

Shropshire Partnership Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan 2019-2023

The Armed Forces Covenant is a pledge that together we acknowledge and understand that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives.

The Shropshire Partnership Armed Forces Covenant (SAFC) Action Plan is driven by Shropshire Council and advocates a shared vision and clear understanding of the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant – to ensure fair treatment and to remove disadvantage for the Armed Forces community: serving personnel, service leavers, veterans and their families. The vision is to ensure the Covenant is better established and understood across the County and that stakeholders can apply its principles through partnership working, service provision and policies.

It is intended that the actions we deliver through this Plan will address the key aims of the Armed Forces Covenant:

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

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THEME	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	NEXT REVIEW DATE	CURRENT POSITION – What are we doing now?	FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS – what are we going to do?
1. Collaboration Between Organisations	Shropshire Council (SC) continues to administer and co-ordinate a steering group of internal/external partners including those signed up to the Covenant.	Cllr K Calder – AFC Champion SC – AFC Project Team	Autumn 2021	Shropshire Armed Forces Covenant (SAFC) Partnership Group set up to oversee and deliver the commitments within the Covenant together. Update: Ongoing support for the SAFC Partnership Group and the number of attendees/interested parties continues to increase. The Ops Group meets monthly and to date, approximately, 100+ individuals (with multi-complex cases) have been assisted since 2019.	Due to the success of the SAFC Partnership Group, the current structure is under review to form a series of working groups who will report directly to a more strategic Partnership Board.
2. Working Together	The SAFC Partnership Group to raise awareness and understanding of the AFC.	SAFC Partnership Group SC – AFC Project Team	Late 2021	General information sharing on the SC official webpage and through Facebook/twitter. Training sessions are delivered on a regular basis and presentations made at appropriate events e.g. Patient Participation Groups. Briefings and presentations are regularly made to Councillors and links developed with civilian communities.	Development of a communications plan incl. website refresh and continued use of social media.
3. Community and Relationships	Develop and implement an evidence-based Outreach Hub service.	SC – AFC Project Team. Armed Forces Community, MOD,	Summer 2020	Outreach sessions are held: - Palmers of Shrewsbury – semi-monthly. - RJAH Orthopaedic Hospital – weekly.	Record statistics to determine success criteria and effectively monitor results:

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		military charities, voluntary and community sector, business sector		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1st Royal Irish Regt Tern Hill – monthly. - Mayfair Centre, Church Stretton – monthly. - Wem Town Hall – every two months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of service or ex-service personnel accessing the outreach hub. - Number of activities/workshops. - Number of service users helped.
4. Recognition and Understanding	Continue to meet the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant, increase awareness and legacy.	<p>SC – AFC Project Team</p> <p>SAFC Partnership Group</p> <p>Armed Forces Community, MOD and regional AFC</p>	Ongoing	<p>As at February 2020, approx. 100 businesses/organisations, within Shropshire, are signed up to the Covenant pledge. Advocacy work continues to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the number of businesses/organisations that are signed up to the Covenant. - To encourage/support businesses/organisations to achieve the Bronze, Silver or Gold AFC Employer Recognition Scheme Awards. 	<p>Continue advocacy work to ensure that AFC signatories are meeting their pledges.</p> <p>Advise and inform subject area leads and service providers on the new Covenant Statutory Duty to be introduced in 2022.</p>
5. Recognition, Understanding and Communications	<p>Develop information on the demographics of the Armed Forces community in Shropshire</p> <p>Build a geographical evidence-base of need in veterans, military families and the wider Armed Forces Community through enhanced collection, use and analysis of data across the public and charitable sectors.</p>	<p>SC – AFC Project Team</p> <p>SAFC Partnership Group</p> <p>Armed Forces Community</p>	Autumn 2021	<p>Strong working relationships have been formed with local Armed Forces organisations including those representing spouses and families.</p> <p>Strong working relationships have been formed with local Armed Forces bases including Reserve Units.</p> <p>An Armed Forces Needs Assessment was undertaken in 2021 which</p>	<p>An AFC Strengthening Delivery Group will be formed to ensure implementation of the key recommendations.</p> <p>Work with partners to identify opportunities to “Ask the Question” and record Armed Forces data.</p>

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				identified 33 key recommendations to strengthen the delivery of the Covenant.	
6. Community Integration	<p>Promote local services and discounts for the Armed Forces Community. Track data of take up of offers and discounts.</p> <p>Promote and support the development of community integration projects to through the AFC Grants Fund application process. https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/case-studies-highlight-use-covenant-fund-grants/</p>	<p>SC – AFC Project Team</p> <p>SAFC Partnership Group</p>	Summer 2020	<p>A Business Directory, detailing local businesses that have signed the Covenant, has been produced and is available through the Shropshire Council Armed Forces webpages.</p> <p>Continue to work with local organisations to support and develop community integration projects.</p>	<p>Monitor the success of applicants, across Shropshire, and deliver training to assist with the AFC Grants Funds application process.</p> <p>Further promote and support the development of community integration projects.</p>
7. Health & Wellbeing Mental Health	<p>Identify specialist needs to support veteran's mental health.</p> <p>Support veterans to access timely, effective and integrated services</p>	<p>Shropshire Council</p> <p>SC – AFC Project Team</p> <p>SAFC Partnership Group/Ops Group</p> <p>CAMHS</p>	Ongoing	<p>Working to support veterans to access timely, effective and integrated services through the Outreach hubs and partnership working.</p> <p>Working with Armed Forces charities and charitable organisations, health and local partners to further strengthen and link wider mental activity.</p>	<p>Raise awareness around the Priority Treatment policy with partner agencies in health. Linked with increasing veteran declaration of service.</p> <p>Actively promote the Positive Pathways Programme.</p> <p>Research and map local mental health services, referral pathways to access primary and secondary mental health services and raise awareness through the Outreach hubs.</p>

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					Ensure recognition of access to mental health services for Armed Forces children.
8. Health & Wellbeing Older Veterans	Address and facilitate the needs of older veterans around social care, mobility, loneliness and social isolation.	Shropshire Council SC – AFC Project Team SAFC Partnership Group	Ongoing	Representation from Shropshire Council Adult Social Care and Age UK has been sought to attend the SAFC Partnership Group.	Link with Integrated Care Partnership projects re. social prescribing and ASC Hub/assistive technology. Update Shropshire Council's policies around veterans.
9. Health & Wellbeing Families	Ensure that NHS and statutory services can be accessed by Service personnel, veterans, spouses and children and that no disadvantage is experienced.	Shropshire Council SC – AFC Project Team SAFC Partnership Group Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)	Ongoing	Work is ongoing to ensure that the Covenant is better integrated within GP practices and hospitals. The SC AFC Project Team have undertaken Veterans Awareness training to Veterans Champions within the Shrewsbury and Telford Health (SaTH) Trust. Outreach hubs regularly take place in local hospitals. Use of the GP Code is widely communicated on social media.	Continue to work with GP practices
10. Health & Wellbeing	Support development of veteran-focused service provision and promote awareness of community-based opportunities.	Shropshire Council SC – AFC Project Team	Summer 2020	Locally commissioned community substance misuse services and networks are aware of how to engage veterans.	

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Substance Misuse		SAFC Partnership Group/Ops Group		Raised profile of organisations working with affected veterans.	
11. Health & Wellbeing Family Support Services	Raise awareness of young carers of serving and ex-service families in the commissioning of Carer's support services	Shropshire Council SC – AFC Project Team SAFC Partnership Group	Summer 2020	Ongoing work to ensure that locally commissioned Carers' support services are engaged with young carers of serving and ex-service families. Representation from Carers' Trust4All (commissioned service from Shropshire Council Adult Social Care) sought to become a member of the Strategic Partnership Group.	Establish and maintain a working relationship with Carers' Trust4All.
12. Finance	Improved financial skills, debt management and benefit advice and support	SC – AFC Project Team Unit Welfare/Citizens Advice/DWP	Autumn 2020	Raising awareness of Armed Forces personnel disadvantage across the partnership and with key stakeholders. The Outreach Hub has regular guest talks including from the large Utility companies and banking establishments etc.	Update SC policies and procedures and raise awareness of possible Armed Forces disadvantage in understanding/accessing benefit advice and support.
13. Education	Recognise difficulties faced by Service families during school transition. Maximise the value of the Service Pupil Premium (SPP).	Shropshire Council SC – AFC Project Team	Autumn 2020	Work is ongoing with Shropshire Council's School Admission Team to raise awareness of the SPP and to identify best practice of how it is spent.	School Admission Codes and SPP have been two of the greatest successes of the Covenant. However, difficulties are still being faced due to academisation. SC AFC Project Team to work with Academy Trusts to encourage them to be more Forces

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				Numbers of eligible pupils for SPP have been identified and these will be used to encourage registration.	friendly and to sign up to the Covenant Pledge. Issues remain about SEN and additional support, in respect of how to get the required package in place at short notice. When families transition from military service, the School Admissions Code does not apply.
14. Employment	<p>More robust engagement with local employers and the Career Transition Partnership (CTP).</p> <p>Consider how veterans can be supported with employment and skills training after two-year period when CTP support ends.</p>	<p>Shropshire Council</p> <p>SC – AFC Project Team</p> <p>SAFC Partnership Group</p> <p>Transition, British Army Maj Sam Brettel SO2</p> <p>MOD Regional Employer Engagement Philip Sinclair</p>	Late 2020	SC – AFC Project Team regularly take part in CTP Events.	<p>Strengthen local partnership with Career Transition Partnerships.</p> <p>Closer engagement with the private sector to develop further areas of work around employability work placements etc.</p> <p>Closer engagement with the Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to boost skills and experience.</p>
15. Housing	<p>Provision of housing advice to the Armed Forces community to enable access to housing services that meet their needs.</p> <p>LA's Housing Department to engage with Armed Forces Welfare Officers, relevant statutory</p>	<p>Shropshire Council</p> <p>SC – AFC Project Team</p> <p>SC – Housing Delivery Manager</p>	Mid 2020	The Ops Group meets monthly to discuss individuals with complex case needs which often include the threat (or actual) homelessness. The Ops Group is attended by a	

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	<p>bodies and Service charities (etc.) to facilitate information sharing on the latest intelligence and those who are rough sleepers.</p> <p>Identify, advise and support homeless veterans, and their families, and those who are rough sleepers</p>	Local Housing Charities		<p>representative from SC Housing Department.</p> <p>Shropshire Council’s Housing policy has service personnel provision in place and is publicised. Armed Forces personnel are treated on an equal basis to other housing applicants under the Housing Association policy. This means that serving personnel, veterans and their families receive the same priority for housing as other applicants with the same housing needs. Armed Forces personnel receive ‘need to reside’ or local connection points in housing applications and homelessness policies.</p>	
16.	<p>Shropshire Council to work with organisations representing past, present and future in staging and promoting community events to raise awareness and appreciation of our Armed Forces.</p> <p>Shropshire Council to continue to maintain the reputation of events, commemorations and celebrations by supporting Armed Forces events, where necessary.</p>	<p>Shropshire Council</p> <p>SC – AFC Project Team</p> <p>SAFC Partnership Group</p>	Ongoing	<p>Shropshire Council has a full calendar of events that celebrate our Armed Forces communities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Armed Forces Day. - Armed Forces Match Day Celebrations. - Remembrance Events. <p>The SC – AFC Project Team is currently part of a Task & Finish Group to deliver VE Day celebrations in May 2020.</p>	<p>Develop a calendar of key dates in the military calendar to ensure that they are commemorated/celebrated.</p> <p>Identify lessons learnt from each event to ensure continuous improvement.</p>