covenant and raise awareness made:

- Branding (use the Armed Forces Covenant Logo more frequently)
- Social Value Act (include in procurement contracts)
- Action Plan and an Annual Report
- Services and Veteran data (to be gathered from job applicants, contractors, and service users)
- Information sharing protocols (develop across Local Authorities, Partners, MoD and individual forces on service leavers, service families)
- Forces Resettlement Officers and Local Authorities (build stronger links)
- Review Local Covenants

The SRARCP have focused on raising awareness of the Covenant and actions include:

A flyer produced and circulated widely which gives a summary of:

- What is the Armed Forces Covenant
- Who are our Armed Forces Community
- How Businesses can support the Covenant
- The Sub-Regional Partnership - our commitment, contact details and support available.

Elected Members and new Local Authority employees are now provided with information about the Armed Forces Covenant as part of the their induction process.

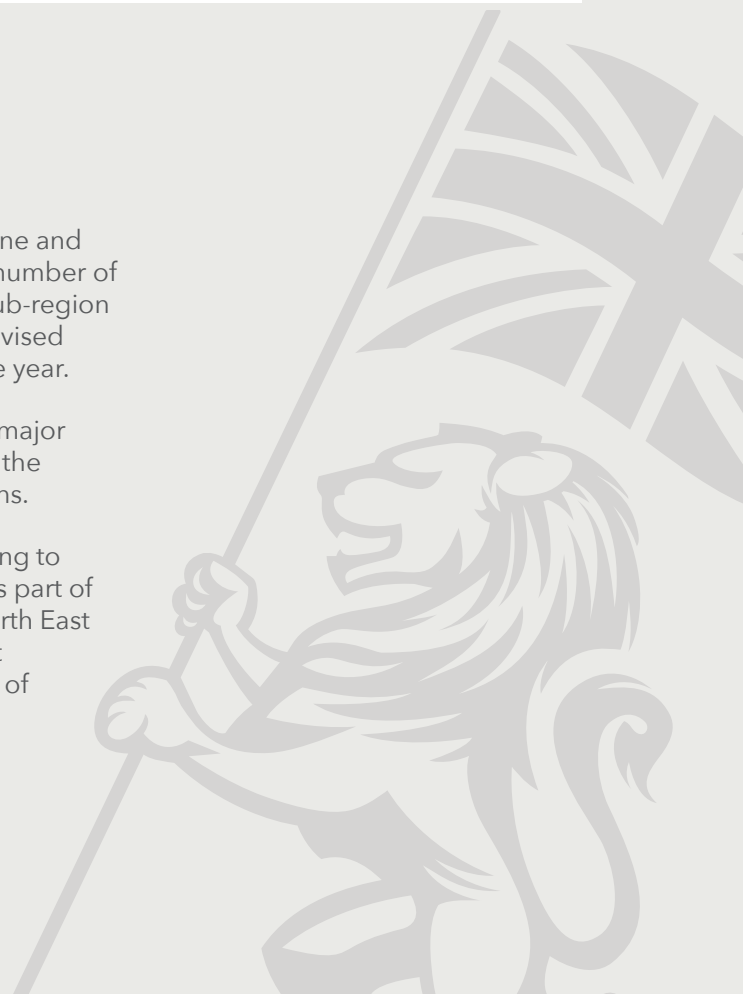
The Armed Forces Career Transition Partnership is now promoting Local Authority job vacancies.



Local Initiatives

It is 100 years since the end of World War One and since the creation of the Royal Air Force. A number of initiatives are taking place throughout the sub-region and some Local Authorities are launching revised Local Community Covenants throughout the year.

- North Lincolnshire Council is planning a major event to re-sign their covenant as part of the 100 year World War one commemorations.
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council is planning to re-sign their covenant on 1st July 2018 as part of the Beverley Armed Forces Weekend North East Lincolnshire Council is planning an event to coincide with the 10 years anniversary of signing their local Covenant.
- North East Lincolnshire is planning an event to mark the 7th anniversary of their covenant signing.



4.2 IMPROVING OUR WEBSITES

North Lincolnshire Council arranged an independent review of local website provision and a number of recommendations were made. SRAFCP agreed to follow the recommendations and each Local Authority is currently updating their websites accordingly. Recommendations included:

Priorities for Sub Regional Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Working:

Website Presence

All Websites will include:

- A link to National Armed Forces Covenant site
- A Welcome message (Elected Member Champion) and clear public statement of support and a commitment to delivery
- Support information and details of local events
- A point of contact and a route for concerns

Outward Communications

The review also highlighted the need to consider greater use of social media outlets such as Facebook or Twitter to promote the Armed Forces Covenant and it recommended producing an annual report, a partnership newsletter and an action plan.



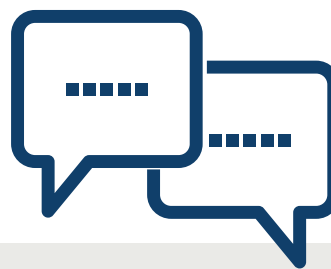
4.3 | OUR TRAINING PACKAGE

Doncaster Borough Council has both developed and provides training for local employees who support the Armed Forces Community.

They have used their experience and expertise, to develop a bespoke, comprehensive training package and the training will now be delivered throughout our sub-region.

An e learning package has also been developed for use within our local authorities.

SRAFPC aim to ensure training is provided to as many Local Authority employees as possible and the e-learning package will be available for Local Authority employees to enhance their skills and raise awareness of how to support the Armed Forces Community.



4.4 | OTHER LOCAL INITIATIVES

- North Lincolnshire is working closely with local employers as part of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme to promote the Covenant and encourage employers to sign up via their Ambassador Programme.
- Veterans are included by Doncaster Borough Council as a equality protected characteristic.
- Supporting the Armed Forces Covenant and the Armed Forces Community is now included as a Social Value in Hull City Council contracts.
- North Lincolnshire Council is engaging with local Armed Forces Champions and Local Authority Veterans, Reservists and Cadets to establish what a 'good' employer should look like.
- Presentations have been given to business, voluntary and public sector representatives at City Leadership Boards in Hull
- Hull City Council continues to fund local projects that support the Covenant priorities including: money advice and employment support workers, local events, and training projects.
- North East Lincolnshire's armed forces 'Hive' project has been extremely productive and has seen a large increase in attendance by Veterans and Service families. The Hive now provides accommodation and facilities for regular 'drop in' clinics by DWP, RBL, SSAFA, Combat Stress, Veteran's Mental Health Transition, Intervention & Liaison Service, Veterans UK and service associations.

5. THE WAY FORWARD

SRAFPCP will continue to progress with strengthening delivery of their local Community Covenants and enhancing the services provided for the Armed Forces Community.

Through partnership working there will be greater awareness of the needs of our local Armed Forces Community and stronger links between service providers and our residents.

“ *The lasting impact of this project will be demonstrated by the creation of a sustainable and continuously joined-up and consistent partnership approach across the Yorkshire and Humber Sub-Region*

This will lead to improved outcomes for veterans and their families who, when dealing with sometimes complex issues and

seeking to address unmet need, can look forward to a consistency of approach across Local Authority boundaries within the Sub Region, benefiting from best practice that is being shared between the areas. ”

**Tracy Harsley,
Chair of the Armed Forces
Sub Regional Partnership Board**

TOGETHER WE ARE WORKING TO SUPPORT OUR LOCAL ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY

Lt Colonel Mick E Casey RLC
Major Tim Atkinson RLC

Kingston upon Hull City Council

Councillor Allan Gardiner
Tracy Harsley
Maxine Hunter

East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Councillor David Elvidge
Emma Thompson
David Barlow

North East Lincolnshire Council

Helen Isaacs
Alex Baxter
Chris Shaw
Gavin Marshall

Doncaster Borough Council

Councillor Paul Wray
Lisa Swainson
Jessica Farr

North Lincolnshire Council

Councillor Julie Reed
Stuart Minto
Sarah Dauris

A special thank you to:

Lt Colonel Allan Hinton RLC



Doncaster
Council



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT