



## Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Programme 5 Year Strategic Plan

### Introduction

This strategic plan forms the basis of the Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Programme and is the basis of the 'Strengthening Local Government delivery of the Covenant' bid to Ministry of Defence Armed Forces Covenant Fund. It is the property of the Programme Management Board and will be reviewed annually or as circumstances or legislation changes.

The original 'Action Plan' was first written in 2017 and started life as an action plan for Borough of Poole and RM Poole. In 2018 it was re-written to encompass the whole of Dorset and formed the basis for the bid to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) for the successful bid for 'Strengthening local government delivery of the Covenant'. The plan has been updated several times since then with the last update in November 2020.

During the life of the 'Action Plan' it has been reworked to consider Local Government Reform and the formation of Dorset Council and BCP Council from the original three unitary councils of Dorset County Council, Bournemouth Borough Council and Borough of Poole. More recently it has been revisited to take account of COVID and the limitations of a national pandemic.

A major revamp of the plan was discussed by the Armed Forces Covenant Programme Board and this is the result of that process.

## **Aims**

The Programme has achieved a lot since it started in 2018 and the partnership has grown and strengthened in that time. Priorities and ambitions have clearly changed and the COVID pandemic has brought this into focus. The Armed Forces Covenant will become a legal requirement for statutory organisations as part of the new Armed Forces Bill that is currently progressing through Parliament.

To reflect these changes and the Boards ambition to firmly embed the Covenant into organisations throughout Dorset it was agreed that the action plan needed to be a longer-term strategy for Dorset and partners.

At the Board meeting of Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> March, the original action plan was discussed, and potential changes discussed.

The aim is to guide our strategy and operational activity over the next five years considering new legislation, improved partnership working and changing priorities.

It should be remembered that although this is a five-year plan it will be revisited annually and reviewed and changed as needed, it will also be reviewed outside of these reviews should legislation or local circumstances change.

The plan will inform the agenda and structure of future Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Programme Board meetings and related activity in Dorset.

## **Review:**

Following the Board meeting of 25 April 2022, it was agreed that the plan be updated to reflect the requirements of new Armed Forces Act and Covenant legislation. To this end the following themes have been downgraded from Strategic to operational objectives.

- **Armed Forces Community and the law.**
- **Schools and Children's education.**
- **Building a home in civilian society.**

All remaining themes would remain as Strategic objectives and would be reviewed by the board annually or as legislative or other pressures required.

## Cross-cutting factors

The Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Programme has adopted the values and cross cutting factors that were outlined in the Governments Veterans Strategy but has aligned these to take in the whole of the Armed Forces Community but whilst recognising the service of our Veterans Community and their role in wider Armed Forces Community.

	<b>Strategy Objective</b>	<b>Strategy desired outcome</b>	<b>Action to meet objective</b>
1	Collaboration between organisations	Improved collaboration between organisations offers coherent support to the Armed Forces Community	
2	Coordination of Dorset services that support the Armed Forces Community	The coordination of Dorset provision delivers consistent aims and principles over time, ensuring the Armed Forces Community are treated fairly compared to the local population.	
3	Data on Armed Forces Community	Enhanced collection, use and analysis of data across the public, private and charitable sectors to build an evidence base to effectively identify and address the needs of the Armed Forces Community.	
4	Public perception and understanding and recognition of the Armed Forces Community	The Dorset population value the Armed Forces Community and understand their diverse experiences and culture. Veterans feel that their service and experience is recognised and valued by society.	

**They will be addressed via the following Dorset actions:**

It is intended that the strategic objectives of the Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Programme will address the key aims of the Armed Forces Community Covenant:

- ▶ Encourage local communities to support the armed forces community in their areas and to nurture public understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the armed forces community
- ▶ Recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the armed forces community
- ▶ Encourage activities which help to integrate the armed forces community into local life
- ▶ Encourage the armed forces community to help and support the wider community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement

**To achieve this there are seven themes that have actions assigned to them:**

**Strategic**

1. Community and relationships
2. Employment, education, and skills
3. Health and Wellbeing
4. Recognition, Understanding and Communication

**Operational**

5. Armed Forces community and the law
6. Schools and Children's Education
7. Making a home in civilian society (Housing)

*The strategic plan shows where the objectives stated meet these priorities, it has been rated in line with the BRAG (Blue, Red, Amber, Green) system to enable easy tracking of risk and progress.*

**BRAG definitions.**

**Red**

Red should only be used when there are significant issues with the project. It can be used when one area of project viability such as scope, time or budget goes beyond the tolerance levels agreed at the start. Red signifies that the matter needs to be escalated to senior management for support immediately.

**Amber**

If you are suffering with a problem that is having a negative effect on the project performance, then an amber rating is appropriate. Usually amber problems can be dealt with within the project team, by the project manager and team members, although it is good practice to alert the project board or senior management to such issues.

**Green**

Green for go! Everything is functioning as expected and the project performance is as planned.

**Blue**

Task or objective complete. Task or objective to be monitored and reviewed or no further action required.

**No colour**

New or completely revised strategic objective

<b>1. Community and relationships</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Measured by</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Progress to meeting objective</b>
CO 1	Encourage communities, community groups, businesses and organisations to participate in Armed Forces Days, recognition of the Armed Forces Covenant and support of the Armed Forces Community.	Number of events, Covenant and ERS signings, Categorise by organisational type (business, community group, T&P Council, etc) Production of guidance document for Communities and organisations. Increase in digital presence/activity.		
CO 2	Work with all Charities and organisations that support the Armed Forces Community across Dorset to coordinate activity and ensure that efforts are not duplicated and are fully supported. To develop and coordinate joint projects and activity	Charities and organisations signed up to and active within Dorset Armed Forces Charity Forum		
CO 3	Develop an improved digital offer for the Armed Forces Community in Dorset and review the current provision of information points.	Creation of Armed Forces Community specific digital channels for Dorset. Provide information points to support the digitally excluded.		
CO 4	Review Dorset wide Covenant training offer in line with new legislation.	Uptake of training by partner organisations and others.		
CO 5	Engage with Town and Parish Council's across Dorset to promote the Armed Forces Covenant and in related activities.	Number of Town and Parish Councils pledging support for the Armed Forces Covenant.		

	<p>Provide training and briefing sessions to all Councillors.</p> <p>To encourage Armed Forces Area Councillor Champions in wards where bases are located.</p>	<p>Sessions delivered</p> <p>Champions appointed.</p>		
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<b>2. Employment, education and skills</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Measured by</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Progress to meeting objective</b>
EM 1	Promote career opportunities for service leavers into partner organisations, develop support networks and provide information on employment opportunities to the Armed Forces Community via a variety of communication channels	Pathway developed and implemented		
EM 2	Increase number of businesses/organisations who are signed up to the covenant. Increase number of businesses/organisations who hold bronze, silver or gold Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme awards.	Number of businesses and organisations signing the covenant, number of ERS awards gained		
EM 3	As part of liaison with business regarding Armed Forces Covenant and ERS Award discussions encourage business to offer discounts or accept the Defence Service Discount Card.	Number of businesses offering discounts		



<b>3. Health and Wellbeing</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Measured by</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Progress to meeting objective</b>
HW 1	Work with NHS Dorset ICB and CCG to develop Dorset ICS Armed Forces Strategy.	Strategy written and presented to Covenant Board		
HW 2	To include Social Care within Health and Wellbeing strategy. Develop objectives in conjunction with Dorset ICS Strategy. In conjunction with HW1.			
HW 3	Work with DHC Dorset Armed Forces Health and Wellbeing Team (AFCT) and 'Op Courage' the Armed Forces Veterans Health and Wellbeing Service in the Southwest to signpost Veterans to specialist Mental Health and wellbeing support.	Metrics to monitor outcomes will be owned by Dorset Healthcare and Op Courage SW		
HW 4	GP Practices, Acute Trusts and Community Health Services to identify veterans to enable tailored support	Number of veterans identified		
HW 5	GP Practices and Secondary Care providers to be veteran-friendly to encouragement positive engagement between veterans and statutory services	Number of GP Practices signed up to the RCGP veteran-friendly accreditation scheme Number of Acute Trusts signed up to the VHCA scheme		
HW 6	Make appropriate information available to enable the Armed Forces Community to cope with issues triggered by deployment and return. Ensure links are made to current established projects and support organisations that are supporting good health and wellbeing.	A comms piece is being developed to ensure the message gets out across Dorset and the Southwest		
HW 7	Implement scheme to support Dorset based foreign and commonwealth Armed Forces communities to establish their specific health and wellbeing needs.	Number of GP Practices advised and cooperating with scheme		

HW 8	Provision of annual Health and Wellbeing event in partnership with the Tank Museum	Event successfully delivered. Develop online resources to support the Armed Forces Community with health and wellbeing issues.		
HW 9	Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Programme board to be informed of an Armed Forces Community - specific Social Prescribing Link Worker role (2021-23 only). Works in partnership with Veterans Gateway development	Key milestones to be determined by National steering group		

4. Recognition, Understanding and Communication				
No	Strategic Objective	Measured by	Owner	Progress to meeting objective
RU 1	Develop information and data sets on the demographics of the Armed Forces Community in Dorset.	Results of 2021 Census, inhouse employee surveys and surveys with wider partners.		
RU 2	Develop an improved digital offer dedicated to information, training and advice for the Armed Forces Community. <b>(See also CO3)</b>	Updates to website and creation of Dorset AF Covenant Facebook page. Number of hits on FB page and website. Annual Digital survey to measure effectiveness of offer.		
RU 3	Improve communications and engagement with the Armed Forces Community and promote the Dorset AFC programme Develop improved links with media and ensure positive news is distributed	Establishment of a Comms Strategy and working group.  Establish FB page and monitor number of hits. Production of mailing list (digital and non-digital) and production of regular newsletter.		
RU 4	Provide Single Points of Contact (SPC) in lead organisations	SPCs identified and publicised		
RU 5	Work with partner organisations to develop a network of Armed Forces Champions advise staff about Armed Forces Covenant issues and liaise with the AFC Coordinator. Establish support buddy and mentoring networks.	Networks established		

## Operational Objectives

<b>5. Schools and Children's Education</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Measured by</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Progress to meeting objective</b>
ED 1	Liaise with LA education units to develop a pan Dorset strategy to facilitate short notice access to school places	Strategy completed		
ED 2	Liaise with LA education units to provide advice to Head teachers re issues e.g. flexibility with children's absence from school (when parent/s come back from campaigns)	Advice provided		

<b>6. Armed Forces community and the law</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Measured by</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Progress to meeting objective</b>
CJ 1	To liaise and work with Dorset's re-offending Board to ensure that the Armed Forces Community is considered in all actions.	Attendance/representation at board.		
CJ 2	To work and liaise with Veterans and Armed Forces support organisations to ensure that members of the Armed Forces Community are supported on release from the criminal justice system in Dorset.	Organisations signed up to help and evidence of positive outcomes		
CJ 3	Engage with the Armed Forces Community to engage with young people at risk and young offenders in the provision of mentoring, training and employment mentoring.	Number of young people assisted.		

<b>7. Making a home in civilian society</b>				
<b>No</b>	<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>Measured by</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Progress to meeting objective</b>
HO1	Provide housing advice to the Armed Forces community to enable access to housing services that meet their needs	Number of personnel advised Number securing housing		
HO 2	LA Housing and Communities Departments to engage with HIVE, Armed Forces Welfare Officers, relevant statutory bodies and service charities to facilitate information sharing on the latest intelligence and options	Intelligence gathered		
HO 3	Identify, advise and support homeless veterans and those who are rough sleepers	Number of veterans supported		
HO 4	Review and agree with LA's re allocation policies to consider opportunities to support housing needs of the Armed forces Community	Allocation policy published. Number of members of the Armed Forces Community advised or assisted.		