

Training Virtual Roundtable

Purpose of the session

A virtual roundtable event was held on 23rd August 2022, bringing together AFCFT grantees to discuss and consider aspects of delivering training about the Armed Forces Community and the Armed Forces Covenant to a range of audiences. The notes – and links to materials where available – are included here as a useful resource to others.

Key Points

- Tailor the training to fit your audience and any time constraints. Power point slides could be useful to root the training
- Remind trainees of the benefits of undertaking training, and that training is not a burden
- Use and tailor pre-existing training; this can help with capacity and time issues
- Working in partnership with other local authorities can be beneficial (sharing resources, consistent training, services, and messages). Ask the regional gold awarded local authority for support.

A special thank you to those who supported the session by sharing their experience, knowledge and expertise:

Phil Deakin is the Armed Forces Covenant Project Worker at Warwickshire County Council, in collaboration with Coventry and Solihull. Phil is re-developing the e-learning on the Armed Forces Covenant including the Frontline Staff and Housing and Homelessness modules. Phil has been delivering Armed Forces training since 2015, including ‘training the trainer’ for local authorities. For more information, please look here: [E-learning for Local Authorities - Armed Forces Covenant](#).

Maxine Hunter is the Veteran Project Co-ordinator at Hull City Council. Through this role, Maxine has gained frontline experience and supported the development of a sub-regional partnership of local authorities around the Humber. Through Covenant funding, Hull City Council have developed a number of initiatives to raise awareness within the Local Authority and partnership organisations. Maxine has also been involved with delivering and tailoring Phil’s’ training, to fit the needs of her local area.

Canon Peter Bruinvels CC is Surrey CC and Kent CC Civilian-Military Covenant Lead and Liaison Adviser as well as Armed Forces Champion and Lead to the All-Party Armed Forces Covenant Parliamentary Group and Ministerial Adviser on the Armed Forces Covenant at the MoD, Peter Bruinvels Associates in partnership with Forces Connect South East and Surrey CC has produced training packages for elected councillors and Covenant Lead Officers as well as frontline and contact centre staff for use across the Southeast. For more information on this training, please look here: [Forces Connect South East toolkit and training - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](#)

What types of training products have you produced?

Phil Deakin:

- A range of e-learning modules which have been widely shared (see link above). Recent funding from AFCFT will enable these modules to be refreshed.
- Phil has also been involved in delivering a lot of face-to-face training to a wide range of people; from customer service staff to councillors, managers, team leaders. Both within the public and third sectors.

- Has also created a ‘train the trainer’ package, to help deliver this training in other local authorities.
- Training generally takes around an hour to deliver, but can vary from 15 to 90 minutes depending on the time available. It is important to use time efficiently and tailor the training to the audience receiving the training.
- Training can be delivered to a range of people including frontline staff, dementia teams, social care etc
- List of topics and types of materials Phil has been involved in:
 - Online Training: [Introduction to the Covenant and Covenant Duty](#) (previously was for frontline staff, but now goes beyond to managers); [Housing and Homelessness](#); [Serving Personnel](#); [Families](#); [Transition phase for veterans](#).
 - Face-to-face: training is tailored to suit each audience, based upon what the Armed Forces Covenant is, and who the Armed Forces Community are, and then focusing in on the issues these groups might face e.g. training for dementia nurses on how to best support an ex-service person.
 - Phil doesn’t use PowerPoint presentations or visual aids when delivering in-person training.

Peter Bruinvels:

- Mainly delivers training face-to-face. The two main training programmes are: [Customer facing, frontline and contact centre staff Armed Forces Awareness Training](#)
- [Elected Councillor Armed Forces Champions \(AFCs\) and Covenant Lead Officers Armed Forces Awareness Training](#)
- Training is specifically adapted for each County to time restraints and the audience and ranges from 30 minutes to 2 hours.
- It’s important to engage with the audience during training, make it relevant to them.
- Peter’s training aims to give AFCs and staff the knowledge to strengthen their current roles.
- He has also developed Forces Connect SE Training more generally to deliver it regionally in the South, but anyone can attend the training when it is online
- He has also created a [Forces Connect App](#). The Forces Connect App offers immediate help and support across a wide range of services. Forces Connect more generally is delivered regionally in the South, but anyone can attend the training.
- Peter has other training on the Armed Forces Act for County Council staff and for all service staff in a council. He has also created training for Adult Social Care Locality Teams and care home staff - the ‘Veterans Listening and Awareness Project’, and training for members of the Armed Forces themselves.
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- Training is typically delivered in person using a PowerPoint presentation, but online delivery has allowed for a wider reach from Cornwall to Wakefield. When delivering something in-person it’s important to really engage the audience.
- PowerPoint presentations can help to root the training and they’re also good to distribute with speaker notes after the training; this is especially the case for ‘train the trainer’ type sessions.
- Training has been recorded to be distributed. Peter has also developed a package suitable for deaf people

- Peter has also produced an 'idiots guide' to the Armed Forces Act and the duty

Maxine Hunter:

- Within the sub-regional partnership Maxine is involved with, there is a 70-member forum. They share information and support one another. Hull City Council also fund some Armed Forces projects.
- She has adapted Phil's e-learning (see above) for all staff within the council to complete. During the COVID-19 Pandemic Maxine adapted the e-learning for Teams training, with specific case studies and examples that the audience can relate to.
- Maxine has found it helpful to have two people supporting the delivery of training and it's particularly helpful if one of the two has a background in the Armed Forces. She is also keen to receive feedback from training and to take any learning from this.
- Maxine refers to her 'One Sheet' rule! I.e. she likes to keep content to one sheet of paper. Has developed a one sheet induction awareness training. This goes to all new staff and elected members.

Questions and comments from the wider discussion:

- One local authority was originally going to start from scratch with producing training materials, but instead has adapted Warwickshire's e-Learning package (see above).. Currently planning on linking in with the wider County Council as it's important to work with other local authorities; this will make services and support available to the Armed Forces Community consistent.
- When it comes to developing training, other attendees talked about how they adapt materials from a range of useful sources.
- It was felt to be essential to (1) tailor the training to suit the audience and (2) to make the most of time you're allocated e.g. there was an opportunity to present to a housing association to highlight why it's important to support their tenants from an Armed Forces background (e.g. signposting support). It was a short time slot, but still a great opportunity.
- It was felt to be important to get across that training and supporting the Armed Forces Community is a benefit and not a burden for the staff involved.
- Some video-style content to go alongside training would be helpful and is still in development.
- The Defence Medical Welfare Service does very good awareness training though there may be a cost associated with this.
- With greater capacity, one local authority has been able to include the NHS in local work.
- The biggest issue with the delivery of delivery of training - especially outside of the local authority and partnerships - is having the resources and time.
- One local authority representative explained that she and a colleague had adapted the Warwickshire training package for Wales (Gateway Wales, NHS Wales), linking to Welsh life. A PowerPoint presentation was then delivered to staff, mainly social workers, customer care staff, occupational therapists, housing staff, and Human Resources (around staff induction).
- There are imminent changes to legislation around the Armed Forces Covenant and Phil is currently rewriting Warwickshire's training packages accordingly. Legislative changes are important and need to be reflected in training packages with Peter's already adapted for those legislative changes in Education, Health and Housing.

- Some training packages, including the Forces Connect App, will hopefully be translated into Welsh (though there is a cost implication), and there are plans to update training more broadly to reflect the differing legislation within Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

What have people done to try and address the challenges around finding the resources e.g. capacity, time etc to deliver training?

- Having an Armed Forces officer champion within every council department can help in order to identify people who may benefit from training.
- If possible, it can be beneficial to engage council Chief Executives and their Leaders as this will help 'lead from the front', sending the message that Covenant related training is important. It is also helpful when Armed Forces leads within councils hold senior positions. Another person found it easiest to offer virtual training (via Teams) once a month for any member of staff from across the five local authorities in their cluster to attend. Training dates are published for the year and there is capacity to train a large number of people in one session. Tailoring the training to suit those attending also ensures training is as effective as possible.
- Staff churn was considered to be a significant challenge to delivering training within local authorities i.e. training can be delivered but then those people move on and new people in post need to be trained.
- It was felt to be beneficial to try and get people interested in training at an early stage of their employment, and to drip feed information from the start.
- Using a 'Train the Trainer' model was also felt to be very beneficial as it widens the pool of trainers available. The Warwickshire package for this was felt to be helpful, as it is consistent in its delivery regardless of who delivers the training.
- One Council representative explained that training is delivered to all council staff and extended to those from the Police, Fire, Harbour and Docks Board, Ambulance Service as well as from local charities such as Age UK, Citizens Advice and local Food Banks at no cost.
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- There was a suggestion of considering training more broadly within a council to see if an Armed Forces element could be included. For example, with mental health training, there is a part that includes the challenges members of the Armed Forces Community may face. It may be possible to reach more people through this method.

How do we reach the local authorities who aren't as involved or aware of the Armed Forces Community?

- In the Southwest of England there is a really good network of Covenant Officers, and this regional approach could prove very effective elsewhere. Doing work within individual local authorities is good, but this could go further. The example of the Armed Forces Liaison Officers in Wales was cited as an example of effective regional working.
- Consistency in training delivery: A more regionally or groups of authority-based approach was seen as important for giving economy of scale. It was also a good basis for creating greater consistency in training. This is one of the most significant aspirations of the imminent Armed Forces Covenant legislation i.e. there will be a consistency in approach to supporting the Armed Forces Covenant across the UK. It was felt this could only be achieved regionally, if not nationally. Without national support (e.g. MOD) there would be limited gains from a local level.

- Others felt the regional approach works really well e.g. using Veterans Hubs to train younger people to be ambassadors. Equally, Veterans may move across authorities' borders and so building strong connections with neighbouring local authorities can help here.
- Another example given was the Covenant Officers Groups which have worked really well but have declined due to staff leaving their positions.
- Seeking the support of the Local Government Association could have influence in this area.
- One local authority representative talked about how they are currently in the process of identifying the number of veterans in the local area, creating groups/community areas around veterans. They are also working with the wider County Council to engage with Veterans in a bottom-up approach to support.

Materials referenced during this session:

For more training packages available from the Trust, please use the following link: [Developing Training Packages and Awareness Raising Materials : Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust](#)