



Findings from the  
Sustaining Delivery of the Armed  
Forces Covenant Programme

# Findings from the Sustaining Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant Programme

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# Preface

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This document is the final report of a study RAND Europe conducted on behalf of the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT). RAND Europe prepared this report for the AFCFT as part of an ongoing evaluation of their efforts to support Local Authorities (LAs) in implementing the Covenant at the LA level. Specifically, this project evaluated the grant funding provided through the AFCFT's Strengthening Delivery Programme (SDP) and Sustaining Delivery Programme (hereafter referred to as 'Sustaining Delivery'). The previous report for this project provided a process evaluation of the SDP. This report provides overarching findings from a survey of SDP participants and three case studies providing greater insight into good practices applied during three projects.

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# Summary

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## Context

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT) administers the Covenant Fund to support the Armed Forces Community.<sup>1</sup> The Strengthening Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant Programme (SDP) was set up in 2016 to provide a series of grants to Local Authorities (LAs) ‘enabling them to deliver projects linked to needs identified by their Local Covenant Partnerships.’<sup>2</sup> In 2017, the AFCFT awarded £3,493,296 across 23 grants, including 107 LAs. These grants formed the first phase of the SDP, followed by a second phase of SDP funding in 2018 of £2,768,055 across 20 grants, which included 80 LAs. The AFCFT awarded grants to 20 ‘clusters’ of LAs per the AFCFT’s instructions, with each cluster featuring a lead LA overseeing the funds’ administration and the relationship with the Trust on the cluster’s behalf. Finally, the Sustaining Delivery Programme (henceforth called ‘Sustaining Delivery’) allocated £25,000 to each of the 20 clusters that had participated in the two rounds of SDP funding.

## Objectives

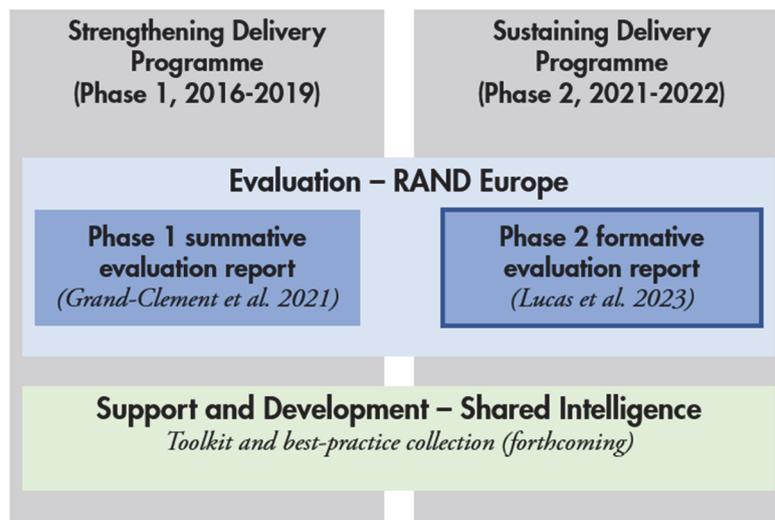
The AFCFT commissioned RAND Europe to undertake a summative evaluation of both phases of the SDP to understand whether and how the Programme had met its goals. The workstreams and deliverables RAND Europe and its project partner, Shared Intelligence (Si), were tasked with are detailed below.

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<sup>1</sup> Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (2023a).

<sup>2</sup> Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (2023b).

Figure 1.1. Overview of SDP and Sustaining Delivery workstreams and project deliverables



Source: RAND Europe documentation.

The Support and Development workstream’s output is a ‘toolkit’ repository of good practices for grant-holders developed by Shared Intelligence (Si) and derived from the SDP’s and Sustaining Delivery’s findings. A previous report<sup>3</sup> represents the findings from the first phase of the Evaluation workstream: the summative evaluation of SDP Phases I and II to help understand whether and how the Programme had met its goals. This final report evaluates Sustaining Delivery and represents the culmination of the Evaluation workstream, pulling in SDP findings where relevant. This final report aims to share learning from the SDP and Sustaining Delivery to help others deliver the Covenant.

This study provides examples for LAs and other organisations on how LAs have implemented measures to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant (henceforth called ‘the Covenant’) comprehensively and sustainably with limited funding. While the interim report was a formal process evaluation of Strengthening Delivery, this secondary report highlighted practices the grantees used. This portion of the study looks at how LAs used AFCFT funding to support local delivery of the Covenant. The AFCFT is keen to share good practices from the learning and resources LAs developed through the SDP and Sustaining Delivery to benefit others implementing the Covenant. To this end, the study team conducted two surveys and several interviews to identify the barriers and challenges grantees encountered and their mitigation strategies and good practices. **Box 1** details the primary research question, revised to meet the AFCFT’s priorities for the study’s second phase.

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<sup>3</sup> Grand-Clement et al. (2021).

## Box 1. The research question underpinning Phase 2 of the study

How has the £25,000 Sustaining Delivery grant helped the grantees build upon their original grant and support more Armed Forces Community members during the last 12 months and, potentially, in the future?

More specifically:

- How have grantees continued or finalised the delivery of activities;
- Helped embed services or practices;
- Supported capturing and sharing stories, case studies, good practices, learning and innovation; and
- Helped LAs recover lost ground due to COVID?#

This report begins by providing a background into the Covenant and outlining the tasks undertaken by the study team (Chapter 1). It then summarises the aims and perceived successes of the Sustaining Delivery projects (Chapter 2) before discussing perceived implementation challenges and enablers (Chapter 3). The concluding chapter (Chapter 4) then summarises and discusses these findings. Detailed survey findings are available in the Annexes. To further disseminate best practices, we also present case studies from each deep dive in three stand-alone documents.

## Findings

This study's findings highlight several common practices among grantees found to help facilitate the Covenant's implementation. Multiple grantees implemented several particular practices to overcome barriers and challenges and better implement the Covenant. These practices include:

- **Designating a specific person or role** with sole responsibility for implementing the Covenant within a particular organisation;
- Cultivating **long-term support networks, partnerships and relationships** with the local Armed Forces Community and other organisations responsible for implementing the Covenant;
- Using **clear and tailored communications** with other government organisations and the broader public to communicate the Covenant's importance and the services available;
- **Dedicating data-collection efforts** towards understanding the local Armed Forces Community;
- **Responding flexibly and adaptably in Sustaining Delivery projects' timelines and scope** as new and unforeseen challenges emerge; and
- Creating **long-term generic materials that others can use to better understand the Covenant and its implementation methods** (e.g. Local Standards Assessments and online guidance resources).

Interview and survey findings reveal that grantees found these practices useful in overcoming various barriers and enablers, from lacking resources to COVID-19 challenges, and in sustaining their projects' impacts beyond the allocated Trust funding.

## Implications and recommendations

As a result of the shared practices documented across our interviews and surveys, we identified several recommendations for practices that may benefit other organisations looking to implement the Covenant locally. These include:

- Using **clear and proactive communications** to raise public awareness about the Covenant, inform the Armed Forces Community about the services and support available to them, and generally widen the Covenant's visibility throughout the broader community.
- **Building relationships and partnerships** with other stakeholders across the Armed Forces Community and those in charge of upholding the Covenant to enhance effectiveness, pool resource, share best practices, collaborate and avoid duplicated efforts where possible.
- **Gathering ongoing information about the local Armed Forces Community** through personal contacts or existing data sources such as census data, enabling a better understanding of the community's unique needs and how best to deliver the Covenant.
- Creating tools such as **self-sustaining materials** to support ongoing work across other communities and LAs at a lower cost.
- Establishing **a dedicated post such as a Covenant officer** or appointing Armed Forces Champions to provide a clear contact point for coordinating the Covenant's delivery – or, where this is not possible, assigning responsibility for all Covenant-related activities to a single individual to enhance accountability, provide a clear contact point and coordinate efforts.
- Adopting or **further embedding the practices discussed in this report** in future Covenant work. LAs and other organisations should continue to share best practices to maximise funding, efficiency and mutual ability to implement the Covenant, e.g. by partnering with neighbouring councils, disseminating work online or hosting/attending shared events.

Given limited available resources and the Covenant's new statutory footing, we hope these practices will help guide LAs and organisations to implement the Covenant in their area.

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## Abbreviations

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AF	Armed Forces
AFCCG	Armed Forces Community Covenant Group
AFCFT	Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust
AFLO	Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer
AFVBC	Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Clubs
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
COVID-19	Coronavirus 2019
FiMT	Forces in Mind Trust
GM	Greater Manchester
GP	General Practitioner
HR	Human Resources
LA	Local Authority
LGA	Local Government Authority
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NHS	National Health Service
PMT	Portsmouth Hospital Trust
Q1	Quarter 1
Q2	Quarter 2
RAFA	Royal Air Forces Association
RAFBF	Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund
RAFLO	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer
RBL	Royal British Legion
RFCA	Reserve Forces' & Cadets' Association

RNBT	Royal Navy Benevolence Trust
SDP	Strengthening Delivery Programme
Si	Shared Intelligence
SKDC	South Kesteven District Council
UK	United Kingdom
WWTW	Walking With The Wounded

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Finally, the team would like to thank the RAND Quality Assurance reviewers, Shann Hulme, Luke Huxtable and Linda Slapakova, for their feedback and comments on this report and other deliverables throughout the project.

While all these individuals have made important and valued contributions to this study, any errors in this report remain the authors' sole responsibility.

# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1. Context

The Armed Forces Covenant (hereafter called ‘the Covenant’ only) is a 2011 pledge between the UK government, the nation and the Armed Forces articulating the nation’s obligations to the Armed Forces Community.<sup>4</sup> At its core, the Covenant acknowledges that the Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantages due to their (or their family member’s) military service.<sup>5</sup> Since 2011, ‘every local authority in mainland Great Britain has signed a “community covenant partnership” with their local armed forces.’<sup>6</sup> This ‘community covenant’ seeks to:

‘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.’<sup>7</sup>

In response to the findings from a 2016 report by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) and the Local Government Association (LGA),<sup>8</sup> the Covenant Fund team – operating initially as part of the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) – set up the Strengthening Delivery Programme (SDP) in 2016 to provide a series of grants to LAs.<sup>9</sup> They divided these grants into two funding programmes to strengthen local Covenant implementation: the SDP, which ran from 2016 to 2020,<sup>10</sup> and the Sustaining Delivery Programme

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<sup>4</sup> The Armed Forces Community comprises serving personnel, reservists, ex-Service personnel and their families.

<sup>5</sup> Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (2023a).

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Defence (2019).

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Defence (2019).

<sup>8</sup> As the first study of its kind, the 2016 study provided an overall picture of the Covenant’s implementation at the local level, highlighting several gaps and challenges, e.g. insufficient understanding of the Covenant and an absent or underdeveloped infrastructure for delivering it (including action plans, Armed Forces Covenant Officers or dedicated webpages). See Forces in Mind Trust et al. (2017).

<sup>9</sup> The Covenant Fund later became the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT).

<sup>10</sup> The SDP was launched in 2016 and provided a series of grants to LAs to enable ‘them to deliver projects linked to needs identified by their Local Covenant Partnerships.’<sup>10</sup> In 2017, the Trust awarded the first funding phase, totalling £3,493,296 across 23 grants and 107 LAs. The second funding phase followed in 2018, providing £2,768,055 across 20 grants, including 80 LAs.

(hereafter referred to as ‘Sustaining Delivery’), which ran from 2021 to 2022. The grants were provided through an open application process, enabling LAs to deliver projects addressing identified needs for improving the Covenant’s local implementation. The Covenant Fund team later transitioned to become the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT).

These programmes aimed to help LAs overcome the gaps and challenges identified in the 2016 report mentioned above whilst designing and implementing a toolkit supporting better implementation of the Covenant.<sup>11</sup> It is hoped that continued funding and support will enable LAs to better meet the needs of local Service personnel. Additionally, the AFCFT hoped that continued project funding, particularly through Sustaining Delivery, would allow them to fulfil their longer-term plans for developing better physical, financial, medical and educational support for the Armed Forces Community.

## 1.2. Project scope

This study represents the final output of the Evaluation workstream, one of two workstreams this project undertook to support grantees and UK-wide Covenant implementation more broadly. RAND Europe oversaw the Evaluation workstream, which included two phases: (a) Phase 1: Strengthening Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant, and (b) Phase 2: Sustaining Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant. We describe both phases below. In parallel, a second workstream overseen by RAND Europe’s project partner, Shared Intelligence (Si), provided direct support to grantees via training and useful project materials.

### 1.2.1. Phase 1: Strengthening Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant

The projects in this phase focused on delivering activities related to 11 main activity strands. Additionally, the AFCFT commissioned RAND Europe to undertake a summative evaluation of both SDP phases to understand if and how the Programme had met its goals.<sup>12</sup> SDP evaluation started in October 2020 and ran until July 2021.<sup>13</sup> In parallel, the AFCFT commissioned Si to curate an online repository of good SDP practices to create a central resource accessible by LAs across the UK. Si generated this resource via extensive engagement with LAs, including interviews, roundtable events and a comprehensive review of programmatic documents.

### 1.2.2. Phase 2: Sustaining Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant

Sustaining Delivery was launched in 2021 and supported each grantee for about a year or until they achieved their proposed task.<sup>14</sup> Grant applications were only open to organisations funded under the SDP, aiming to provide additional support to continue, finalise or expand activities that had begun under the SDP. This funding aimed to help embed good practices and reinforce the SDPs’ gains to provide ongoing benefits to

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<sup>11</sup> Forces in Mind Trust, Local Government Association and Shared Intelligence (2017).

<sup>12</sup> A summative evaluation is designed to assess a program (in this case the SDP) after its activities’ conclusion.

<sup>13</sup> For a full description of the SDP evaluation, including its methodology and key findings, please see Grand-Clement et al. (2021).

<sup>14</sup> Whether the grant amount related to a fixed duration or the project’s completion depended on the proposed project type, e.g. a dedicated one-year job role versus establishing a particular resource for the Armed Forces Community.

the Armed Forces Community served by each LA partnership cluster.<sup>15</sup> The AFCFT awarded 20 grants of £25,000 each, each going to a cluster of organisations led by a designated LA.<sup>16</sup> Annex A provides a full list of grantees.

RAND Europe was contracted to provide a focused evaluation of the Sustaining Delivery projects to understand good practices across the Sustaining Delivery grantees, including ways they had mitigated challenges or overcome obstacles. The evaluation's primary aim, building on the findings from the more formal evaluation methods used for the SDP, was to analyse the effectiveness of the follow-on grants. This analysis sought to answer the following questions:

- What examples of good practice and learning demonstrate how LAs, with limited funding, have implemented measures to deliver the Covenant comprehensively and sustainably?
- Given the barriers and limitations to implementing the Covenant, how can these examples be shared across different LAs? Where might there be opportunities for the Trust and other organisations to provide support or better assist with delivering the Covenant in future?

This project phase aimed to disseminate good practices, examples and learning more widely to support other LAs in delivering the Covenant under similar constraints. Additionally, the study team sought methods for better sharing practices and experiences across LAs and other community organisations. This task was particularly important given that the Covenant has come under statutory force.

### 1.3. Phase 2 methodology

This study was not a formal process evaluation. Instead, the study team focused on identifying and describing the practices different grantees used to help inform others seeking to implement the Covenant locally. We used the following methods in Phase 2 to address the questions outlined above:

- **Surveys:** The study team issued two questionnaires to all LAs leading clusters and obtained funding from the AFCFT during Sustaining Delivery. We distributed a short survey in December 2021 (hereafter called the 'December survey'), when the projects first started, followed by a more comprehensive questionnaire in June 2022 (hereafter called the 'June survey').<sup>17</sup> Of the 20 grantees, 19 LAs responded to the December questionnaire and 17 to the June questionnaire.<sup>18</sup> Annex C details the survey materials and questions used.
- **Deep dives:** Based on the questionnaire responses and a consultation with the Trust, we selected three case studies ('deep dives') to provide a more in-depth insight into potential good practices

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<sup>15</sup> Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (2021).

<sup>16</sup> Although there were 20 grant holders in the programme, we only surveyed 19 grantees: we did not survey Milton Keynes because agreement was needed about changes to the grant's delivery after their delivery partner dropped out.

<sup>17</sup> Although we circulated surveys among the lead organisations in 19 of the 20 clusters the Trust awarded grants to, not all grantees responded to both surveys: 19 responded to the December survey and only 17 to the June survey.

<sup>18</sup> This is significantly fewer than 35 SDP projects as Sustaining Delivery granted a much smaller number of grants than the SDP (20 vs 35). The Sustaining Delivery surveys also focused only on LAs that led clusters, whereas the SDP survey included lead and participant LAs.

and ways grantees overcame various challenges. We selected these three projects because they were completed in time for inclusion and provided a selection of different geographic locations, lead LA types and project focuses. **Table 1.1** details the selected deep dives, and Annex D provides the materials used in these interviews.

- **Interviews:** The study team conducted seven interviews across the three deep dives to explore the views of the lead LAs, another LA within their cluster, and, where possible, community partners who worked with the cluster and benefited from the project's activities (e.g. the charity 'Hull 4 Heroes').
- **Theme identification:** We consolidated the survey results and deep dives to identify comparative themes across methodologies and between grant cases. We incorporated these takeaways into the findings and explored them in our subsequent 'expert consultation'. This analysis primarily compared data drawn from the research activities, mainly the two surveys, and comparisons with the exemplary practices identified among the three grants. We compiled this data in an extraction template and triangulated it across the various data collection methods. We also used survey data to inform the deep-dive interview questions. We present the results of that analysis in this report.
- **Continuous expert consultation:** We held regular meetings with the Trust to consult on the materials we produced with Si and stay current with any relevant Trust developments. These meetings helped ensure that the questionnaire responses, case study results and document review findings identified key themes, findings and recommendations.

Table 1.1 Details of selected deep dives

<b>'Strengthening Engagement with our Community'</b>	
<b>Start date:</b> 15 September 2021	<b>End date:</b> 31 October 2022
<b>Lead LA:</b> Kingston upon Hull City Council	<b>AFCFT funding allocated:</b> £25,000
<b>Other organisations involved:</b> Local Community Hubs, Armed Forces Forums and Delivery Boards.	
<b>Initial grant aim:</b> To build relationships between civilians in local communities and Armed Forces members by raising awareness of the Armed Forces community's challenges, explaining their support networks and meeting their needs, facilitated through forums and Local Community Hubs.	
<b>'Covenant Commitment: Highland and Moray'</b>	
<b>Start date:</b> 11 October 2021	<b>End date:</b> 5 September 2022
<b>Lead LA:</b> Highland Council (county council)	<b>AFCFT funding allocated:</b> £25,000
<b>Other organisations involved:</b> Local AFCCGs, individual consultants, Warwickshire Council and Moray Council.	
<b>Initial grant aim:</b> To further support Community Planning Partnerships by providing specific learning and training materials, helping identify gaps in provision for Armed Forces communities and substantively articulate their needs within local communities.	
<b>'Sustaining Armed Forces Covenant Delivery (CMF)'</b>	
<b>Start date:</b> 30 September 2021	<b>End date:</b> 30 September 2022
<b>Lead LA:</b> Charnwood Borough Council	<b>AFCFT funding allocated:</b> £25,000
<b>Other organisations involved:</b> The Loughborough WellBeing Centre, Parish Councils, Warwickshire County Council, Rutland and Market Harborough Covenant Officer.	
<b>Initial grant aim:</b> To expand sign-up to the GP accreditation scheme, establish training, Armed Forces Community Champions and a dementia resource pack, and further support the Veterans Wellbeing Café project.	

Source: Information compiled by RAND Europe based on grant documentation provided by the AFCFT.

## 1.4. Caveats and limitations

While we based this report's analysis and findings on thorough research using the best available data, it is not a formal assessment of the Covenant's implementation through Sustaining Delivery. Although this allowed us to focus on Trust's stated aims, it limited the report's ability to comprehensively examine Sustaining Delivery's implementation effectiveness. Since this project's data came from self-reporting grant-holders, it may also be subject to self-reporting bias and limitations in objectivity. Therefore, any findings should not be attributed to or associated with formal process-evaluation methodologies, nor should those findings be inferred from this report's analysis. Further, we could not independently validate grant participants' views, including interviewees; we thus present them throughout as the perception or opinion of the individual who provided the information.

Additionally, timelines changed throughout the Sustaining Delivery's lifetime and, consequently, this study's, often due to exogenous factors beyond the control of either the Trust, the grantees or the study team, e.g. the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its accompanying restrictions, staff turnover and

availability among grantees, and funding constraints. Therefore, the study team could not collect information from each programme simultaneously, limiting some of the consistency between answers. Such factors also significantly delayed the study because grantees started projects later than anticipated or had little to report in the earlier stages.

Finally, findings were limited by staff availability and grantees' available time for participation. For example, the study team could not collect survey responses from all 20 grantees.

## 1.5. Structure

This report proceeds as follows:

- **Chapter 2** summarises the Sustaining Delivery projects' aims and perceived successes.
- **Chapter 3** provides insights regarding implementation challenges and key enablers the grantees considered to have contributed to their success. This chapter includes a summary of the highlighted practices from each deep dive.
- **Chapter 4** provides concluding thoughts based on the findings outlined in chapters 2 and 3, alongside recommendations for others seeking to implement the Covenant.

Annexes provide supplementary documents, including:

- A.** A complete list of all grantees from the Sustaining Delivery programme;
- B.** A full overview of results from the December 2021 and June 2022 grantee surveys;
- C.** The survey instruments we administered in December 2021 and June 2022; and
- D.** The interview protocol we used to gather examples of good practice.

Additionally, highlighted practices collected from the three deep dives are available in the following three (separate) documents:

- *Supporting Sustained Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant: Highlighted practices from the Charnwood Council cluster*
- *Supporting Sustained Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant: Highlighted practices from the Highland Council cluster*
- *Supporting Sustained Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant: Highlighted practices from the Kingston-upon-Hull City Council cluster.*

## 2. The aims and successes of Sustaining Delivery grants

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This chapter summarises the aims and perceived successes of projects conducted as part of the Sustaining Delivery grants. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these findings derive from two surveys and three deep dives into individual grants.<sup>19</sup> This chapter considers the big picture as it emerged from the two surveys before considering the specific examples of each deep dive.

### 2.1. Project aims

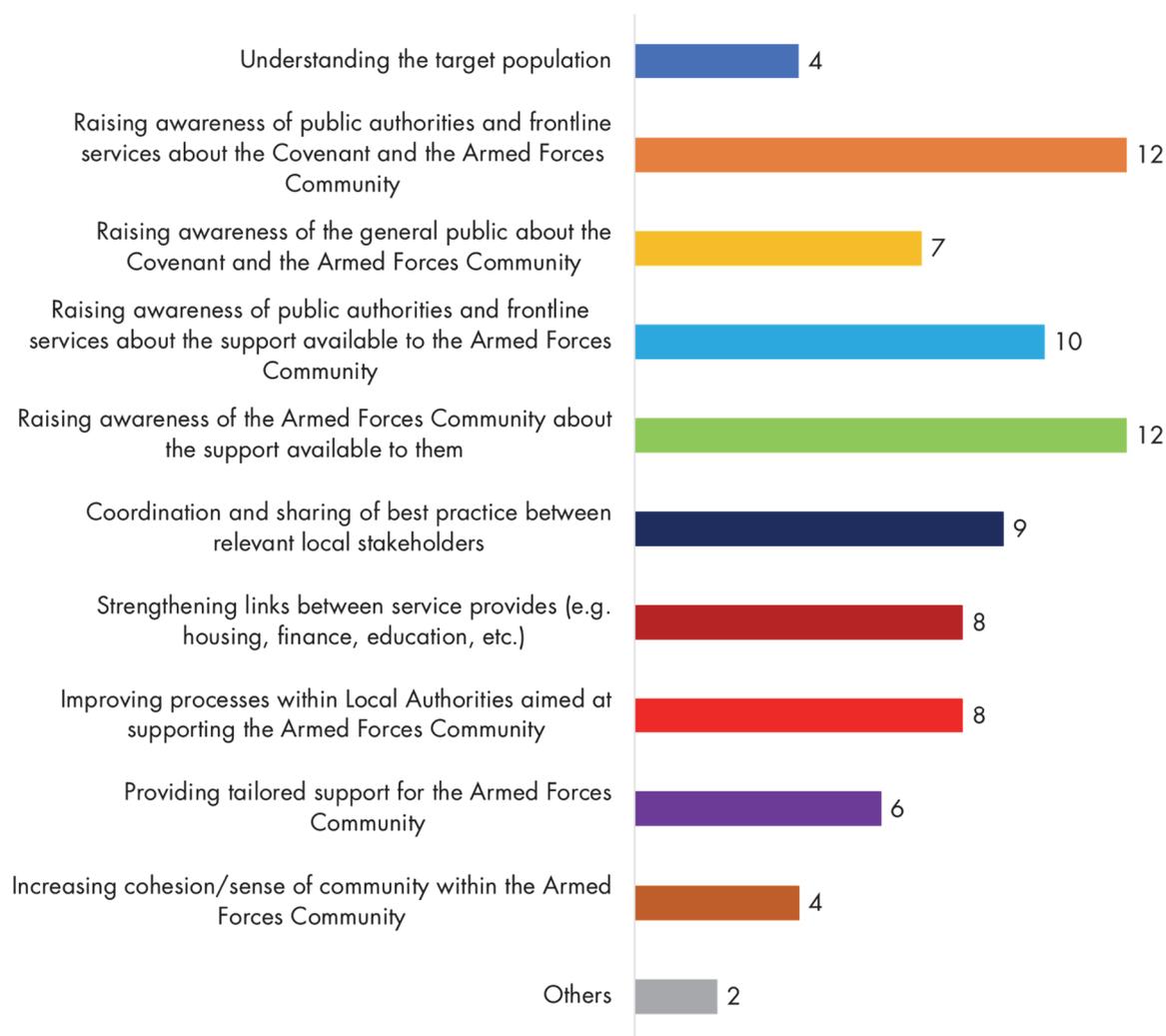
#### 2.1.1. Survey results

Building on the SDP, Sustaining Delivery aimed to fund those LAs requiring more investment or likely to contribute the most to improving the Covenant's local implementation. The Trust did not mandate any specific activities under these grants. **Figure 1** overviews the different activity strands undertaken by Sustaining Delivery continuation grants as of June 2022. Most projects undertook several activity strands; we have attached no weighting reflecting the dominant activity strand in each project.

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<sup>19</sup> Annex B provides the complete survey results, and Annex C provides the full survey questions.

**Figure 1 Number of Sustaining Delivery projects pursuing each activity**



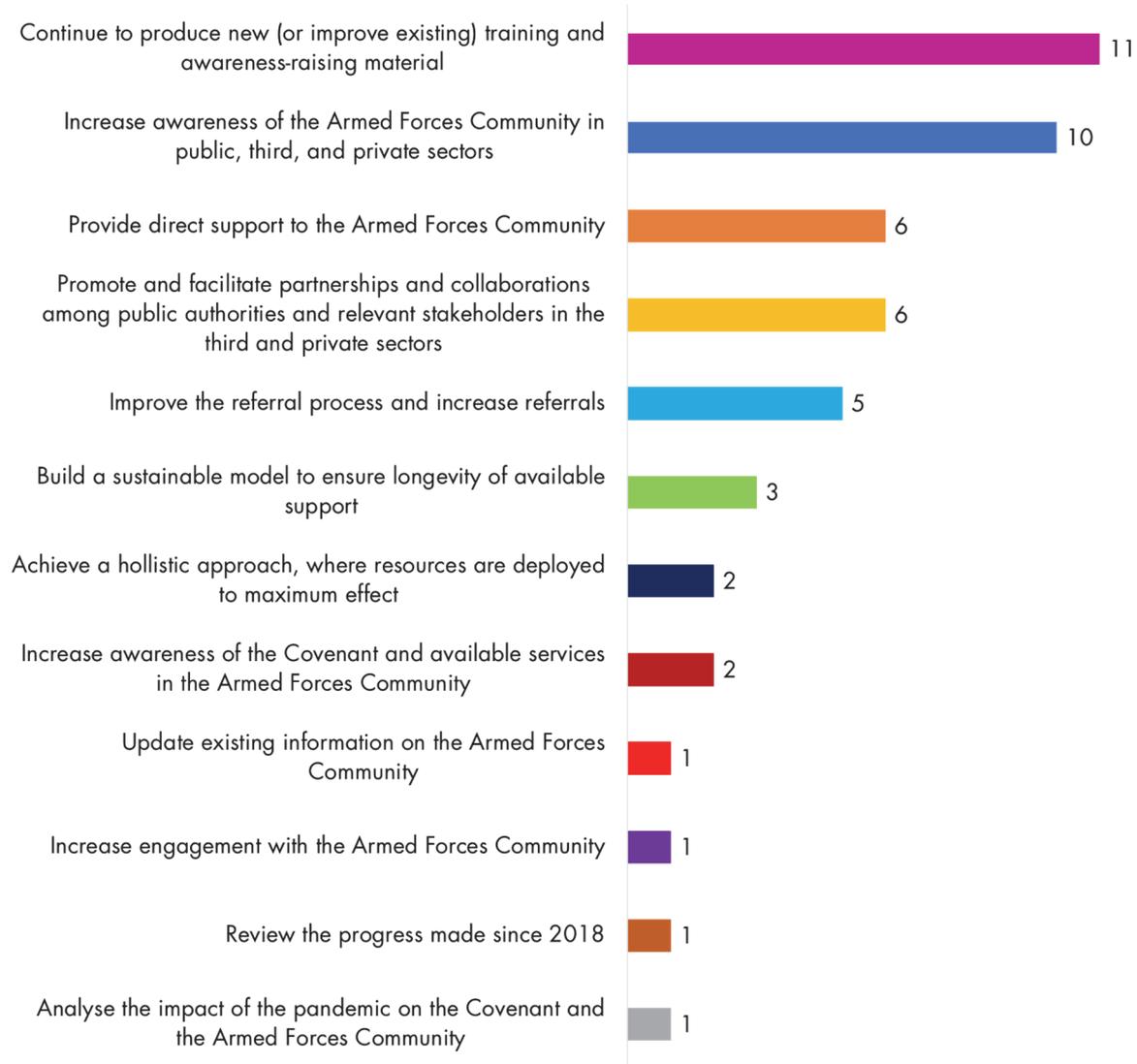
Source: RAND Europe analysis of data from 17 projects where LAs completed the June 2022 questionnaire.<sup>20</sup> Note that respondents could choose as many options as they felt appropriate.

The most common activity pursued by grantees included raising public authorities’ and frontline services’ awareness about the Covenant and Armed Forces Community and the Armed Forces Community’s awareness about available support. The SDP evaluation results suggest that 18 out of 31 grantees with projects focused on the ‘raising awareness’ activity strand (approximately 58 per cent) felt that the Sustaining Delivery grant had, ‘to a great extent’, increased awareness of the Armed Forces Community among public authorities and frontline services. Similarly, 16 out of 28 grant-holders whose projects focused on this activity strand (approximately 57 per cent) felt that the Sustaining Delivery grant had ‘to a great extent’ increased awareness among the Armed Forces Community about the support available to them. We thus

<sup>20</sup> No weighting was attached to the above assessments according to the activity strands dominating each project. The numbers represent the number of projects that undertook each activity strand. In the figure below, the ‘others’ category refers to two grant-specific activities: promoting the Forces Connect App in training and continuing engagement with local businesses in the private sector.

concluded that grant-holders felt such activities may have required sustained funding and effort over both grants.

**Figure 2 Number of projects that identified these goals as a top-three priority**



Source: RAND Europe analysis of data from 17 projects (out of 20 total) that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.<sup>21</sup>

The relative activity-strand focus in **Figure 2** aligned with each project’s stated priorities. When asked to pinpoint the three main priorities they intended to pursue, projects most often mentioned the following:

<sup>21</sup> No weighting was attached to the above assessments regarding which priorities were ranked highest by individual projects. The numbers represent the number of projects that mentioned each area as one of its top three priorities. Additionally, the categories of goals listed and identified are not mutually exclusive.

- Producing new (or improving existing) training and awareness-raising materials directed at various relevant stakeholders, e.g. by developing new e-learning modules or updating existing materials in line with the Armed Forces Act (11 out of 17); and
- Increasing public-, third- and private-sector awareness of the Armed Forces Community by, for example, training LA staff, encouraging parishes to sign up to the Covenant or utilising social media (10 out of 17).

One of the lowest Sustaining Delivery priorities was updating existing information on and increasing engagement with the Armed Forces Community, despite several projects focusing on this during the SDP.<sup>22</sup> This finding corresponds with the least common activity strands: understanding the target population and increasing the Armed Forces Community's cohesion/sense of community. These findings suggest that project teams felt they had more comprehensive data on the Armed Forces Community following the SDP and thus needed to spend less time and resources understanding it.

### 2.1.2. Deep dives

#### Charnwood Borough Council cluster

The Charnwood-Borough-Council-led cluster (hereafter referred to as 'Charnwood') aimed to embed the Covenant into internal and external organisational processes by working with multiple community organisations. Ultimately, it intended to raise awareness among the Armed Forces Community, the public, authorities and front-line services about the Covenant and the support available for the Armed Forces Community. The project engaged with numerous organisations, including the Loughborough Wellbeing Centre, Veterans Wellbeing Hub, Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre, parish councils, general practitioner (GP) practices, social prescribers and other community groups.<sup>23</sup> Cluster members believe they achieved their goals by coordinating and sharing best practices between relevant local stakeholders, strengthening links between service providers and improving processes within Local Authorities supporting the Armed Forces Community.<sup>24</sup>

#### Highland Council cluster

This Highland-Council-led cluster (hereafter referred to as 'Highland') produced free online training materials for partners' and individual agencies' use, deepening the public, third and private sector's understanding of the Armed Forces Community.<sup>25</sup> The Highland representatives explained in the post-project interviews that the project allowed the Council to address and complete work areas outlined in a previous project<sup>26</sup>: embedding the Covenant principles across Community Planning Partnership, Scotland Community Planning Partnerships and Statutory Partnerships. Sustaining Delivery gave Highland a

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<sup>22</sup> A total of 25 out of 43 projects undertook the activity strand 'Understanding the target population' during the SDP. Grand-Clement et al. (2021).

<sup>23</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>24</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview C2, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>25</sup> Moray and Highland Councils (2022).

<sup>26</sup> Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe.

sustainable mechanism for embedding and progressing the Covenant through various partners (e.g. Fire, Police, National Health Service [NHS] and third-sector organisations).<sup>27</sup> The materials aimed to increase awareness about the Armed Forces Community's unique needs and address the local knowledge gap hindering Community Partners' work.<sup>28</sup> The cluster circulated these materials to Community Partners for embedding and cascading within individual agencies' staff training.

### Kingston upon Hull City Council cluster

The 'Strengthening Engagement with our Community' cluster led by the Kingston upon Hull City Council (hereafter referred to as 'Hull') aimed to foster greater engagement with forums, delivery boards, businesses and the Armed Forces Community.<sup>29</sup> The primary aims of this engagement included:

- Raising awareness of the public authorities and front-line services about the Covenant and the Armed Forces Community;
- Raising the general public's awareness about the Covenant and the Armed Forces Community; and
- Providing tailored support for the Armed Forces Community and raising their awareness of the support available.<sup>30</sup>

Interviewees re-iterated these aims in the post-project interviews, highlighting the overarching desire to prioritise veterans in any work undertaken.<sup>31</sup> The Hull and LA partner representatives echoed the goals of building communication within the Covenant, increasing partner engagement and broadening people's knowledge about the Covenant itself.<sup>32</sup>

## 2.2. Perceived successes

### 2.2.1. Survey results

Overall, respondents strongly felt that Sustaining Delivery positively influenced their activities, with 14 respondents reporting it had improved the Covenant's implementation in their area to 'some' or 'a great' extent.<sup>33</sup> This finding echoed the Phase 1 SDP evaluation, which showed that grantees considered the programme to have improved the Covenant's local implementation.<sup>34</sup> **Figure 3** details how the funding was perceived to have achieved this.

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<sup>27</sup> Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>28</sup> June 2022 survey results.

<sup>29</sup> June 2022 survey results.

<sup>30</sup> Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

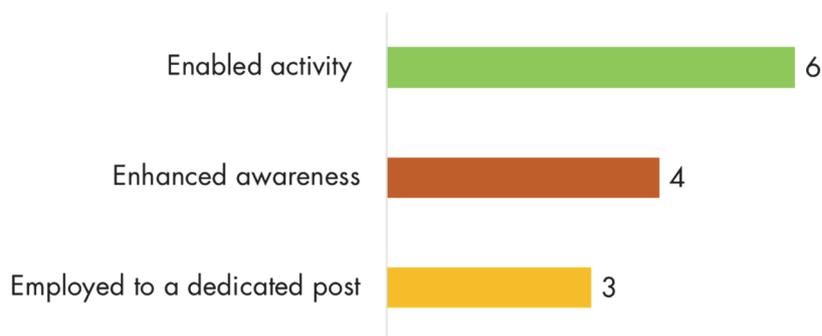
<sup>31</sup> Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>32</sup> Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>33</sup> June 2022 survey results.

<sup>34</sup> Grand-Clement et al. (2021).

**Figure 3 Ways in which Sustaining Delivery helped improve the Covenant’s implementation in respondents' areas**



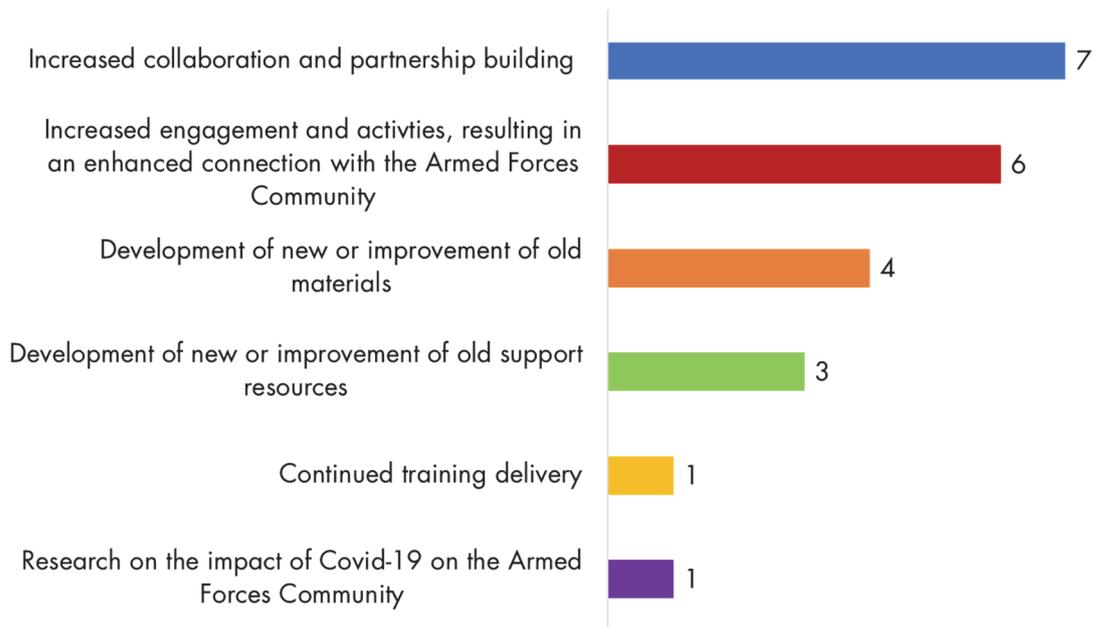
Source: RAND Europe analysis of data from the 17 projects that filled in the June 2022 questionnaire.<sup>35</sup>

Among the ten respondents who provided detailed comments, the most significant area they mentioned where funding improved the Covenant’s implementation was in enabling activity that would not otherwise have been possible. One respondent extensively described key media engagement the grant made possible, citing a media campaign that reached 71,200 people – including a video with over 34,000 views. Other respondents emphasised Sustaining Delivery’s importance, given the financial pressure on LAs to uphold the Covenant and execute other aspects of local service delivery. One grantee noted that the increased activity that Sustaining Delivery enabled increased the County Council’s confidence and subsequent willingness to provide additional funding. A thematic analysis of the survey data suggested that most grantees positively perceive the funding’s impacts.

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<sup>35</sup> Not all project representatives who participated in the surveys answered each question. Figures only include data from respondents.

**Figure 4 Grantee perspectives on perceived successes achieved through the Sustaining Delivery project**



Source: RAND Europe analysis of data from 17 projects (out of 20 total) that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.<sup>36</sup>

According to grant-holders, the greatest success achieved through the Sustaining Delivery grants was collaboration and partnership building, which they felt had increased during projects. Increased engagement and activities followed closely behind since they enhanced connection with the Armed Forces Community.<sup>37</sup> These findings align with evidence from the SDP evaluation, where the most significant benefit of SDP funding grant holders mentioned was improved sharing and coordination of best practices between relevant local stakeholders. This finding also resonated with areas of success identified through the SDP evaluation, such as providing tailored support to the Armed Forces Community and raising their awareness of the support available to them.<sup>38</sup>

Sustaining Delivery also helped clusters implement resources and pursue activities within their local communities to serve the Armed Forces better. For example, several clusters used Sustaining Delivery funds to provide dedicated materials to help other LAs identify and address their local Armed Forces Community’s needs. By helping local service organisations secure funding and deliver activities, many grantees felt they were empowering them to deliver a higher standard of care to the Armed Forces Community.

<sup>36</sup> The numbers represent the number of projects that mentioned each area (note that projects could select multiple areas where they felt their project was successful).

<sup>37</sup> June 2022 survey data.

<sup>38</sup> Grand-Clement et al. (2021).

## 2.2.2. Deep dives

### Charnwood

The Charnwood Representative reported that the Sustaining Delivery funding mechanism and process helped improve the Covenant's implementation in their area to a great extent.<sup>39</sup> The Charnwood Representative re-iterated the project's success in the post-project interviews, explaining that Sustaining Delivery '100%' improved the Covenant's local implementation, helping them make 'a positive difference' on multiple fronts.<sup>40</sup> The cluster enlisted parish councils to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and the Careers Transition Partnership and trained and established Armed Forces Champions in multiple Parish Councils to form self-sustaining networks.<sup>41</sup> They also established an Armed Forces Champion post in Charnwood's human resources (HR) department to provide tailored employment support to those leaving the Armed Forces locally.<sup>42</sup> Adjusting Melton Borough Council's HR policies to be more veteran-friendly (by appointing an in-house Armed Forces Champion and increasing Armed Forces recruitment) also helped them achieve gold employee recognition status under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, the cluster adjusted Melton Borough Council's equality impact assessments to include veterans in the Equality and Diversity Legislation.<sup>44</sup> They also facilitated the GP Veteran Friendly Aware scheme amongst GP Practices, where staff received training and signposting information about Veterans.<sup>45</sup> Collaboration with the Veterans Wellbeing Hub secured long-term funding, which has since been used to implement the hub locally. Lastly, the cluster designed a Dementia Toolkit for Veterans suffering from Dementia, providing comprehensive information and guidance.<sup>46</sup>

### Highland

The Highland Council re-iterated the success of the Sustaining Delivery programme and related materials in the post-project interviews, with the Highland Council Representative remarking that 'the project has achieved what it set out to do' and 'absolutely helped' implement the Covenant locally.<sup>47</sup> The Highland interviewee described how Sustaining Delivery gave them the financial capacity to hire a dedicated Project Officer and Educational Materials Consultant to action Covenant support.<sup>48</sup> Sustaining Delivery's resources also allowed Highland and other cluster members to collaborate in raising awareness about the Armed Forces Community through accessible training.<sup>49</sup> These online training materials aimed to improve

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<sup>39</sup> June 2022 survey results.

<sup>40</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>41</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>42</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>43</sup> Interview C2, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>44</sup> Interview C2, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>45</sup> June 2022 survey results.

<sup>46</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>47</sup> Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>48</sup> Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>49</sup> Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe.

awareness and services relevant to the Armed Forces Community amongst community partners; they are shared with local organisations and available to all, including individuals.<sup>50</sup>

## Hull

The perceived success of the Hull project was re-iterated in each of the three post-project interviews.<sup>51</sup> One Local Authority partner believed that they achieved the goal of broadening people's knowledge of the Covenant through consultation development of a self-assessment tool within their Local Standards Assessment for gauging responses to incoming legislation.<sup>52</sup> The project's greatest impact was arguably its success in building an entire community that did not exist before, connecting pockets of service members and veterans (one advantage of operating within a larger cluster).<sup>53</sup> Interviewees considered the connections made during this project to be self-sustaining and long-lasting, with service members collectively joining clubs, crossing the river to meet and gathering at breakfast clubs.<sup>54</sup> The project also helped break down barriers to resources for the region's Armed Forces Community, the benefits of which will continue through a network of invested personnel, project deliverables and future initiatives.<sup>55</sup>

## 2.3. Conclusion

This chapter summarised the aims and perceived impacts of projects conducted as part of Sustaining Delivery, as reported in the surveys and deep dives. These aims ranged from clear and measurable goals, such as releasing publicly available materials to support others in delivering the Covenant, to more abstract aims, such as building partnerships and relationships.

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<sup>50</sup> June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>51</sup> Interviews A1–A4, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>52</sup> Interview A4, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>53</sup> June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>54</sup> Interview A4, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>55</sup> A4 Interview, conducted by RAND Europe.

## 3. Barriers and enablers

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This chapter explores the challenges Sustaining Delivery grantees encountered in pursuing their stated aims and the enablers they felt were critical to overcoming or mitigating these barriers. The chapter begins with a general discussion of barriers and challenges, informed by the survey findings and supplemented by detail from each deep dive, then examines approaches for ensuring the projects' sustained impact now that the Sustaining Delivery funding has ended.

### 3.1. Barriers and challenges

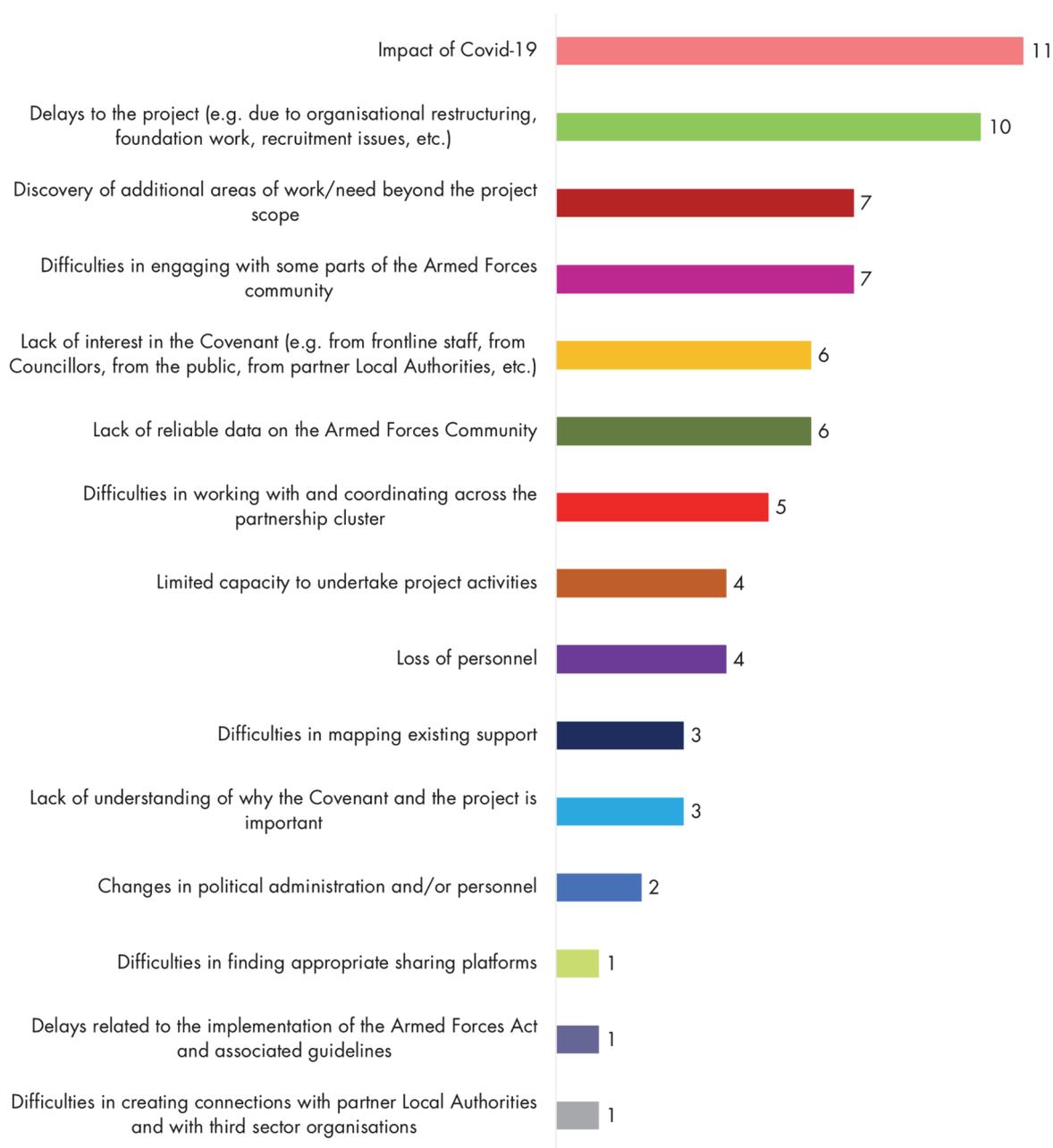
#### 3.1.1. Survey results

According to the survey results (and as Figure 5 shows), the two most common barriers to Sustaining Delivery implementation most projects faced related to COVID-19's impact and the associated project delays. COVID-19's impact was also one of the two biggest challenges encountered during the SDP, suggesting that the pandemic has continued to negatively impact efforts to improve the Covenant's implementation. We conclude that this challenge's continued prevalence means that some of the pandemic's effects, such as its impact on support personnel (causing work delays in some cases), lie beyond the projects' control or adaptive capacity.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> June 2022 Survey Results.

**Figure 5 Main barriers and challenges identiby number of grantees**



Source: RAND Europe analysis of data from 17 projects (out of 20 total) that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.<sup>57</sup>

Project delays occurred for various reasons, as **Figure 6** shows. Recruitment issues and difficulties in agreeing, collaborating and preparing partners were the most common causes of delay.

<sup>57</sup> The above results are not weighted according to the projects' perception of their significance. The figures denote the number of projects that mentioned each barrier/challenge.

**Figure 6 Main causes of project delays, by number of projects**



Source: RAND Europe analysis of data from 17 projects that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.<sup>58</sup>

Survey data suggests that almost half of the projects anticipated these barriers and challenges.<sup>59</sup> However, one project did not anticipate or plan for the need to recruit replacement staff, and another did not anticipate the need to regularly re-establish relationships with serving Armed Forces units due to personnel changes and rotations. Nonetheless, the results may indicate that projects identified and planned for emergent challenges relatively well.

### 3.1.2. Deep Dives

Interviewees frequently reiterated the challenges of limited funding, describing how funding constraints constrained their ability to honour LAs' pre-existing commitments to improve the Covenant's delivery in their areas.<sup>60</sup> However, they emphasised the key role that Sustaining Delivery funding, though limited, played in helping them achieve their goals.

In particular, interviewees suggested that funding for dedicated employment positions significantly impacted Covenant delivery. As LA staff members often have many responsibilities, they have less time to dedicate to the Covenant, potentially making projects slow and inefficient. Without funding to hire new staff to address the Covenant's needs, interviewees believed that councils and LAs struggle to progress such work. Moreover, partner engagement dropped without sufficient resources to hire Covenant Officers dedicated to delivering the Covenant. For example, partners like the NHS or housing authorities cannot often operate at the level of dedicated resources, which can slow work progress.<sup>61</sup> Although the LAs felt they had the will to support the Covenant, they suggested that resources in such cases were insufficient to support

<sup>58</sup> The above results are not weighted according to the projects' perception of their significance. The figures denote the number of projects that mentioned each cause. Only ten project representatives responded to this question.

<sup>59</sup> June 2022 survey data. 'Q17. Are these the same or different to the challenges or barriers that you anticipated?'

<sup>60</sup> Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>61</sup> Interview A3, conducted by RAND Europe.

it.<sup>62</sup> For some LAs, personnel changes meant timescales had to be adapted to ensure more people could engage with the project.<sup>63</sup>

## Charnwood

The Charnwood deep dive highlighted occasional disagreements within the cluster that proved challenging. Interviewees described instances where multiple partners presented competing ideas regarding funding division. For example, Charnwood wanted funding from other cluster councils to sustain the Project Officer position, while other cluster partners disagreed. However, the Charnwood representative believed the cluster had a fruitful working relationship overall despite these difficulties.<sup>64</sup> The funding's temporary nature was another barrier. One interviewee explained that since limited funding was considered a threat to the key project staff's job security, he could not promise job security for an 'exceptionally motivated and committed project officer.'<sup>65</sup> This limitation ultimately led the individual to take another job.

## Highland

Highland initially struggled to engage with Community Planning Partners and raise their awareness of the Armed Forces Community.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, cluster members struggled to get the expertise needed to develop the project's training materials.<sup>67</sup> Quick time scales and a fast project turnaround made it necessary to recruit someone quickly; therefore, the cluster put out a tender and brought in a specialist to develop accessible materials. Despite the initial risk that paying for a specialist would not be approved at the LA level, arguments favouring this step were ultimately approved.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, the significant geographic size discrepancy between the two Councils culminated in different operating contexts, which meant extra work was sometimes required to improve collaboration within the cluster.

## Hull

Interviewees from Hull described how they saw the public's limited or absent understanding of what the Covenant or its partners do as a key barrier to maximising impact and establishing the necessary connections.<sup>69</sup> For example, interviewees frequently mentioned the Council and Covenant work's lack of visibility within the Armed Forces community.<sup>70</sup> They suggested that their work within wider communities to externally support the Armed Forces is not fully communicated to military personnel working internally, citing several occurrences where new reservist employees had no prior knowledge of their services.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Interview A3, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>63</sup> June 2022 survey results.

<sup>64</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>65</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>66</sup> Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>67</sup> Interview B2, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>68</sup> Interview B2, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>69</sup> Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 survey results.

<sup>70</sup> Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 survey results.

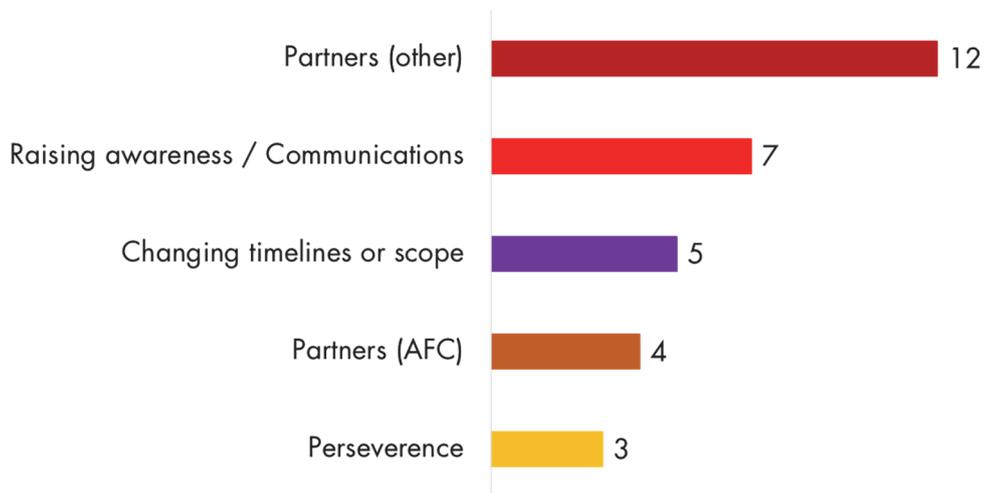
<sup>71</sup> Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe.

## 3.2. Enablers

### 3.2.1. Survey results

The grantees adopted various mitigation strategies (shown in **Figure 7** in response to the challenges identified.

**Figure 7 Mitigation strategies for overcoming risks and barriers identified by grantees**



Source: RAND Europe analysis of data from 17 projects that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.

The survey results suggest that most grantees overcame their challenges by working with partners, including the Trust itself and other organisations working in specific areas of the Armed Forces Community (e.g. not-for-profit organisations working specifically with veterans). These partnerships bore fruit in multiple ways: one grantee described using ‘the expertise and knowledge of the existing pathways established’ by an organisation they engaged with, while others talked about the importance of working with better-resourced organisations that can ‘take burden from the public sector’.

Other grantees emphasised the importance of consistent and persistent communication or general perseverance to continue pushing for results without other sources of momentum. One grantee described the need to maintain ‘drive and belief to pursue the vision I put forward’, while others described the need for ‘engagement’ with community partners. Many respondents mentioned how the need for persistence and the importance of partnerships suggests that effective partnerships require significant effort, despite the number of organisations working in this space. Many grantees felt they had lessons worth sharing with others facing similar risks and barriers, highlighting the importance of this ongoing work.

For all grants and clusters, and despite their best efforts, unforeseen challenges and obstacles often arose. Therefore, adaptability and flexibility were critical for enabling projects to shift timelines and scope and continue delivering the best value. Common challenges included recruitment difficulties, conflicting responsibilities and the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted grantees throughout this project. Grantees across all projects also found it useful to cultivate agility with their project plans in consultation with their local communities to best meet their needs.

### 3.2.2. Deep dives

The surveys and interview results for the three deep-dive clusters reveal several additional findings echoed across all three project clusters. These included the following:

- **Appointing a particular individual or role responsible for coordinating the Covenant's implementation was seen as a key enabler** across the different grantees in Sustaining Delivery.<sup>72</sup> These were ideally Project Officers, often hired through Sustaining Delivery funding, who exclusively undertook Covenant duties and could cultivate wide and enduring networks.<sup>73</sup> Project Officers were seen as particularly advantageous during Sustaining Delivery, taking the load off overburdened council staff and providing consistent project support. However, the project team speculates that even without the resources for a dedicated Project Officer, designating a particular individual responsible for overseeing the Covenant's delivery might have similar benefits.
- Grant holders deemed **collaboration and partnership building the most successful and beneficial area** within their projects.<sup>74</sup> Collaboration was embedded into the project cluster's structure and frequently utilised to share best practices, develop holistic project materials and create stronger service and support networks.<sup>75</sup> Partnerships within the Armed Forces Community enabled grantees to better understand local service personnel and veterans' dynamic needs to tailor activities more effectively. Outside the Armed Forces Community, networks and relationships helped disseminate good practices and/or information about gaps. Furthermore, the cluster built partnerships via collaborative networks with other LAs, the Armed Forces Community (particularly eager to help) and the third and private sectors.<sup>76</sup>
- Similarly, the cluster considered their cultivation of **long-term support networks and relationships crucial for delivering the Covenant, particularly for sustaining the Covenant's delivery** after the project's completion.<sup>77</sup> Several grantees found that networks also allow grantees to continue the Covenant's work following the grant funding's end. Outreach opportunities to bolster community engagement provided a similar pathway that grantees used to increase project sustainability.
- Interviewees felt **clear and tailored communication strategies were needed** with partners, networks and the wider public to facilitate cooperation.<sup>78</sup> Raising awareness about the Covenant was an activity many grantees found beneficial.<sup>79</sup> The more proactive these communications were, the

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<sup>72</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview A3, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>73</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview A3, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>74</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview C2, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview B2, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview A3, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>75</sup> Interview C2, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>76</sup> June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>77</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>78</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview C2, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>79</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe.

more grantees could raise awareness of the Covenant, disseminate information about its implementation and available support and facilitate feedback from other networks.

- Based on the differences between the SDP and the Sustaining Delivery surveys, interviewees expressed that **dedicated information collection activities provided significant value** in enabling projects to scope and target their efforts appropriately.<sup>80</sup> Pre-existing relationships and forums enabled projects to collect information about their communities' needs to meet their diverse requirements.<sup>81</sup> Interviewees felt that this facilitated better use of limited resources.<sup>82</sup> Given such activities' importance, they may be a useful target for future funding. Where funding is unavailable, a great deal of sector-wide data is available or currently being collected that could be used with minimal effort.<sup>83</sup>
- **Interviewees considered robust and publicly available materials to provide long-lasting support for Covenant implementation.**<sup>84</sup> Ideally, these are sufficiently flexible for various community organisations and individuals to use. Such public materials can raise awareness about the Armed Forces community and provide resources for various support avenues (e.g. medical, educational, employment, housing, etc.).<sup>85</sup> One grantee, for example, created legislation standards documents and best practices available to inform and guide ongoing work.<sup>86</sup> However, some projects chose to achieve more formal project sustainability by employing long-term employees likely to remain dedicated to the Covenant's work.

A full account of these practices relative to each project is available in the Highlighted Practices documents described in Section 1.5.

### 3.3. Continued impact after Sustaining Delivery

#### 3.3.1. Survey Results

The challenge of sustaining SDP efforts was mentioned extensively in the SDP evaluation and surveys and was part of the motivation for Sustaining Delivery. Among the projects funded by Sustaining Delivery, all survey respondents indicated they were still working to enhance the work's sustainability after funding ceased. Despite the time elapsed and increased dedicated planning processes for sustainability, many of the barriers to sustainability that appeared in the SDP seem to have continued impacting Sustaining Delivery projects.

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<sup>80</sup> Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview B2, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>81</sup> Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>82</sup> June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>83</sup> For example, work sponsored by the Forces in Mind Trust recommends using census data; see Shared Intelligence et al. (2022).

<sup>84</sup> Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>85</sup> Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>86</sup> Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe.

While most projects anticipated being able to continue their activities or services, several did not, and at least one did not know. Respondents often attributed the lack of sustainability to the absence of ongoing funding. For example, one project reported that the lack of assured funding meant they could no longer keep their dedicated Covenant Officer,<sup>87</sup> and at least one project never planned to continue their work past the end of the grant.<sup>88</sup>

Figure 8 lists the most common sustainability plans among those who anticipated their project’s longevity.

**Figure 8 Most frequently reported plans for sustaining projects beyond the grant’s duration**



Source: RAND Europe analysis of data from the 17 projects that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.

Again, partnerships were a key theme, with multiple respondents (n=7) indicating that partnerships with their cluster partners or other organisations would be key to sustainability. Several organisations intended to continue making their materials available, either for raising awareness (n=10) or training (n=3), a relatively resource-efficient proposition. However, without support to continue raising awareness of these materials and updating them regularly, it was unclear how long these materials might remain relevant – although at least one respondent had accounted for this by specifically including ‘very generic materials and information’ to minimise the need for updates.

### 3.3.2. Deep dives

The deep dives captured concrete examples of achieving sustainability.

#### Charnwood

While not expecting any activities undertaken as a direct result of the project to continue after the grant ends, the Charnwood representative detailed their plan to maximise the project’s sustainability. At this time, a final project report included eleven recommendations for the three councils concerning short-term

<sup>87</sup> June 2022 survey results.

<sup>88</sup> June 2022 survey results.

requirements and the Covenant's long-term delivery.<sup>89</sup> The cluster considered relationships to be a key enabler for sustainability, with interviewees describing how the cluster's cultivated network is a 'human thing' that will naturally outlive the grant activities.<sup>90</sup> Charnwood will also continue its relationship with other community partners, such as the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre and the Veterans Wellbeing Hub, with whom they hope to continue collaborating.<sup>91</sup> Such relationships can produce additional dividends. For example, Charnwood collaborated during the project with the Veterans Wellbeing Hub, which deals with Veterans' mental and emotional well-being issues, to help them implement a local hub that interviewees believed would 'long outlive the project.'<sup>92</sup> As a result of the connections made during the project, the local communities also have a network that encompasses council members, the Armed Forces Community, Armed Forces Champions, parish councils, and support organisations.<sup>93</sup> Finally, the Armed Forces Champions have a firm commitment to the community and a robust skillset that makes their role more sustainable.<sup>94</sup>

## Highland

Through engagement with the military and civilian communities, Highland established what they consider well-informed and versatile training materials<sup>95</sup> designed to increase awareness about the Armed Forces Community's unique needs and address the local knowledge gap hindering current services. They circulated these materials, developed with best-practice sharing in mind and intended to be accessible to all<sup>96</sup> and applicable across diverse stakeholders without requiring regular updates,<sup>97</sup> to Community Partners for embedding and cascading within individual agencies.<sup>98</sup> The cluster aims for them to continue being used post-project without an ongoing funding stream. While the project's material's full impact cannot be assessed until the training is further disseminated and used by Community Partners, Sustaining Delivery's influence on the Covenant's delivery in Highland can be determined from earlier project stages. The Highland representatives reported that Sustaining Delivery enabled the cluster to consolidate materials, identify the Armed Forces Community's unique needs, forge connections and foster partnerships.<sup>99</sup>

## Hull

Following the project's completion, the cluster expects the Hull-led activities to continue embedding in local services. Engagement with businesses and support packages for veterans and service leavers will develop after the project finishes. Hull continues to have a dedicated full-time person employed as an Armed Forces

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<sup>89</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview C2, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>90</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>91</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>92</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>93</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview C2, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>94</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>95</sup> Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview B2, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>96</sup> Interview B2, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>97</sup> June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>98</sup> Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>99</sup> Interview B2, conducted by RAND Europe.

Covenant Officer was considered critical to the project work's sustainability.<sup>100</sup> Additionally, while the funding allowed cluster members to engage in consultation and legislation-focused work, the legislation standards document is now live, providing a continual reference point without requiring ongoing funds.<sup>101</sup> The document is also a standing agenda item, continually updated via regular partnership meetings.<sup>102</sup> Finally, cluster members have invested in the new Armed Forces Hub, which will serve as a gathering space and a platform for future work areas identified in the project.<sup>103</sup>

### 3.4. Conclusion

This chapter explored general barriers throughout projects' lifetimes and specific challenges in ensuring sustainability. It also examined strategies used to mitigate barriers. The next chapter consolidates common findings from Chapters 2 and 3 to propose a final list of the practices grantees found most beneficial for implementing the Covenant.

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<sup>100</sup> Interview A3, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>101</sup> Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>102</sup> Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>103</sup> A3 Interview, conducted by RAND Europe.

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

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This final chapter overviews the beneficial practices identified through the study's survey and deep dives with Sustaining Delivery grantees. The section below details the key good practices identified. These findings are based on grantees' experiences as they perceived and described them; the study team could not independently verify them. Nonetheless, they represent a valuable and unique set of insights for other LAs seeking to implement the Covenant in similar situations.

### 4.1. Project aims and successes

While LAs often had a pre-existing commitment to improving local delivery of the Covenant, Sustaining Delivery funding made this an actionable reality. Several surveys and post-project interviews with grant holders suggested they felt that Sustaining Delivery positively impacted local Covenant implementation overall. Respondents believed that the single greatest area where Sustaining Delivery funding improved the Covenant's implementation was in generating activity that would not otherwise have been possible. However, concerns remain about sustaining these projects' positive impacts, particularly given the lack of ongoing funds, and ensuring the Covenant can be delivered across the country now that it has gained statutory footing.

When asked to pinpoint the main priorities they intended to pursue in Sustaining Delivery, projects most often mentioned producing/improving training and awareness-raising materials for stakeholders, increasing the public-, third- and private-sector's awareness of the Armed Forces Community by training LA staff, encouraging parishes to sign up to the Covenant, or utilising social media. To this end, most Sustaining Delivery projects sought to raise public authorities' and frontline services' awareness about the Covenant and the Armed Forces Community and the Armed Forces Community's awareness about the support available to them.

### 4.2. Highlighted practices

The three deep dives enabled the project team to consolidate information on key practices grantees considered helpful for achieving the Covenant's delivery. The section below summarises the findings across the three deep dives, which include the importance of the following practices:

- **Forgings partnerships and collaboration:** According to interviewees, the projects utilised collaboration to develop robust project materials and expand networks for disseminating services

and support. These relationships stretched across individual clusters and LAs and also included the third sector and the Armed Forces Community.<sup>104</sup> Interviewees considered the Armed Forces Community particularly eager to provide insight and get involved in the projects when needed, reiterating that their interests remained at the heart of Sustaining Delivery.<sup>105</sup> Collaboration through the cluster approach enabled projects to benefit from other LAs' perspectives and experiences.<sup>106</sup> Co-designing project materials that can adapt to feedback is critical for aligning project outputs with the specific needs of the Armed Forces Community and Community Planning Partners.<sup>107</sup>

- **Dedicating resources for implementing the Covenant:** Several grantees partially attributed their successful local implementation of the Covenant to the presence of a dedicated full-time Covenant Officer providing support to the local councils and external partners.<sup>108</sup> While other city council members can be pulled away from Covenant work due to other responsibilities, Covenant Officers provide constant project momentum. Additionally, Covenant Officers can limit external partners' legwork by making local standards more readily accessible (e.g. by simplifying statutory guidance).<sup>109</sup> Grantees described how Sustaining Delivery funding allowed project groups to hire dedicated staff members (consultants and Project Officers) who could focus regularly or exclusively on the Covenant.<sup>110</sup> Such staff members could make significant progress within the projects, as supporting Sustaining Delivery was their primary task.
- **Establishing relevant self-sustaining resources:** Interviewees described how publicly available tools, including training and guidance documents, can provide long-lasting support to help achieve project sustainability.<sup>111</sup> For example, one cluster created legislation-standards documents and best practices available to inform and guide ongoing work.<sup>112</sup> Outreach opportunities to bolster community engagement and share these tools were another identified pathway to increasing project sustainability.
- **Communicating regularly and effectively:** While interviewees felt that clusters helped plan and deliver Sustaining Delivery, they described how their functioning depended on frequent effective communication.<sup>113</sup> They also considered underlying flexibility important for adapting communication strategies to address challenges or differences in opinion.

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<sup>104</sup> Interview A2, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview B2, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>105</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>106</sup> Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview B2, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>107</sup> Interview B2, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>108</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 Survey Results.

<sup>109</sup> Interview A3, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>110</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>111</sup> Interview B1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview B2, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>112</sup> Interview A3, conducted by RAND Europe.

<sup>113</sup> Interview C1, conducted by RAND Europe; Interview A1, conducted by RAND Europe; June 2022 survey results.

Educational reports discussing these practices and how other groups seeking to implement the Covenant in their area can use them are available in the separate documents titled 'Supporting Sustained Delivery of the Covenant'.

### 4.3. Implications and recommendations

Based on the shared practices identified through interviews and surveys, we compiled several recommendations for practices that may benefit other organisations looking to implement the Covenant locally. These recommendations include:

- Using **clear and proactive communications** to raise public awareness about what the Covenant entails, inform the Armed Forces Community about the services and support available to them, and generally widen the Covenant's visibility in the broader community.
- **Building relationships and partnerships** with other stakeholders across the Armed Forces Community and those in charge of upholding the Covenant to enhance effectiveness, pool resource, share best practices, collaborate, and avoid duplicated efforts where possible through a comprehensive understanding of ongoing efforts.
- Regularly **gathering information about the local Armed Forces Community** through personal contacts or existing information sources, such as census data. Such information enables a better understanding of the community's unique needs and how the Covenant can best be delivered.
- Creating tools such as **self-sustaining materials** to support ongoing work across other communities and LAs at a lower cost.
- Establishing **a dedicated post such as a Covenant officer** or using Armed Forces Champions to provide a clear point of contact for coordinating the Covenant's delivery – or, where this is not possible, assigning responsibility for all Covenant-related activities to a single individual to enhance accountability, provide a clear contact and coordinate efforts.
- Adopting or **further embedding the practices highlighted in this report** in future Covenant work. LAs and other organisations should continue sharing best practices to maximise funding, improve efficiencies and mutually optimise capacity for implementing the Covenant (e.g. by partnering with neighbouring councils, disseminating work online or hosting and attending shared events).

Given the limited resources available and the Covenant's new statutory footing, we hope these practices will provide helpful guidance enabling LAs and organisations to implement the Covenant in their area.

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## Annex A. Sustaining Delivery Grants

**Table 4.1. Overview of grants awarded under the Sustaining Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant Programme**

Name of grant	Lead LA	Other organisations	Grant aim
5330: Gwent Armed Forces Support	Caerphilly Borough County Council	ABUHB; Gwent Police & Prisons; Supporting People; Woody's Lodge; Veterans NHS Wales; Change Step; 160 <sup>th</sup> Welsh Brigade; 104th Royal Artillery; 203 Field Hospital; Defence Transition Service; Cornerstone; Housing Associations	Support the recently established Caerphilly Veterans Hub. Provide face-to-face specialist help on housing queries, benefits advice, personal budgeting, etc.
5332: Cardiff Armed Forces Advice Team	Cardiff Council	Into Work Advice Service; Housing Solutions; Money Advice; Adult Learning; Armed Forces Charities (Woody's Lodge, Change Step and Project 360), Specialist organisations (DWP, Citizen's Advice, Cardiff and Vale Credit Union, Foodbanks)	Continue the conduction of advisor meetings, which provide tailored support on securing financial help, completing housing applications, and finding sustainable employment. The team's PowerBi dashboard for identifying community needs will be further supported and shared with the Knowledge Network to other LA's.
5349: Continuing Delivery of the Covenant	Carmarthenshire County Council	AFLO, unspecified service delivery partners	Providing continued support for the VC Gallery, Woody's Lodge and Links. These groups provide comprehensive support from the provision of leisure activities to practical assistance.

Name of grant	Lead LA	Other organisations	Grant aim
5339: Sustaining AF Covenant Delivery (CMF)	Charnwood Borough Council	The Loughborough WellBeing Centre, Parish Councils, Warwickshire County Council, Rutland and Market Harborough Covenant Officer	Expand sign-up to the GP accreditation scheme. Create training PPP, Armed Forces Community Champions, and dementia resource pack. Further support the Veterans Wellbeing café.
5345: West Yorkshire Implementation Project	City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council	The Department for Education, Service Children's Progression Alliance, Armed Forces Families & Safeguarding; Families Federations; SSAFA and Royal British Legion; Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs; RFCA; Military contacts; Colleagues in health, housing, and within the Department of Work and Pensions	Will facilitate the delivery of money-advice training, a children's worker training script, an updated resource directory and a template for business networking.
5333: Armed Forces Drop-in Centre	City of York Council	York College, Welfare organisations, military charities, the NHS Age UK and CABs, volunteers	Support the continued development of a military drop-in centre in York. The centre will create a relational military community facility, offering belonging, education, and empowerment.
5336: Armed Forces Community Development	Colchester Borough Council	Garrison Civil Engagement Officer, Kristina from the Reserves Forces and Cadets Association, Braintree, Essex City Council, North East Essex CCG Colchester and Tendring Suicide Prevention Task and Finish Group, Essex Civilian Military Partnership	Support a part time resource to strengthen the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant. This will improve data sharing across the cluster, build on the veteran database, more comprehensively engage in suicide prevention work and further relationships with key partners and the community.
5340: Embedding the Dorset Armed Forces Covenant	Dorset County Council	Bournemouth University; Wessex RFCA; Dorset CCG; Dorset Healthcare NHS University Trust; Dorset Police & Crime Commissioner; Bovington Tank Museum; Armed Forces Bases and SW Command; various Armed Forces Charities	Will facilitate the demographic mapping of the Dorset Armed Forces community to build an evidence base to identify and address their needs Support for training, events, private-sector engagement and local authority mechanisms (mentoring, support networks, policy, etc.).

Name of grant	Lead LA	Other organisations	Grant aim
5220: Armed Forces Outreach Engagement Project	Gateshead Council	Walking with the Wounded (WWTW)	Improving access to the existing Armed Forces Outreach Service, particularly focusing on groups that are underrepresented in referrals, like spouses and those still serving. Will also deepen the partnership with Walking with the Wounded (WWTW), who will help advertise and raise awareness of the Service.
5348: GM Armed Forces Covenant eLearning	Greater Manchester Combined Authority	GM Armed Forces Programme Lead, MeLearning, Warwickshire County Council	Will help to facilitate the production of tailored eLearning packages to increase knowledge of the Armed Forces Covenant across the City Region. A full audit of Armed Forces Covenant service delivery will also be undertaken.
5342: Embedding the Covenant in Delivery	Herefordshire Council	Telford and Wrekin (Telford Mind, Clinical Commissioning Group, Public Health team), Covenant Partnership Officer for Herefordshire	Awareness-raising events will be developed for internal staff, members and relevant partner organisations. Meanwhile, tailored support (e.g. Calm Cafes) will be offered to veterans through local providers of mental health services.
5344: Covenant Commitment Highland and Moray	Highland Council	Local AFCCGs, individual consultants, Warwickshire Council	Will further support Community Planning Partnerships by providing specific learning and training materials, . Working with these Partnerships will help identify gaps in provision for AF communities and substantively articulate their needs within local communities.
5284: Strengthening Engagement with our Community	Kingston Upon Hull City Council	Local Community Hubs, Armed Forces Forums and Delivery Boards	Will build relationships between civilians in local communities and Armed Forces members by raising awareness of the challenges faced by the Armed Forces community, explaining their support networks, and ensuring their needs, are met. This will be facilitated through forums and Local Community Hubs.

Name of grant	Lead LA	Other organisations	Grant aim
5335: Our Forces Community 'One Voice'	Lancashire County Council	Armed Forces organisations from the charity sector, Lancashire Covenant Network	Provide collaborative assistance and training that helps to unify 15 councils in Lancashire as 'one voice' while still tailoring services to their unique circumstances. Improved training will also be delivered to members of NHS primary care networks and council housing department staff.
5352: Sharing Best Practice, Sustaining Delivery	Milton Keynes Council	Royal British Legion, SSAFA, Op Courage, NHS/CCGs (East London Foundation Trust and Central North West London), Local Reserve Units, DWP, Citizens Advice Bureau, Veterans UK, Forces Connect, Veterans Gateway, Public Health (Drug/Alcohol Commissioning team), Thomas Harris House, Project Nova, Local Housing organisations.	The Sharing Best Practice, Sustaining Delivery project, will ensure covenant delivery by uncovering unmet support needs among veterans, reservists, family members. This continued funding will ensure that best practice regionally and nationally is shared.
5343: Supporting our Armed Forces Communities	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer (RAFLO), Members of each of the local authorities Covenant Forums which include a wide range of public service organisations	Through this funding, good practices within the Covenant will be shared throughout the region. The AFLO, who covers Neath Port Talbot Council will continue to strengthen communication channels and improve existing programs.
5351: Solent Partnership Thematic Needs Assessment	Portsmouth City Council	Veterans Outreach Support, Royal Navy Benevolence Trust (RNBT), Alabare, Aggie Westerns, Portsmouth Hospital Trust (PMT)	The 2018 needs assessment will be reviewed and its content will be refreshed and built upon. This review will focus on the core priorities of Health, Housing, and education, along with emerging issues tied to the COVID-19 pandemic.
5341: Making our Covenant count	Rutland County Council District Council	Charnwood, Warwickshire, Melton and Rushcliffe Councils AF Covenant Officers; Lincolnshire County Council; East Leicestershire and Rutland Clinical Commissioning Group; Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust; University Hospitals of Leicester Trust; Rutland Health Primary Care Network; Harborough Locality	Establish three veteran hubs across the cluster area (Oakham and Lutterworth Q1 and Grantham Q2). Develop collaborative initiatives through a community-led umbrella form and expand training resources.

Name of grant	Lead LA	Other organisations	Grant aim
5337: Forces Connect South East Training	Surrey County Council	Integrated Leadership Team; Healthwatch Rutland, SKDC MindSpace Stamford, South Lincs Action on Mental Health, Lincolnshire United Hospitals, Primary Care Networks in South Lincs; RBL, RAFA, SSAFA, ABF, RAFBV, AFVBC, and Age UK	The pre-existing successful training and awareness- raising program for public authorities will be enhanced by updated support and presentation materials, . These improvements will further increase the repository of sharable resources.
5334: Refresh of Covenant e-learning programme	Warwickshire City Council	Armed Forces Network, Peter Bruinvels Associates, Warwickshire County Council, Veteran Healthcare Alliance, Surrey County Council, Hampshire County Council, Coventant Lead Office  North Warwickshire, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Councils and Coventry City Council; Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust; Naval Families Federation; Caerphilly County Borough Council and Wrexham County Borough Council; MOD Covenant Team; Rutland County Council and South Kesteven DC; Bradford, Milton Keynes; Greater Manchester Combined Authority; Forces Connect South East; City of Edinburgh Council	Elements of the original e-learning modules will be revised to include recent feedback and any area developments. New content, resources and videos will be developed to support these changes.

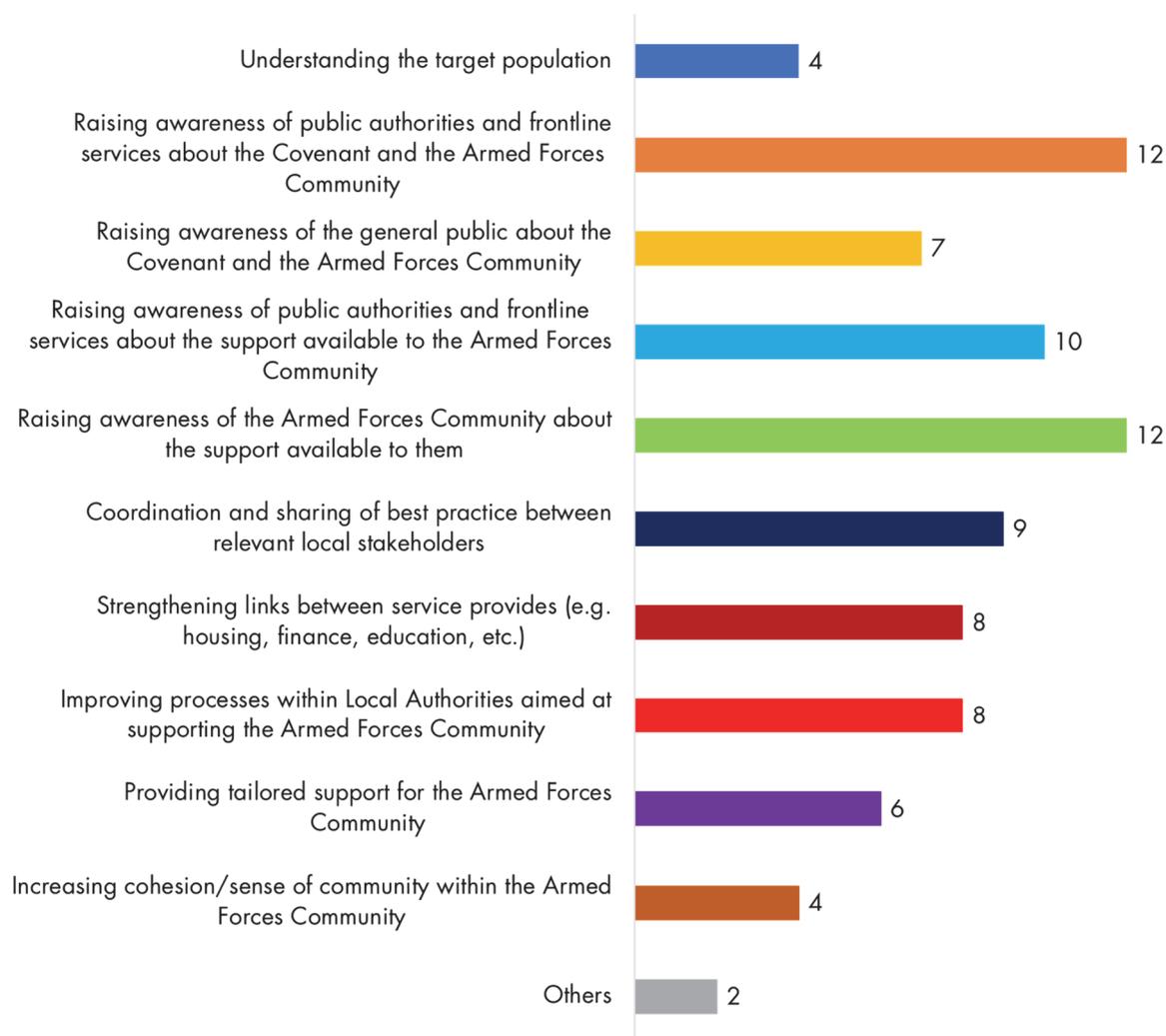
## Annex B. Full survey results

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### B.1. Project Aims

Continuing the same model as the prior SDP evaluation, the Trust did not mandate any specific continuation activities, instead choosing to fund those LAs requiring more investment or likely to contribute the most to improving local Covenant implementation. **Figure B.9** shows an overview of the different strands of activities undertaken by the Sustaining Delivery Programme continuation grants based on information from the June 2022 survey. Note that most projects undertook several activity strands to varying extents; we attached no weighting to reflect which activity strands dominated in each project.

**Figure B.9. Overview of activity strands undertaken by projects**



Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data from 17 projects that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.<sup>114</sup>

Of the eleven activity strands, raising public authorities’ and frontline services’ awareness about the Covenant and the Armed Forces Community (n=12) and raising the Armed Forces Community’s about the support available were the most commonly undertaken (n=12). These activity strands were also the most popular during the SDP, whose evaluation results show that 18 out of 31 SDP grant holders (approximately 58 per cent) whose projects focused on awareness-raising felt the SDP grant had yielded greater awareness of the Armed Forces Community among public authorities and frontline services ‘to a great extent’. Similarly, 16 out of 28 grant holders (approximately 57 per cent) whose projects focused on this activity strand felt the SDP grant had yielded greater awareness among the Armed Forces Community about the support available to them ‘to a great extent’. Thus, we conclude that Sustaining Delivery grant holders either (a) felt these activities were not significantly accomplished during the SDP, thus requiring more

<sup>114</sup> No weighting was attached to the above assessments in terms of which activity strands dominated each project. The numbers represent the number of projects that undertook each activity strand. In the figure below, the ‘others’ category refers to two grant-specific activities, namely: promoting the Forces Connect App in training and continuing engagement with local businesses in the private sector.

funding and time, or (b) perceived these activities as requiring continuous effort and funding, perhaps because of their efficacy or intrinsic value.

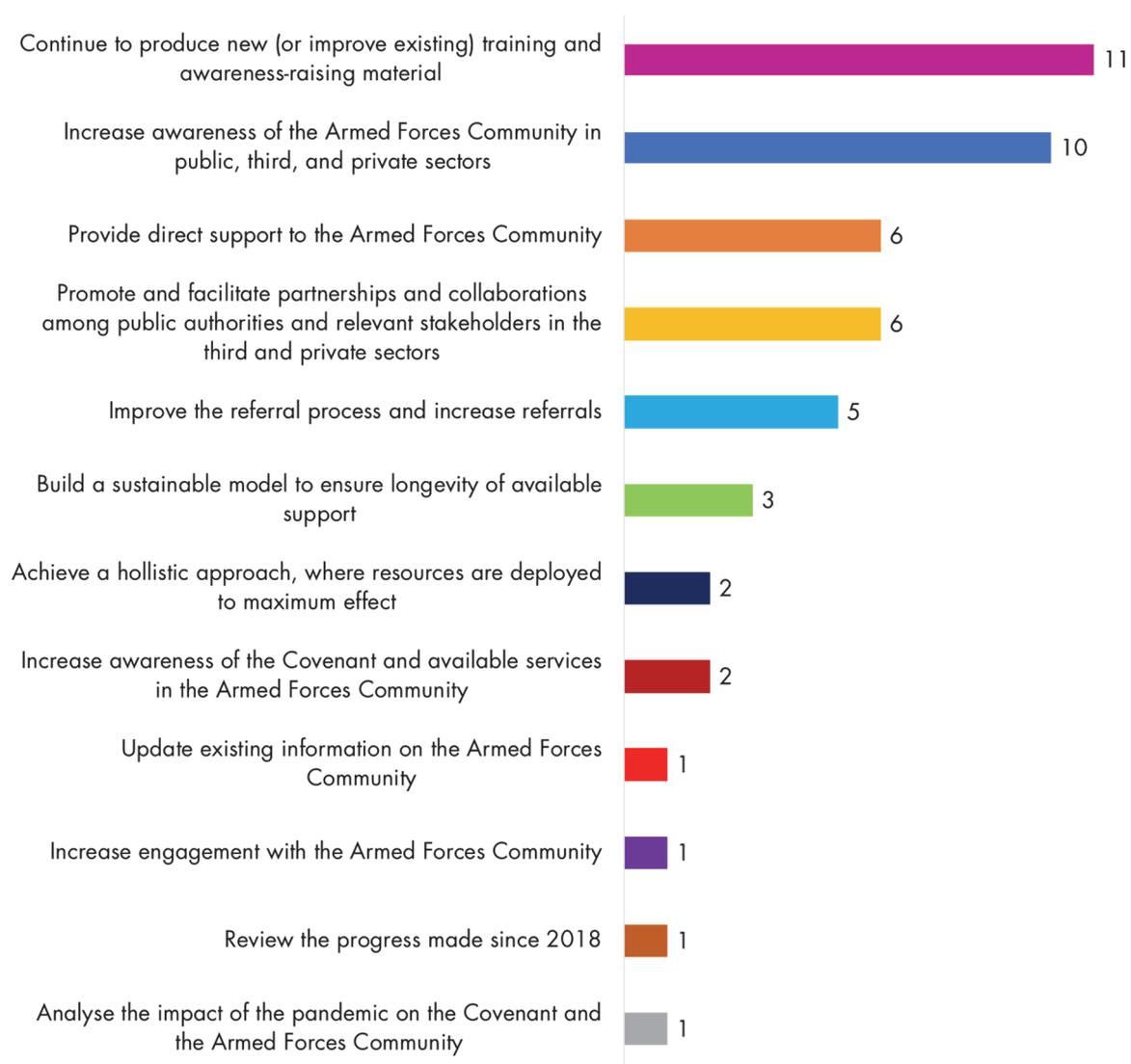
Conversely, the least-undertaken activity strands were understanding the target population (n=4) and increasing the Armed Forces Community's cohesion/sense of community (n=4). While the last activity strand was also the least common during the SDP, the first was among the most common SDP activity strand, undertaken by 25 out of 43 projects (approximately 58 per cent). Therefore, it is possible that most continuation projects felt they had already undertaken sufficient work to understand the target population and could now focus on activities to support it.

The focus on the activity strands below aligned with the projects' stated priorities. As **Figure B.10** illustrates, projects most often mentioned the following when asked to pinpoint the three main priorities that they intended to pursue:

- Producing (or improving existing) training and awareness-raising materials directed at various relevant stakeholders (n=11), e.g. by developing new e-learning modules or updating existing materials in line with the Armed Forces Act; and
- Increasing awareness of the Armed Forces Community in public, third and private sectors (n=10) by, for example:
  - Training LA staff
  - Encouraging parishes to sign the Covenant, or
  - Utilising social media more generally.

Both priorities align with one of the most common activity strands: raising public authorities' and frontline services' awareness about the Armed Forces Community. In contrast, only two projects reported an intention to prioritise raising the Armed Forces Community's awareness of the Covenant and available support, despite also being one of the most common activity strands (undertaken by 12 of 17 projects). Projects may have intended to fulfil this activity strand indirectly by prioritising other areas, such as providing direct support to the Armed Forces Community (n=6), promoting and facilitating Covenant-implementing partnerships and collaborations (n=6) or increasing referrals (n=5). We conclude that projects may have felt they could reach more members of the Armed Forces Community by improving the Covenant's practical implementation.

**Figure B.10. Overview of the top three priorities selected by projects**



Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data from 17 projects (out of 20 total) that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.<sup>115</sup>

The least frequently selected priorities were updating existing information on the Armed Forces Community (n=1) and increasing engagement with the Armed Forces Community (n=1). Again, this aligns with the least common activity strands: understanding the target population and increasing the Armed Forces Community’s cohesion/sense of community. This supports the theory that projects felt they had more comprehensive data on the Armed Forces Community after the SDP, needing to spend less time and resources to understand it. Reviewing progress made since 2018 (n=1) and analysing the pandemic’s impact (n=1) were also low priorities. We conclude that since the current grants were presented as continuation funding to the SDP, the projects may have felt this was not a good point to stop and objectively analyse the funding’s cumulative impact. Similarly, projects may have considered that, in many areas, the full effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are yet to be revealed or understood, rendering a potential assessment incomplete

<sup>115</sup> The above results are not weighted according to each project’s perception of the highest-ranking priorities. The numbers denote the number of projects that mentioned each area as one of the top three priorities.

at this stage. Survey data supports this interpretation, suggesting that COVID-19's impact was still one of the most significant barriers the projects faced (discussed in more detail in Section B.3).

## B.2. The overall impact of the Sustaining Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant programme

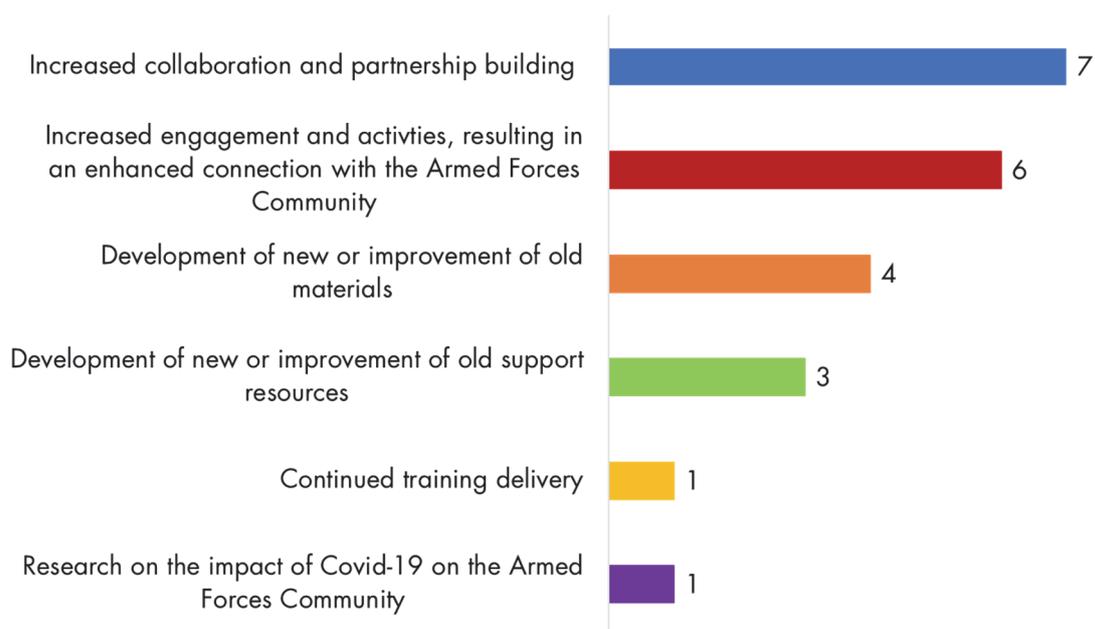
As summarised in Chapter 1, RAND Europe's independent evaluation of the SDP suggested that the programme positively impacted the Covenant's local implementation overall. However, it is difficult to distinguish between the current programme's impact and the SDP's overall impact, given that the Sustaining Delivery Programme represents continuation funding, enabling previous SDP grant-holders to continue building on the SDP's foundational work. Moreover, multiple grant holders have expressed difficulties identifying objective impact, given that we distributed the December 2021 and June 2022 surveys relatively early in their projects' timelines.

Nevertheless, we identified some valuable insights from grant holders' about what they feel has worked best during their projects thus far. According to grant holders, collaboration and partnership building was the most successful area, perceived to have significantly increased during the projects (n=7). This finding aligns with evidence from the SDP evaluation, where grant holders indicated that improved coordination and best-practice sharing between relevant local stakeholders showed the biggest benefits from the SDP funding,<sup>116</sup> followed by increased engagement and activities, enhancing connection with the Armed Forces Community (n=6). This finding corresponds with areas of success identified through the SDP evaluation, e.g. providing tailored support to the Armed Forces Community and raising the Armed Forces Community's awareness about the support available to them. Interestingly, increasing engagement with the Armed Forces Community was one of the lowest priorities that projects identified, suggesting that activities contributing to more than one outcome did indirectly help this area.

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<sup>116</sup> Grand-Clement et al. (2021).

**Figure B.11. Overview of grant holders' perspectives on what has worked best**

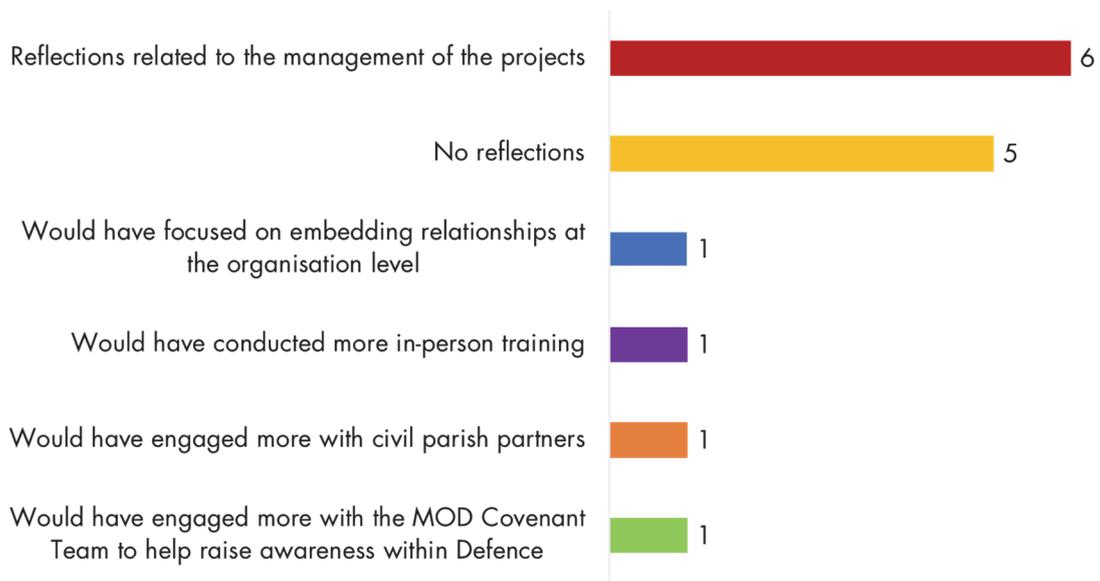


Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data from 17 projects (out of 20 total) that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.<sup>117</sup>

In contrast, **Figure B.12** overviews the areas grant holders felt worked least well. A significant number reported that it was too early to determine (n=5), and half of those who completed the survey (n=6) commented more on the project's management than its impact on local Covenant implementation. For example, lessons identified included the need for a dedicated individual or team focused on the Covenant's implementation, clear responsibilities for involved LAs and partners, a joint project management approach (e.g. joint email addresses and communications plans), planned funding contingencies, and, more generally, establishing a clear strategic plan at the start of projects, helping advance long-term goals while remaining reactive to short-term issues.

<sup>117</sup> The numbers denote the number of projects that mentioned each area (note that projects could select more than one area where they felt their project was most successful).

**Figure B.12. Overview of grant holders' perspectives on what has worked least well**



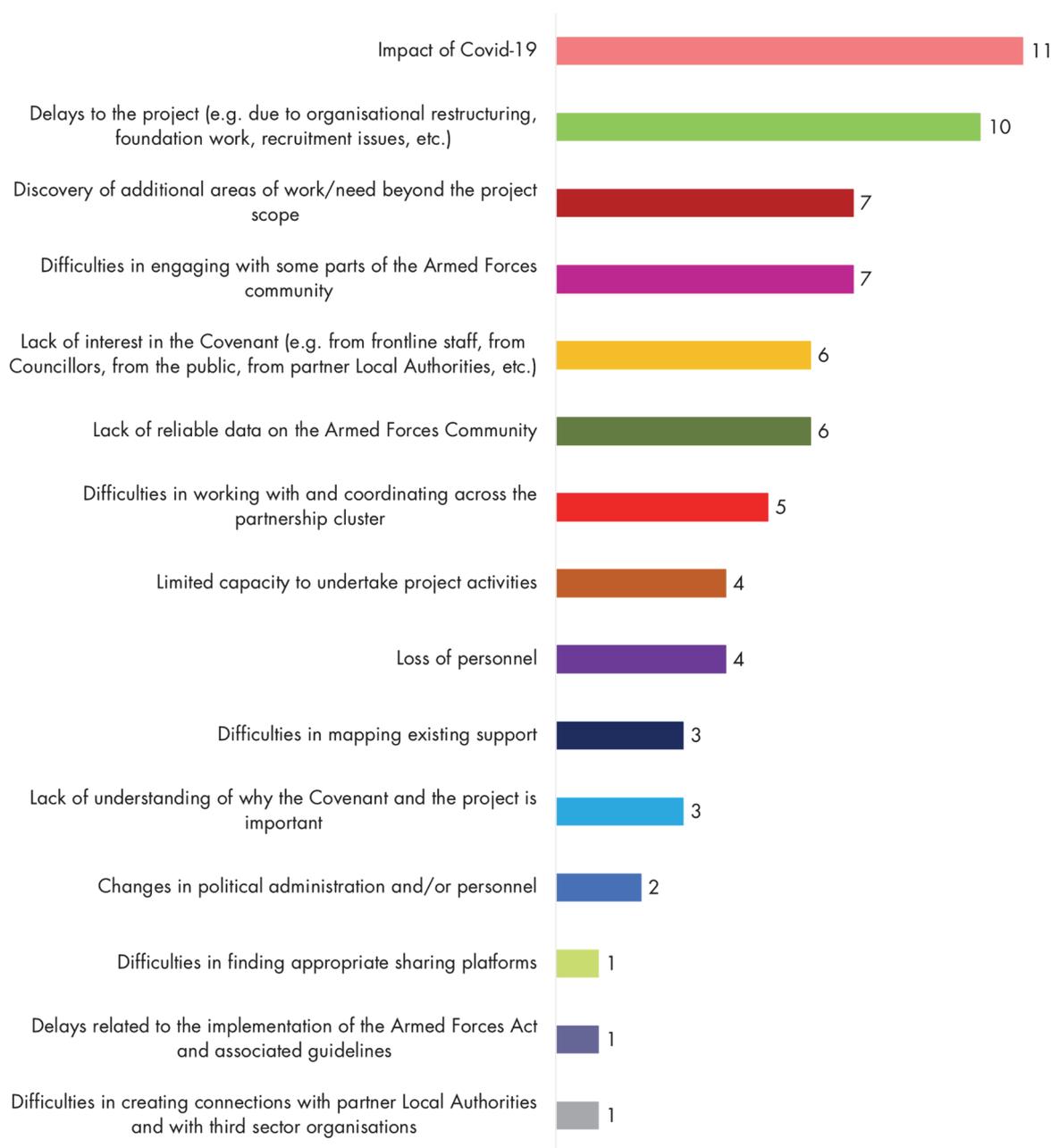
Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data from 17 projects (out of 20 total) that completed the June 2022 questionnaire. The numbers denote the number of projects that mentioned each area as least successful.

### B.3. Barriers and challenges

According to the survey and the overview in **Figure B.13**, most projects faced two key barriers: COVID-19's impact (n=11) and project delays (n=10). COVID-19's impact was also one of the two biggest challenges encountered during the SDP, suggesting that the pandemic has continued to negatively impact efforts to improve the Covenant's implementation. We suggest that this challenge's continued prevalence may mean projects have failed to implement adequate mitigation strategies. However, it is also possible that some of the pandemic's consequences, such as its possible economic impact on LAs, lie beyond the projects' capacity for control or adaptation.

The two least-encountered barriers projects reported were changes in political administration and/or personnel (n=2) and other difficulties, such as delays in implementing the Armed Forces Act (n=1), difficulties connecting with LAs and third-sector organisations (n=1) or difficulties finding an appropriate sharing platform (n=1).

**Figure B.13. Overview of the main barriers and challenges projects identified**



Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data from 17 projects (out of 20 total) that completed the June 2022 questionnaire. No weighting was attached to the above assessments regarding which barriers the projects considered most significant. The numbers denote the number of projects that mentioned each barrier/challenge.

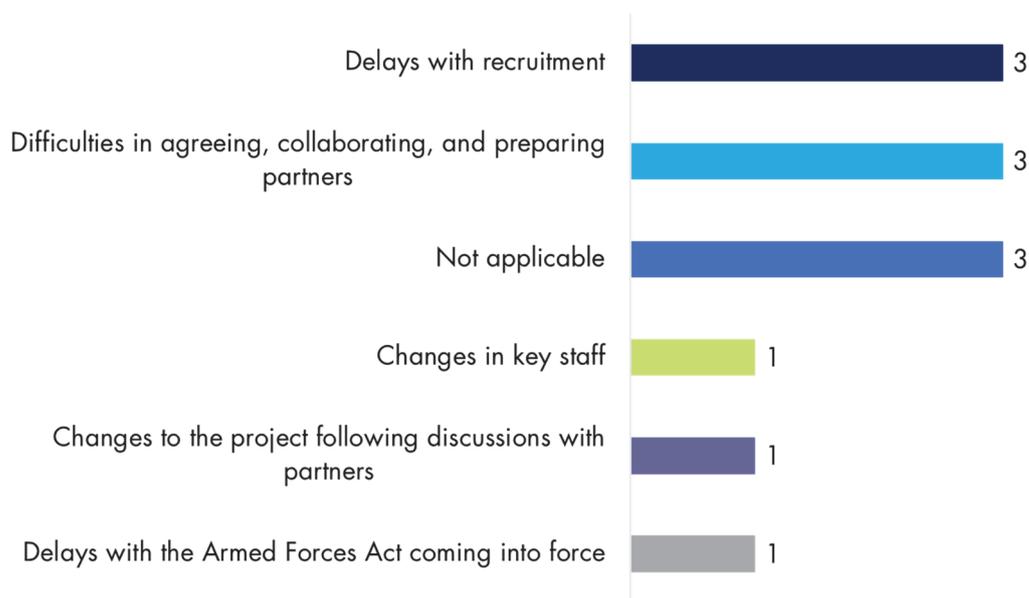
Only six current projects identified a lack of reliable data on the Armed Forces Community as a barrier. This finding contrasts with the SDP survey results, where a lack of reliable data on the Armed Forces Community was one of the two biggest challenges reported. As mentioned above, this might indicate that grant holders better understood the Armed Forces Community following their work under the SDP.

In addition, collaboration between grant holders may have improved during Sustaining Delivery. While the SDP evaluation showed that only 3 of 35 grant holders encountered difficulties working and coordinating across the partnership cluster, our survey found that 5 of 17 grant holders found this challenging. However, this could be due to the difference in the organisations surveyed since the December 2021 and June 2022

surveys only surveyed the clusters' lead LAs, who may have encountered fewer barriers. Similarly, project delays were also one of the difficulties more frequently mentioned in the present survey, with 10 of 17 grant holders in the June 2022 survey noting it was an issue, compared to only 8 of 35 SDP grant holders. While challenges in these two areas could have increased due to internal and external factors affecting the projects, this is difficult to know for certain. It is also possible that this perceived increase may reflect the projects' early stages and the concomitant teething problems, whereby grant holders may not yet have identified successful mitigation strategies.

Project delays occurred for various reasons, as **Figure B.14** shows. The most common causes of delay were recruitment issues (n=3) and difficulties in agreeing, collaborating with and preparing partners (n=3). Survey data shows that 6 of 17 projects experienced delayed starts, while 9 of 19 anticipate delays in finishing.

**Figure B.14. Overview of the main causes of project delays**

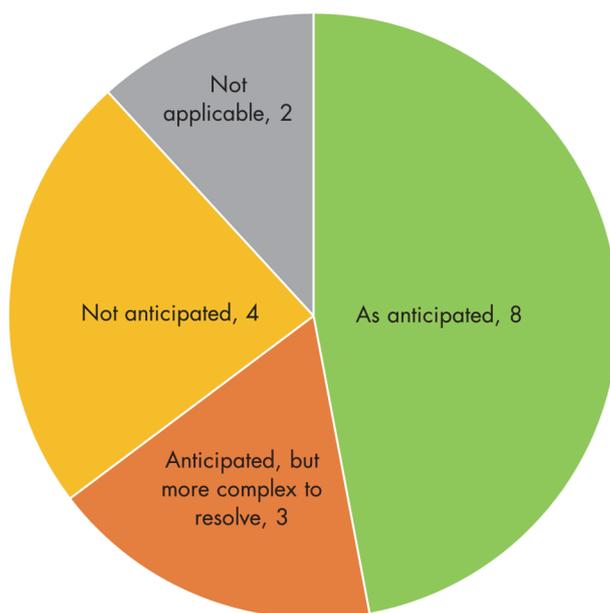


Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data from 17 projects that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.<sup>118</sup>

Overall, survey data suggests that almost half of the projects (8 of 19) correctly anticipated the barriers and challenges they would encounter, as illustrated in **Figure B.15**. Four projects faced challenges they did not anticipate. Three projects reported that, despite correctly anticipating challenges, they underestimated the complexity of their resolution. For example, one project did not anticipate or plan for the need to recruit replacement staff, while another did not anticipate the need to regularly re-establish relationships with Armed Forces units due to personnel changes and rotations. Similarly, one project did not anticipate how and to what degree COVID-19 would continue impacting LA resources and staff time, impacting how far they could effectively mitigate its effects.

<sup>118</sup> The above results are not weighted according to the projects' perception of their relative significance. The numbers denote the number of projects that mentioned each cause.

**Figure B.15. Overview of the extent to which projects anticipated barriers and challenges**

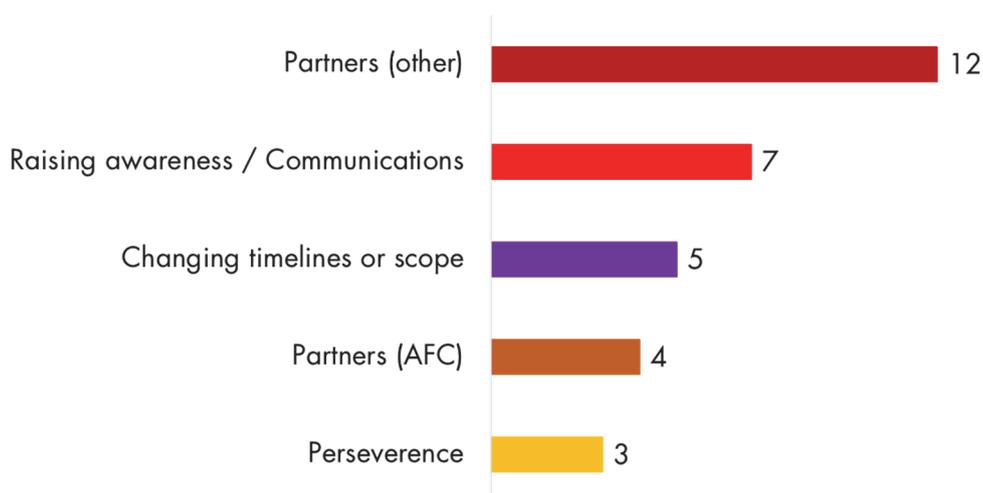


Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data from 17 projects that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.

#### B.4. Mitigation strategies, good practices and useful lessons

In response to the challenges identified above, the grantees adopted different strategies and mitigation strategies. **Figure B.16** provides an overview of some of the mitigation strategies most frequently mentioned in the survey.

**Figure B.16. Overview of mitigation strategies used for overcoming risks and barriers**



Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data from 17 projects that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.

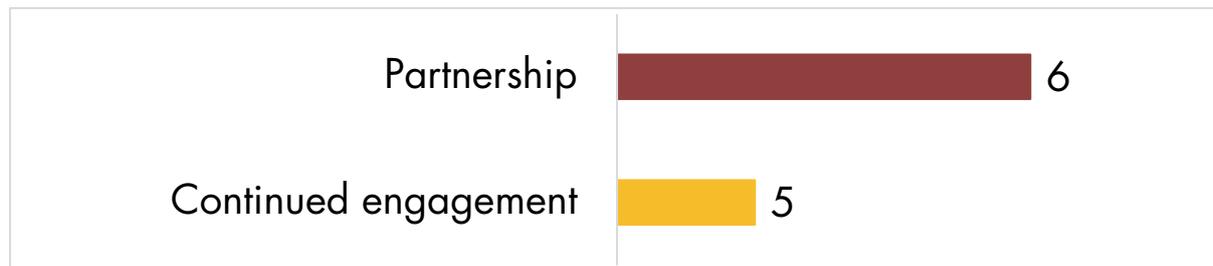
Our survey data showed grantees most commonly reported overcoming challenges by working with partners within (n=3) and outside (n=3) the Armed Forces Community. Partners outside the Armed Forces

Community ranged from the Trust to unspecified allies and other organisations working in specific areas of the Armed Forces Community (i.e. non-profit organisations working specifically with veterans). While some grantees named specific organisations, others referred to ‘working in partnership with a range of agencies’. One grantee described using ‘the expertise and knowledge of the existing pathways established’ by an organisation they engaged with; other grantees mentioned the importance of working with better-resourced organisations that can ‘take burden from the public sector’.

Other grantees emphasised the importance of consistent and persistent communication (n=3) or general perseverance (n=2) to continue pushing for results without other sources of momentum. One grantee described the need to maintain ‘drive and belief to pursue the vision I put forward’, while others simply described the need for ‘engagement’. The number of organisations who mentioned the importance of persistence and partnerships suggests that effective partnerships require significant investment, despite the number of organisations working in this space.

Several grantees felt they had valuable learning from their experiences to share with others seeking to overcome similar risks and barriers. **Figure B.17** shows the particular practices grantees felt they wanted to share as part of the survey, namely engaging with partners and persistent and continued engagement.

**Figure B.17 Good practices grantees identified for mitigating challenges and overcoming barriers**



Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data is from 11 of the 17 projects that answered this question in the June 2022 questionnaire.

Interestingly, while these results largely mirror the content of the mitigation strategies described above, they do not match the number of grantees reporting using them; significantly more of the identified learning was unique to a particular grantee. For example, ‘engage with procurement early’ (n=1) is limited to projects requiring such engagement. Another referred to ‘securing the venue for the hubs for free’, which only applies to certain projects.

Many of the mitigation strategies did not appear in response to this question at all. Several respondents indicated that this question did not apply to them (n=3), while others skipped it entirely (n=3). Despite the number of respondents who described adjusting timelines or scope to respond to changing circumstances or requirements as part of their mitigation strategy, there was no explicit mention of this in responses to this question (n=4). Similarly, awareness-raising was only mentioned once as a potential lesson, despite three respondents mentioning it as an important mitigation strategy in the previous question. The reasons for this are unclear, although it may be because grantees felt these strategies were already common knowledge or another mitigation strategy might have been better suited.

## B.5. Sustainability

The challenge of sustaining SDP-initiated efforts motivated the Sustaining Delivery project and featured significantly in the SDP evaluation. Despite the time elapsed and more dedicated planning processes for sustainability, many of the barriers to sustainability seem to have continued impacting Sustaining Delivery projects. Among the Sustaining-Delivery-funded projects, all survey respondents indicated that they were considering post-grant sustainability. While most projects anticipated continuing the activities or services their project had undertaken (n=11), several did not (n=4) and at least one did not know. **Figure B.18** lists some of the most common sustainability plans.

**Figure B.18. The most common plans for sustaining projects post-grant**

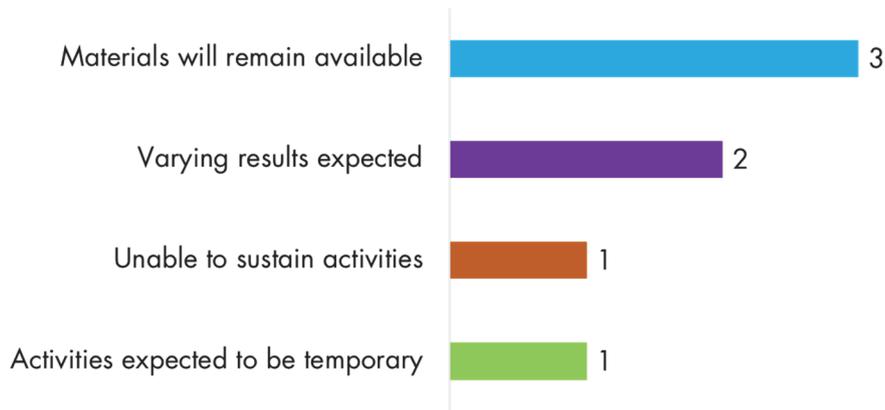


Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data from the 17 projects that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.

Despite this planning, several grantees (n=4) reported still securing or requiring funds to continue their efforts. One grantee described how ‘the current level of work and outcomes being achieved...are not sustainable without additional funding’. Others seemed more optimistic, reporting specific plans to request additional funding, though not yet secured.

Again, partnerships were a key theme, with multiple respondents (n=7) indicating that partnerships with their cluster partners or other organisations would be key to sustainability. Many organisations intended to continue making their materials available for awareness-raising (n=10) or training (n=3) – a relatively resource-efficient proposition. However, without support to continue raising awareness of and regularly updating these materials, it was unclear how long they might remain relevant (although at least one respondent had accounted for this by including ‘very generic materials and information’ to minimise the need for updates). Moreover, at least one respondent indicated that their materials’ ability to remain impactful depended on others’ interest in delivering the associated training. Grantees’ uncertainty about the ability to continue projects was reflected in the responses to a follow-up question, as shown in **Figure B.19**.

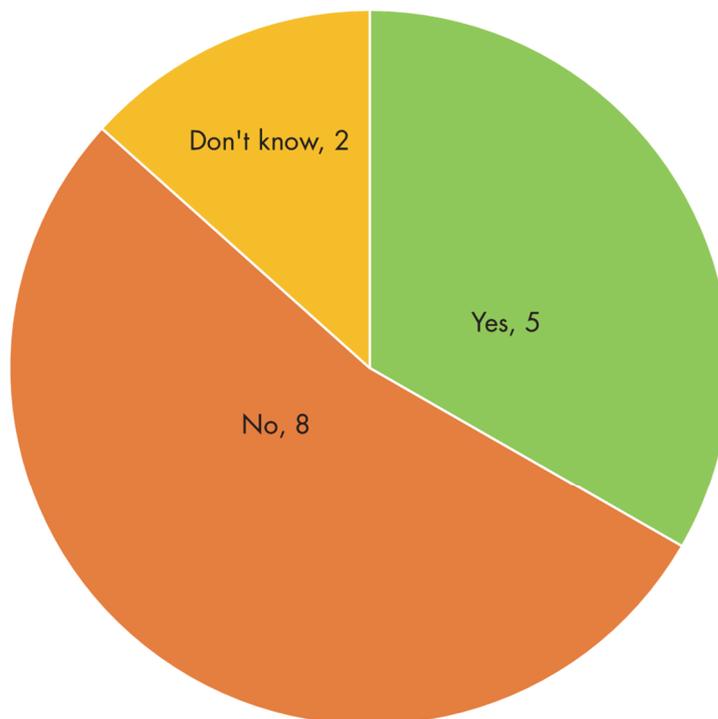
**Figure B.19. Overview of responses to whether activities can continue post-grant**



Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data from the 17 projects that completed the June 2022 questionnaire. ‘Activities expected to be temporary’ refers to expectations at the start of the grant.

These responses showed a generally positive result, with most projects (n=13) indicating that they expected their project to continue or had always intended it to be temporary. However, the uncertainty levels evident across survey questions about sustainability, particularly around continued resources, indicate an ongoing challenge. Interestingly, the data shows a possible gap between grantees who entered the project with a plan that remained effective throughout the project and those who have struggled with uncertainty, as shown in **Figure B.20**.

**Figure B.20. Has the plan for the project’s sustainability changed since the first survey?**



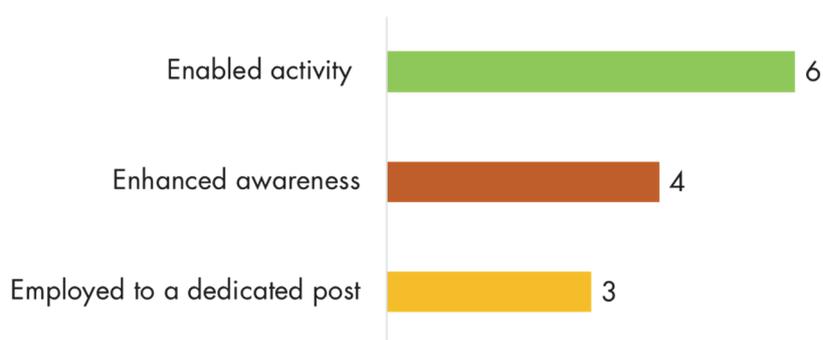
Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data from the 17 projects that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.

Some projects openly discussed changing their plans or described approaches that were ‘always changing and developing’ or ‘adapted as changes to Government policies and strategies...come into play’, while other grantees felt they were ‘still on track with original plans’ or that ‘the plan remains the same’. The reason for this gap was unclear: the study team postulated that it might be due to some grantees’ greater experience or may reference unanticipated obstacles that arose during the project. As discussed above, some of the training requests indicate that this area requires continued attention, either from the Trust or other organisations working to support the Covenant’s delivery.

## B.6. Grant administration

Overall, respondents felt strongly that Sustaining Delivery had been a positive influence, with 14 respondents reporting that it had improved the Covenant’s implementation in their area to ‘a great extent’ or ‘to some extent’. **Figure B.21** details how grantees felt the funding helped.

**Figure B.21. Overview of how Sustaining Delivery grants helped improve the Covenant's implementation in respondents' areas**



Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data is from the 13 of 17 projects that answered this question in the June 2022 questionnaire.

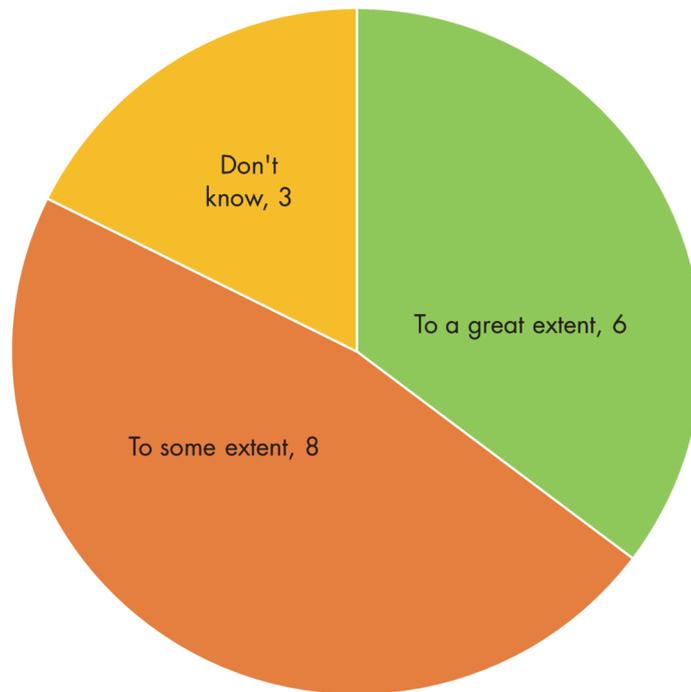
For the ten respondents who provided detailed comments, the greatest area they felt the funding had improved the Covenant’s implementation was enabling activities that would not otherwise have been possible (n=4). One respondent provided extensive detail about media engagement that the grant facilitated, enabling a media campaign to reach 71,200 people – including a video that received over 34,000 views. Other responses emphasised the Sustaining Delivery programme’s importance in light of ‘extreme financial pressure’. One grantee even stated that increased activity enabled by Sustaining Delivery bolstered the County Council’s confidence and subsequent willingness to provide additional funding. Overall, these results suggest the funding’s success across most grantees.

As in the SDP evaluation, survey respondents had mixed feelings about the cluster approach.<sup>119</sup> On the one hand, as **Figure B.22** shows, most respondents felt at least somewhat positive about the cluster approach, and none would entirely argue against using clusters in future funding. Respondents’ comments highlighted

<sup>119</sup> See Grand-Clement et al. (2021) for this area’s SDP evaluation results.

several definite benefits to the cluster approach, including sharing different perspectives and experiences (n=2), avoiding duplication (n=1) and enhancing consistency (n=3).

**Figure B.22. Recommendations for using clusters in future grants**

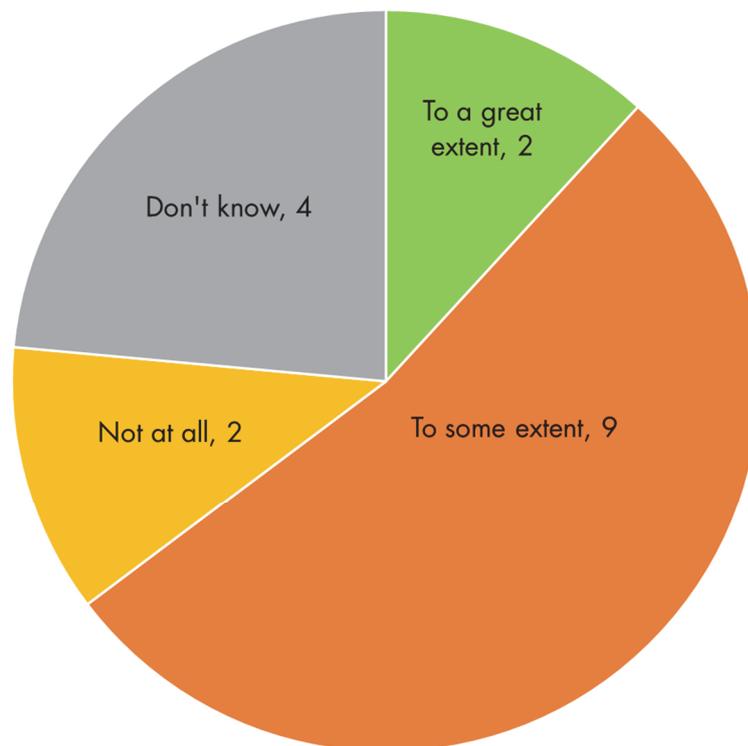


Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data is from the 17 projects that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.

What the graph does not reflect, however, is the number of respondents who heavily qualified their support for the cluster approach in their comments. At least one respondent described how ‘Operating as a cluster can be frustrating because of the challenges, but it can also provide rewards’. In contrast, others were more equivocal, suggesting that effectiveness ‘depends on the project’ or recognising that ‘projects need to be adapted to meet the needs and make best use for resources in each region’. At least one respondent pointed out that leading a cluster was ‘extremely onerous’ in getting other cluster members to participate.

Grantees’ views on training and support provided were also largely positive, albeit with some disagreement. **Figure B.23** shows that most of those who responded to the question (n=10) felt that the training had been useful to ‘some’ or ‘a great extent’, while significantly less (n=2) felt the training had not been at all useful.

**Figure B.23. Overview of responses regarding how useful grantees found the training and support offered by Si**



Source: RAND Europe analysis. Data from the 17 projects that completed the June 2022 questionnaire.

One possible explanation for the less positive responses, including those who did not know, might be a lack of resources or time; at least one respondent reported that they had ‘no time to engage’ with the training Si provided or that the ‘numbers invited were too restricted’. Other responses indicated insufficient time or resources for participation. This finding aligns with the general shortage of resources in this area reflected throughout the survey and the study team’s interactions with grantees.

Few grantees reported specific opinions in areas that emerged as ripe for future training, with most respondents (n=10) stating that they did not know. Of the respondents who identified areas for future training, two mentioned grant or bid writing and one the importance of face-to-face training. In contrast, another respondent praised the online format, particularly its ease of access, suggesting that various formats may be necessary to respond to differing needs across LAs and other organisations.

## Annex C. Survey questions

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### C.1. December 2021 survey materials and questions

Below are the introductory materials and questions distributed to the lead organisations in each cluster for the Sustaining Delivery project as part of the December 2021 survey. This survey aimed to collect preliminary information on each project, primarily to compare answers against the subsequent June 2022 survey. Questions featuring an asterisk indicate that the question was required. Of the 20 organisations approached, 19 responded to the survey.

#### C.1.1. Part 1: Introduction and privacy policy

Thank you for taking part in this survey on the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's (the Trust) Sustaining Delivery Programme. Please find below some information on the study and the survey.

##### **Study background and objectives**

RAND Europe and Shared Intelligence (Si) have been commissioned by the Trust to evaluate two programmes focused on improving the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant, a pledge by the government that members of the Armed Forces Community should not suffer disadvantage due to their (or their family member's) service, with special consideration for those who have given the most, such as the injured or the bereaved. The overall aim of this study is to understand the contributions of these programmes to the practical implementation of the Covenant.

##### **Survey overview**

This survey is focused on Sustaining Delivery and should take you around 15 minutes to complete. This survey is available to all Sustaining Delivery grantees. The main purpose of this survey is to provide the necessary data for the RAND Europe study team to conduct its evaluation of Sustaining Delivery. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. Your responses will only be seen by members of the RAND Europe and Si project teams. The Trust will only see aggregated responses; no personal information or data specific to one project will be shared with the Trust.

##### **Who are we?**

RAND Europe is a not-for-profit independent research organisation that helps to improve policy and decision-making through evidence-based research and analysis. More information on RAND Europe, our projects and researchers can be found on our website, [www.rand.org/randeurope/](http://www.rand.org/randeurope/). We are supporting the Trust in this study, which is the data controller. For the purpose of this data collection, we are acting as their data processor.

### **What data are we collecting and why?**

As part of this study, we are contacting the Sustaining Delivery grantees in order to gather data to inform our evaluation of Sustaining Delivery and our creation of the toolkit. The information you provide as part of the study is the research data. Any research data from which you can be identified is known as personal data. It does not include data where the identity has been removed (anonymous data). Your personal data (name, position, organisation, e-mail addresses and country) is being processed for the purpose of scheduling and carrying out this survey and for follow-up clarifications, if necessary, including requesting consent for attribution. This data may also be used to schedule and carry out potential interviews as part of the case studies later in the project. The information collected during this survey will be used only for research in relation to the subject matter of the study. We will give you the option to have your opinions attributed to you in the analysis, but in the absence of this, we will ensure that any quotes are appropriately anonymised. If you consent to attribution, the information will be attributed to your Local Authority or to your project and not to your name.

### **What is the legal basis for processing activities?**

The legal basis for processing your personal data, and contacting you, is that it is in our legitimate interest to allow you to participate in this project. Your interests are not affected in any way, as our default position is that your personal data will not be linked to your responses, so any information you provide will be unattributable.

Any responses that you then provide in the survey will be on the basis of consent, and you will be able to withdraw this consent to our processing of your data up until the point that the study report is finalised and published.

### **About the collected data and its processing and storage**

The data will be securely stored digitally. Access to the data is controlled on a 'need to know' basis and is only available to the project team. All data provided will be processed in accordance with the standards of the UK Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All personally identifiable data collected as part of this project will be deleted one year after the end of the project.

### **Sharing your data with other parties**

RAND Europe has been instructed to ensure that any research datasets shared with the Trust are anonymised so that project beneficiaries cannot be identified. We will therefore ensure that any names or other personal identifiers are removed and, where necessary, redact any sections of text that could be identifiable. This is important to us and the Trust, as we want you to be able to give us honest answers without consideration of how those might be interpreted.

### **Your rights**

RAND Europe operates in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and EU law, including GDPR. You are provided with certain rights that you may exercise through us. In summary, those rights are:

- To access, correct, or erase your data;
- To object to the processing of your data;

- To request that our processing of your data is restricted or to withdraw consent.

If you wish to exercise any of these rights, you can contact the RAND Europe Data Protection Officer by email at REdpo@randeurope.org or in writing to Data Protection Officer, RAND Europe, Westbrook Centre, Milton Road, Cambridge, CB4 1YG, UK, referring to “21048 – Strengthening and Empowering Delivery of the Covenant” as the subject. Contacting us directly as the data processor removes the need to disclose to the Trust that you have participated in any way in the research.

Should you wish to contact the Data Protection Officer of the Trust, who is the data controller, you can do so by email to info@covenantfund.org.uk.

You also have the right to contact the Information Commissioner’s Office in the UK if you have any concerns about the processing of your data. They can be reached at Information Commissioner’s Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, or by email to casework@ico.org.uk.

### **Whom can I contact for more information about this project?**

If you have a query or concern about any aspect of this study, please contact Rebecca Lucas (rlucas@randeurope.org).

By participating in this survey, you acknowledge and agree to us processing your data according to the process outlined above.

- Do you confirm that you have read and understood the information provided above and consent to participate in this survey?\* (*Radio buttons: Yes/No*)

#### **C.1.2. Part 2: Research aims**

When answering, please keep in mind that we are gathering this information to explore the following question:

- How has the £25,000 grant helped the cluster build upon its original grant and enable more members of the Armed Forces Community to be helped during the last 12 months and, potentially, for the future? How have grantees:
  - Continued or finalised the delivery of activities?
  - Allowed services or practices to be embedded?
  - Allowed stories, case studies, good practice, learning and innovation to be captured and shared?
  - Allowed LAs to make up ground lost as a result of COVID?

#### **C.1.3. Part 3: Research questions**

- Please indicate the grantee organisation with which you are affiliated\* (*Drop-down* listing local authorities, with an option for ‘Other’)
  - If ‘Other’ please specify (*open text*)

- What are the top aims for your project? Please include anything that you accomplished with the SDP grant that you are now hoping to build on with this current project. (Please name about three) (*Open text*)
- What challenges or barriers do you anticipate? (Please name about three) (*Open text*)
- Have you started to think about sustainment after the duration of the grant? If so, please explain. (*Open text*)

## C.2. June 2022 survey materials and questions

Below are the introductory materials and questions distributed to the lead organisations in each cluster for the Sustaining Delivery project as part of the June 2022 survey. An asterisk indicates that the question was required. Of the 20 organisations approached, 17 responded to the survey.

### C.2.1. Part 1: Introduction and privacy policy

Thank you for taking part in this survey on the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's (the Trust) Sustaining Delivery programme. Please find below some information on the study and the survey.

#### **Study background and objectives**

RAND Europe and Shared Intelligence (Si) have been commissioned by the Trust to better understand the Sustaining Delivery Programme, which is focused on improving the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant, a pledge by the government that members of the Armed Forces Community should not suffer disadvantage due to their (or their family member's) service, with special consideration for those who have given the most, such as the injured or the bereaved. The overall aim of this study is to understand the contributions of the programme to the practical implementation of the Covenant, as well as to gather and disseminate best practices.

#### **Survey overview**

This survey is focused on the Sustaining Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant Programme and should take you around 30 minutes to complete. This survey is available to all grantees.

This survey forms part of RAND Europe's research activities and is intended to provide the study team with the necessary data to analyse the contributions of the programme to the delivery of the Covenant and to gather best practices. As a result, the survey is divided into five parts:

- **Background information** to provide information on the grantees and the projects;
- **Implementation**, to provide information on the activities conducted (or planned to be conducted) as part of the projects and the perceived or demonstrated impact these have had on the implementation of the Covenant;
- **Risks and barriers**, to provide information on the internal and external risks and barriers faced during project delivery, as well as lessons learned and areas of good practice;
- **Sustainability**, to provide information on sustainability plans and on the internal and external factors that may have made some activities more sustainable than others;
- **Grant administration**, to provide feedback on the administration of the grant by the Trust, including on the use of clusters and partnership working;

- **Training and toolkit** to allow us to understand how the support provided by Si has helped you thus far and what kinds of support might prove useful in the future.

Please note that questions with a \* are compulsory. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. Your responses will only be seen by members of the RAND Europe and Si project teams. The Trust will only see aggregated responses; no personal information or data specific to one project will be shared with the Trust. Following this questionnaire, the RAND Europe project team will also be conducting more in-depth case studies focused on selected grants, which will involve phone interviews with selected individuals from each grant. We will be getting in touch with the selected grantees in July.

### **Who are we?**

RAND Europe is a not-for-profit independent research organisation that helps to improve policy and decision-making through evidence-based research and analysis. More information on RAND Europe, our projects and researchers can be found on our website, [www.rand.org/randeuropa/](http://www.rand.org/randeuropa/).

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### **What data are we collecting and why?**

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### **What is the legal basis for processing activities?**

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### **About the collected data and its processing and storage**

The data will be securely stored digitally. Access to the data is controlled on a 'need to know' basis and is only available to the project team. All data provided will be processed in accordance with the standards of the UK Data Protection Act (2018) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All personally identifiable data collected as part of this project will be deleted one year after the end of the project.

### **Sharing your data with other parties**

RAND Europe has been instructed to ensure that any research datasets shared with the Trust are

anonymised so that project beneficiaries cannot be identified. We will therefore ensure that any names or other personal identifiers are removed and, where necessary, redact any sections of text that could be identifiable. This is important to us and the Trust, as we want you to be able to give us honest answers without consideration of how those might be interpreted.

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- To object to the processing of your data;
- To request that our processing of your data is restricted or to withdraw consent.

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### **Whom can I contact for more information about this project?**

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By participating in this survey, you acknowledge and agree to us processing your data according to the process outlined above.

- Do you confirm that you have read and understood the information provided above and consent to participate in this survey?\* (*Dropdown: Yes/No*)

### **C.2.2. Part 2 Background information**

- Please provide your name\* (*open text*)
- Please provide your email\* (*open text*)
- Please provide the name of the Local Authority in which you are based: (*open text*)
- Please specify the Local Authority that was the primary recipient of the Sustaining Delivery Programme grant you were involved with: \* (*Drop-down listing local authorities, with an option for 'Other'*)
  - If 'Other' please specify (*open text*)

- Please specify the original planned start date for your project (*Drop down with month and year*)
- Please specify the original planned end date for your project (*Drop down with month and year*)
- Please specify the actual start date for your project (*Drop down with month and year*)
- Please specify the current planned end date for your project (*Drop down with month and year*)
- If these dates have changed, please provide an explanation as to why (*Open text*)
  - *As a reminder, if your project dates have changed and you have not yet agreed on a grant variation with the Trust, you will need to get in touch with your dedicated Grants Officer to ensure any time variations are agreed. This is part of the Terms and Conditions of your grant funding.*

### C.2.3. Part 3: Implementation

This section seeks to understand the outcomes and outputs of the types of activities that you have conducted.

- What are the top aims for your project? Please include anything that you accomplished with the previous Strengthening Delivery Programme grant that you are now hoping to build on with this current project. (Please name about three) (*Open text*)
- The list below includes 11 types of activities which the Strengthening Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant Programme projects undertook in order to implement the Covenant. Please indicate which of these activities are the main focus of your continuation project: \* (*Check-boxes listed below*)
  1. Understanding the target population
  2. Raising awareness of the public authorities and front-line services about the Covenant and the Armed Forces Community
  3. Raising awareness of the general public about the Covenant and the Armed Forces Community
  4. Raising awareness of the public authorities and front-line organisations about the support available for the Armed Forces Community
  5. Raising awareness of the Armed Forces Community about the support available to them
  6. Coordination and sharing of best practices between relevant local stakeholders
  7. Strengthening links between service providers (e.g., housing, finance, education, etc.)
  8. Improving processes within Local Authorities aimed at supporting the Armed Forces Community
  9. Providing tailored support for the Armed Forces Community
  10. Increasing cohesion/sense of community within the Armed Forces Community
  11. Other (please specify) (*Open text*)
- When you look back at your project so far, what activities are you most proud of and why? \* (*Open text*)
- When you look back at your project so far, what would be the one thing you would do differently and why? (*Open text*)

#### C.2.4. Part 4: Risks and Barriers: What risks and barriers exist to local Covenant implementation of the Sustaining Delivery Programme projects?

The questions in this section aim to understand what risks and barriers you may have faced throughout the implementation of your Sustaining Delivery Programme project and how you might have tried or been able to overcome them. We are interested in a broad spectrum of risks and barriers; these could therefore relate to both internal and external risks and barriers.

- Has your project encountered any of the following challenges or barriers in its efforts to implement the Covenant? \* (*Check-Boxes listed below*)
  - Lack of interest in the Covenant (e.g., from frontline staff, from Councillors, from the public, from partner Local Authorities, etc.)
  - Political pushback
  - Delays to the project (e.g., due to organisational restructuring, foundation work, recruitment issues, etc.)
  - Difficulties in working with and coordinating across the partnership cluster
  - Difficulties in creating connections with partner Local Authorities and with third-sector organisations
  - Loss of personnel
  - Limited capacity to undertake project activities
  - Discovery of additional areas of work/need beyond the project scope
  - Lack of reliable data on the Armed Forces Community
  - Difficulties in mapping existing support
  - Difficulties in engaging with some parts of the Armed Forces community
  - Impact of COVID-19
- Are there any other challenges or barriers that you have encountered?\* (*Open text*)
- Are these the same or different to the challenges or barriers that you anticipated?\* (*Open text*)
- How did you overcome the risks and barriers you identified? \* (*Open text*)
- Are there any lessons learned or good practices from the way your project overcame risks and barriers that you would like to share with us? (*Open text*)

#### C.2.5. Part 5: Sustainability of the grants provided under the Sustaining Delivery Programme

The questions in this section aim to understand the sustainability aspects pertaining to your Sustaining Delivery Programme project. This includes understanding what activities are planned to last beyond the grant, what activities will not, whether these plans have undergone any changes since the start of the project, and why.

The Trust views sustainability in a number of ways, including: Ability to access additional funding for ongoing delivery; Ongoing partnership and collaboration; Ongoing improvement for project beneficiaries; and Improved knowledge and evidence.

- Have you started to think about sustainability after the duration of the grant? If so, please explain your plan.\* *(Open text)*
- Has this plan changed since the first survey? If so, how? *(Open text)*
- Are any of the activities or services undertaken as a result of your project expected to continue after the end of the project and grant?\* *(Radio buttons: Yes / No / Don't Know)*
- Are any of the activities undertaken by your project expected to be embedded or mainstreamed in services or processes in your area after the end of the project and grant, as opposed to support on a temporary basis? \* *(Radio buttons listed below:*
  - Activities have been embedded in mainstream services
  - Activities are temporary
  - Not applicable
  - Other (please specify) *(open text)*
- How have plans to embed, mainstream, or otherwise sustain activities undertaken by your project changed since the start of your project?\* *(Open text)*
- To your knowledge, have any of your activities so far been used as an example of good practice and/or been implemented in other areas or by other Local Authorities? \* *(Radio button: Yes / No / Don't Know)*
- If yes, what activities have been used as an example of good practice or implemented in other areas? *(Open text)*

### C.2.6. Part 6: Grant Administration: How the programme was administered

The questions in this section aim to understand how the programme worked in practice. In this section, 'cluster' refers to groups of Local Authorities that bid together for the grants.

- To what extent do you think the cluster approach helped improve partnership working between:\* *(Matrixed answer with radio buttons listed below, including 'If Other' please specify with open text)*

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all	Don't know	Not applicable
Local Authorities within your cluster					
Other Local Authorities not part of your cluster					
Your Local Authority and the third sector					
Your Local Authority and the private sector					
Your Local Authority and other local public services (e.g., health, housing, employment agencies, etc.)					
Other					

- To what extent would you recommend that the Trust use clusters in future grant funding? \* (*Radio buttons listed below*)
  - To a great extent
  - To some extent
  - Not at all
  - Don't know
  - Please provide any further comments below (*open text*)
- Has your recommendation in this area changed since the Strengthening Delivery Programme grant? (*Radio buttons listed below*)
  - To a great extent
  - To some extent
  - Not at all
  - Don't know
  - Please provide any further comments below (*open text*)
- To what extent has the Sustaining Delivery programme, as a funding mechanism and process, helped you improve the implementation of the Covenant in your area so far? \* (*Radio buttons listed below*)
  - To a great extent
  - To some extent
  - Not at all
  - Don't know
  - Please provide any further comments below (*open text*)
- Do you have any suggestions for improvement, lessons learnt, or areas of good practice you would like to share with either the Trust or other grantees regarding the administration of the programme by the Trust? (*Open text*)

#### C.2.7. Part 7: Training and support

- To what extent has the training and support offered by Si been useful? Training and support activities conducted so far include an online workshop on the Veterans' Hubs, an action learning set, and Basecamp. (*Radio buttons listed below*)
  - To a great extent
  - To some extent
  - Not at all
  - Don't know
  - Please provide any further comments below (*open text*)
- Was the format of the training and support suitable for your needs? (*Radio buttons listed below*)
  - Yes
  - Yes, with some exceptions
  - No, there were areas that could have used improvement
  - The training was not suitable

- No opinion / don't know
  - Please provide any further comments below (*open text*)
- Are there further areas of training and support that would have been useful? (*Radio button: Yes / No / Don't Know*)
  - Please provide any further comments below (*open text*)
- To what extent has the Knowledge Network on the Trust's website been useful? (*Radio buttons listed below*)
  - To a great extent
  - To some extent
  - Not at all
  - Don't know
  - Please provide any further comments below (*open text*)
- What gaps still exist in the Knowledge Network that might be helpful to fill? Please provide comments below (*open text*)

#### C.2.8. Part 8: Closing questions

- Is there anything else you would like to share with the study team? (*Open text*)
- Please feel free to attach relevant documents (*Option to choose file*)

Thank you for completing this survey.

In particular, the Trust, RAND Europe, and Shared Intelligence wish to thank those that have helped to enhance the Knowledge Network by contributing with resources. This helps to share knowledge, good practices, and lessons learned and supports Local Authorities across the country that have not benefited directly from Trust funding.

If you have a query or concern about any aspect of this study, please contact Rebecca Lucas ([rlucas@randeurope.org](mailto:rlucas@randeurope.org)).

If your project dates have changed and you have not yet agreed on a grant variation with the Trust, please get in touch with your dedicated Grants Officer to ensure any time variations are agreed. This is part of the Terms and Conditions of your grant funding.

## Annex D. Interview Protocol

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As described in the main body of the report, each cluster that RAND Europe conducted a “deep dive” on to find positive examples of practices involved three interviews: one with the lead LA, one with a second LA involved in the project, and the third with a project beneficiary. The questions that follow below formed the basis for those interviews.

### D.1. Interview questions for grant recipients

These questions aimed to provide an initial structure for the interview. However, using semi-structured interviews meant we could ask more specific questions on an interview-by-interview basis.

#### D.1.1. SDP contribution to an improvement in the implementation of the Covenant

The interviewer is to provide a brief overview of the activities the grant stated they undertake as part of the questionnaire and check that it is all correct.

- a. How was work distributed across the cluster?
1. Can you briefly describe the main aim(s) of the project(s)?
2. Can you briefly describe your role and involvement in the grant?
3. How was the project impact measured?
  - a. Do you have any quantitative or qualitative data you can share? (can be emailed after the interview)
4. Overall, do you believe that the grant you received helped improve the implementation of the Covenant in your area?
  - a. Why do you believe that it did or did not help improve the implementation of the Covenant?
  - b. What aspects, in particular, helped improve the implementation of the Covenant in your area?

#### D.1.2. Risks and barriers to local Covenant implementation

The interviewer to outline the risks and barriers provided by the grant in the survey, where relevant.

5. Many projects reported difficulty with staffing delays and the lack of buy-in from other stakeholders. Was this your experience? If so, could you provide more detail?
6. Many projects also reported difficulty engaging with parts of the Armed Forces community. Was this your experience? Why or why not do you believe this might have been the case?
7. What were other risks and barriers you experienced?
  - a. How did you mitigate these?

- b. What other mitigation strategies could have helped?
  - c. Many projects reported that continued engagement with partners was a key mitigation measure. Was this your experience?
8. What was the main learning and/or good practice that emerged for you from this grant with regard to overcoming risks and barriers?

#### D.1.3. Sustainability of the grants

9. If activities or services undertaken as a result of your project are planned to continue after the end of the project and grant, how will this be achieved?
10. To what extent do you feel that the project and its impact are sustainable?
  - a. In general, what do you think are the main barriers to sustainability that your project encountered (or that any similar projects may encounter)?
  - b. How has your work on this project improved the sustainability of the project and its activities?
11. Based on your experience, what makes certain activities more sustainable than others?
12. What was the main learning and/or good practice that emerged for you from this grant with regard to achieving sustainability?

#### D.1.4. Clusters

13. How did you find working within your cluster?
  - c. Was the cluster size appropriate?
  - d. Did it lead to improved relations? If so, is this sustainable?
  - e. For non-lead LAs – how did you find the grant management?
14. To what extent do you think that the cluster approach helped overcome the risks and barriers you identified in earlier questions?
15. Some projects found the clusters in themselves to be a barrier to achieving impact. Was this your experience? Why or why not do you think this was the case?

#### D.1.5. Additional questions

16. Did your project discover additional areas of work? If so, which were these?
17. What kind of training or resources would have been useful in delivering this project?
18. Are there any additional materials that you would like us to consider in our work?

### D.2. Interview questions for project beneficiaries

These questions were intended to provide an initial structure for the interview; however, the use of semi-structured interviews meant that more specific questions might be asked on an interview-by-interview basis.

#### D.2.1. Grant overview

1. How did you come to know about the Sustaining Delivery Programme (SDP) project?
2. What was your involvement in the project?
3. Who were your main contact points?

#### D.2.2. Project benefits and impact

4. Do you believe that the SDP project helped improve the implementation of the Covenant in your area?
  - a. Why do you believe that it did or did not help improve the implementation of the Covenant?
  - b. What aspects, in particular, helped improve the implementation of the Covenant in your area?

#### D.2.3. Risks and barriers

5. What are the main risks and barriers to improving the implementation of the Covenant in your area?
6. To what extent do you think that the SDP project helped overcome these risks and barriers?

#### D.2.4. Sustainability of the project

7. Have the activities or services undertaken as part of the SDP project continued after the end of the project?
8. To what extent do you feel that the project and its impact are sustainable?

#### D.2.5. General questions

9. Overall, what worked well with the SDP project?
10. What worked less well?
11. What are the main lessons learnt?