



Herefordshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership

Annual Review Report 2022

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Purpose

To update stakeholders on progress and delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant’s aims in Herefordshire over the past 12 months.

Background

The Herefordshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership (HAFCP), is tasked with delivering the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant in Herefordshire. The partnership is made up of representatives from the Armed Forces community together with the public, private, and voluntary sectors. It is facilitated by Herefordshire Council as part of their ongoing commitment to ensure that the Armed Forces community is not disadvantaged when accessing public services. Dedicated topic leads work to an action plan to

address key areas of need within Herefordshire. Each year, it refreshes the action plan and priorities based on identified gaps in provision or where improvements can be made to services and support.

HAFCP would like to thank all their partners and stakeholders for the outstanding work and commitment throughout another challenging year. In particular, our military charities who work tirelessly out in the community supporting individuals and families, and also the organisations and businesses who go the extra mile to offer bespoke support and services to our Armed Forces community.

Highlights in 2022

It has been another busy year within the Covenant agenda. Our military charities saw a rise in the numbers of support requests as we came out of covid restrictions and the cost of living challenges quickly followed. Issues of mental health, poverty and housing remain high, together with rising need for dementia and healthcare support for older veterans and their families.

As part of the Armed Forces Act 2021 we welcomed the new Covenant Duty, announced in November 2022 by the Government. The legislation now calls on certain public bodies to have a legal duty to pay due regard and ensure consideration is given to specific needs of the Armed Forces community. The Duty will raise awareness in the areas of healthcare, education, and housing and how military life can impact on the Armed Forces community, and in some instances disadvantages that can arise when members of that community seek to access key local services. Organisations such as NHS Trusts, Local Authorities, schools and academies will now need to ensure anyone from the Armed Forces community receives a fair assessment when their cases are considered and that special provision may be justified in some circumstances, in particular those who have sacrificed the most, such as the bereaved and the injured.

The new legislation coincided with the first ever England & Wales census data released by the ONS on 10th November on numbers and location of UK Armed Forces veterans. This vital information will help service providers and other armed forces charities and organisations to reflect on how to improve support for veterans in line with the Armed Forces Covenant.

In 2021, 1.85m people in England and Wales reported that they had previously served in the UK Armed Forces, of those 9,600 are living in Herefordshire. This represents 6.1% of the Herefordshire population aged 16-plus compared to the national average of 3.8%. 11% of households in Herefordshire have at least one resident who is an armed forces veteran compared to the national average of 7%. Herefordshire also has the highest population of veterans (pro rata) of any local authority in the West Midlands. Further demographic and thematic data is expected to be released in 2023.

Healthcare

Topic lead: **Tim Howson, Vice-chairman**

We continue to work closely with primary and secondary healthcare partners to improve services for all those in the Armed Forces community. We welcome the Defence Medical Welfare Service as a new strategic partner together with the expertise they bring in supporting members of the Armed Forces in hospital settings and on-going treatment.

- We are working with local NHS providers to improve signposting and overall awareness. The Wye Valley NHS Trust is developing an Armed Forces element to their staff induction training as well as displaying slides in their emergency departments.
- We are delighted to report that the majority of Herefordshire GP practices have gained 'Veteran-friendly' accreditation which is a scheme developed by The Royal College of GPs and NHS England. It means that each practice has a named person who is aware and up to date with all aspects of care for veterans, and can thus help to ensure appropriate clinical intervention for

veterans. In order to embed what the veteran friendly accreditation means in practice, we will be working with Taurus Healthcare, the GP Federation on some training videos and highlighting what looks good.

- We regularly attend Primary Care Network meetings across the county as well as linking up with Talk Community, Healthwatch Herefordshire and Herefordshire's Community Partnership.
- Through our commitment to improve dental access and treatment for our serving families we ensured that Hereford Garrison contributed to a major commissioning document undertaken by Healthwatch Herefordshire on behalf of NHS England and NHS Improvement. The report highlights the challenges they face due to frequent posting, where there is little or no chance of the family members of the serving personnel getting back on a patient list for a regular dentist in Herefordshire. The findings of the report is helping to shape a procurement exercise to commission a large NHS dental service in Herefordshire.
- Public Health teams have arranged sessions with Garrison families and in early year settings to offer practical advice and guidance in good oral care for children and healthy lifestyles for parents with younger children.
- We now have a better understanding of veterans who are receiving local authority support in residential settings or home care. We are improving our links with residential care providers by raising awareness of the additional support available to those with an Armed Forces background. According to the ONS Census data, in 2021 there were 450 veterans in residential care across local authority and private care.
- We are working with colleagues in Public Health and local NHS to ensure the Armed Forces are represented in the newly formed Integrated Health & Care System.
- We have developed reciprocal links with Public Health to assist with reducing health inequalities and commissioned services to identify the Armed Forces as a recognised group.
- Turning Point, Herefordshire's drug and alcohol recovery service provides free and confidential support to those with an Armed Forces background and their families. The dedicated Armed Forces recovery worker will often collaborate with military charities to provide additional support for an individual or family member.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

Topic lead: **David Thomas, Deputy Associate Director, Primary Care & Community Mental Health**

- In May 2022, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health & Care NHS Trust became 'Veteran Aware', under the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance accreditation. The accreditation acknowledges their commitment to ensure members of the Armed Forces community are not disadvantaged when receiving care, to train staff on veteran-specific needs, and support the Armed Forces as an employer.
- The Trust has developed a new personalised mental health service pathway for veterans and their families to reflect their ongoing commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and the new Covenant Duty. The document highlights the primary pathways into mental health services for veterans across Herefordshire as well as ensuring that staff teams across the Trust have a greater awareness and understanding of veteran mental health needs.
- The Trust continues to employ an experienced Mental Health Practitioner (MHP), for the sole purpose of enhancing access to mainstream mental health care for veterans and their families across Herefordshire. The role of the MHP is to help overcome stigma while actively supporting veterans in their journey to engagement with mental health care. The MHP works closely with Herefordshire's Veteran Support Centre and other local providers, such as Orchestra of the Swan's Dementia café at the Courtyard to ensure veterans and their families' access the "Right care at the Right Time". In 2022, the MHP was supporting around 20-25 veterans a week.

- Herefordshire & Worcestershire Suicide Prevention team collaborates closely with military charities to help reduce suicide rates by offering prevention tools, advice and guidance to those working in Armed Forces settings.

Housing

Topic lead: **Hayley Crane, Strategic Housing Manager, Herefordshire Council**

- We are improving ways to identify and capture Armed Forces data of those seeking housing on the social housing register. According to current data we have 25 Armed Forces families on the waiting list. Their position on the waiting list is assessed in line with the new Covenant Duty and their priority needs.
- Herefordshire Council's Housing Allocation policy has been updated to ensure it reflects the Covenant legislation and its statutory duty.
- Finding suitable housing continues to be a challenge due to housing supply, in particular those seeking single accommodation. However, last year Herefordshire Strategic Housing and the Housing Solutions Team worked closely with the military charities and mental health teams to successfully re-house a number of single veterans living in unsuitable or poor accommodation.
- The veteran self-build project in Leominster, Noden Mews, was completed in December 2020, and consists of 19 houses and flats of which nine are specifically available to veterans. The veterans who worked on the site, some of whom were homeless, now live in the homes that they built.
- In the past 12 months, three further units have become available at Noden Mews. These have been allocated directly back to new veteran tenants based on priority needs and as part of Herefordshire Council's ongoing commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.
- In addition to the Buchanan Trust conversion of North Farm Cottages 1-4 in 2021, Phase 2 was completed in summer 2022. This project comprises of two x 2 bedroomed properties of which one being fully DDA compliant. Funding was secured through a number of local and national funders.
- We presented to the housing associations and registered providers in Herefordshire to improve their understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant and to promote a range of local charities and support available to any of their tenants with an Armed Forces background.

Schools & Education

Topic lead: **Louise Tanner, Admissions & 14-19 Curriculum Manager, Herefordshire Council**

Representatives from Children & Families Directorate and from the local Garrison HIVE (military families' information support unit), and third sector partners continue to meet termly. Good relationships have developed through the year to support education and improve outcomes for children of Service personnel.

- **Service Pupil Premium (SPP)**
The take-up of service pupil premium has increased again in this financial year by a further 6 pupils. The table indicates there has been a steady year-on-year increase in the number of military children attracting the SPP in Herefordshire schools.

Financial Year	Number Service Children	SPP per Child	Total Herefordshire Schools
01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023	1144	£310	£366,080
01/04/2021 – 31/03/2022	1138	£310	£352,780
01/04/2020 – 31/03/2021	1110	£310	£341,000
01/04/2019 - 31/03/2020	1032	£300	£309,600
01/04/2018 -31/03/2019	1019	£300	£305,700
01/04/2017 - 31/03/2018	906	£300	£271,800
01/04/2016 – 31/03/2017	902	£300	£270,600

The SPP is there for schools to provide mainly pastoral support for military children in recognition of the specific challenges they face due to Service life and as part of the on-going commitment of the Armed Forces Covenant. Herefordshire Council and the HIVE at Hereford Garrison regularly promote and encourage schools to apply for the SSP.

- Schools can also apply to the MOD Education Support Fund, now being administered by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. This programme provides funding to schools to help mitigate the effects of exceptional mobility and/or separation faced by Service children.
- Local military families are benefitting from the MOD’s Wraparound Childcare scheme that offers up to 20 hours per week of free childcare before and after school during term time for eligible military parents with children aged 4 to 11 years. The scheme offers practical support to help combat the unique challenges faced by service families, such as frequent relocations that require military families to move home, find new schools and childcare provision, and adjust their lives.
- We are building on our relationships with schools by collating a list of nominated Armed Forces contacts in all our primary and secondary schools.
- We are encouraging schools to sign-up to the Armed Forces Covenant as forces-friendly employers and as part of their community commitment to support the local Armed Forces community.
- Covenant signatories Encore Music Enterprises, the county’s music service, offer vocal sessions for Service children wishing to gain confidence and the opportunity to learn, sing and record songs of their choice.
- The Cart Shed continues to offer free school holiday activities for children from Serving and veteran families. ‘Escape to the Woods’ includes woodland fun such as den building and creating shelters, bush crafts, green woodworking, willow working and outdoor cooking.

Criminal Justice

Topic lead: **Lisa Burnett, YSS: Remember Veterans / West Mercia Police**

- We are making reciprocal links with Hereford Magistrates to promote additional support available for members of the Armed Forces and their families. A new noticeboard has been installed at the Courts to display Armed Forces support literature and we are hoping to be speaking at the Hereford Annual Bench Meeting in March 2023.
- YSS: Remember Veterans caseworker continues to work, where permission is granted, with military veterans who are currently in, or are at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. The project is joint funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Trust, (through the Veterans’ Places, Pathways and People programme), and West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner Grant.
- In 2022, YSS: Remember Veterans accepted 33 new veteran referrals supporting them back into civilian life, offering them one-to-one practical and emotional support to overcome barriers and prevent re-offending.
- Through the close working relationship Remember Veterans has with local police custody suites, courts, HM prisons and probationary services, we are capturing data and trends in arrest rates. Around 6% of all arrests in Herefordshire in 2022 were from individuals declaring they have an

Armed Forces background. The most common arrests include: assault, drink/drug driving offences and criminal damage.

Employment & Training

Topic lead: **Alexia Heath, Post-16 Learning and Skills, Herefordshire Council**

- Veterans and Service leavers can access a range of bespoke employment and training support in Herefordshire including Landau Ltd, The Forces Employment Charity and Department of Work and Pensions Armed Forces work coaches. Case workers regularly set-up sessions at Herefordshire's Veteran Support Centre providing transitional support back into meaningful employment.
- The Military 2 Business event hosted by NMITE, in partnership with Landau, was held during Armed Forces Week 2022. This annual event attracts over 50 local forces-friendly employers, training providers and charities who offer help and recruitment opportunities to local veterans, Service-leavers and family members.
- NMITE continue to be outstanding ambassadors for the Armed Forces Covenant both in brokering new businesses to sign the Armed Forces Covenant but also offering a range of progression opportunities through their masterclasses and degree programmes.
- Landau Ltd, provide a supported employment specialist programme for veterans. They will give unlimited time and work closely with individuals in finding meaningful employment. Landau host regular Job Fairs in Herefordshire where they promote the benefits of signing the Armed Forces Covenant to businesses and organisations.

Herefordshire Veteran Support Centre

Topic Lead: **Tracy Ricketts, Head of Corporate Grants & Programmes, Herefordshire Council**

Herefordshire Veteran Support Centre (HVSC) was an original Covenant Partnership guided concept that started in 2018. The centre, along with members of the caseworker Ops Group, continues to provide "on the ground" examples of needs and trends of required support. The centre has seen a busy and increased footfall over the past 12 months. Working closely with the military charities and other service providers, the centre manager is able to provide a one-stop shop and streamline the level of support an individual or family member may need. Whilst the HVSC gained charitable status in December 2020 Herefordshire Council continues to offer direct employment and joint line manager support to the centre manager. They also assist in identifying and supporting applications to secure grant-funding in partnership with its stakeholders. This is to ensure that the Centre continues to provide and facilitate the advice, guidance and support to the armed forces community in Herefordshire.

Over the past 12 months the HVSC has seen:

- 36 organisations access the centre to collaborate or meet clients.
- 100 family members.
- 368 veterans seeking assistance and 5 currently Serving.

The most common areas for support include:

- Cost of living issues.
- Dementia / Alzheimer's.
- Social limitation/isolation.
- Homelessness.

The Charity Trustees have secured external funding to cover the 12 month operating costs as part of their fundraising strategy. Significant local fundraising initiatives have played a key factor in helping to improve the facilities at the centre, to continue to support the Veteran Brunch, and provided stability to initiate future projects.

Business & Wider Covenant

Topic Lead, **Kate La Barre, Armed Forces Covenant Officer, Herefordshire Council**

- Information, advice and guidance for the Armed Forces Community has been improved, with better navigation at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/armedforces
- The Talk Community directory now has [dedicated information, advice and guidance for those with an Armed Forces background](#) and several of their Community Hubs have veteran volunteers.
- Bromyard & Winslow Town Council and Kington Town Council have now signed the Armed Forces Covenant resulting in all our market towns committed to the Covenant.
- Armed Forces Day 2022 was hosted by Ross-on-Wye Town Council, supported by the local Royal British Legion branch. Our thanks to Ross-on-Wye for organising such a successful family event with a range of attractions to mark our thanks to HM Armed Forces.
- We are delighted that 29 new businesses and organisations in Herefordshire signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2022 as forces-friendly employers, bringing our total to 119. HS Infra Ltd achieved ERS Gold, the MOD's highest employer accolade. Herefordshire now has 6 ERS Gold Award holders and 13 ERS Silver Award holders.

Useful Contacts

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