



Armed Forces Covenant: Northamptonshire Evaluation

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Executive Summary

The Northamptonshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership (AFC) commissioned the Institute for Social Innovation and Impact (ISII) of the University of Northampton to undertake an evaluation of the AFC Project 2-year MOD funded (April 2017 – March 2019) for Northamptonshire. The aim of the Project was to provide better access to services in such areas

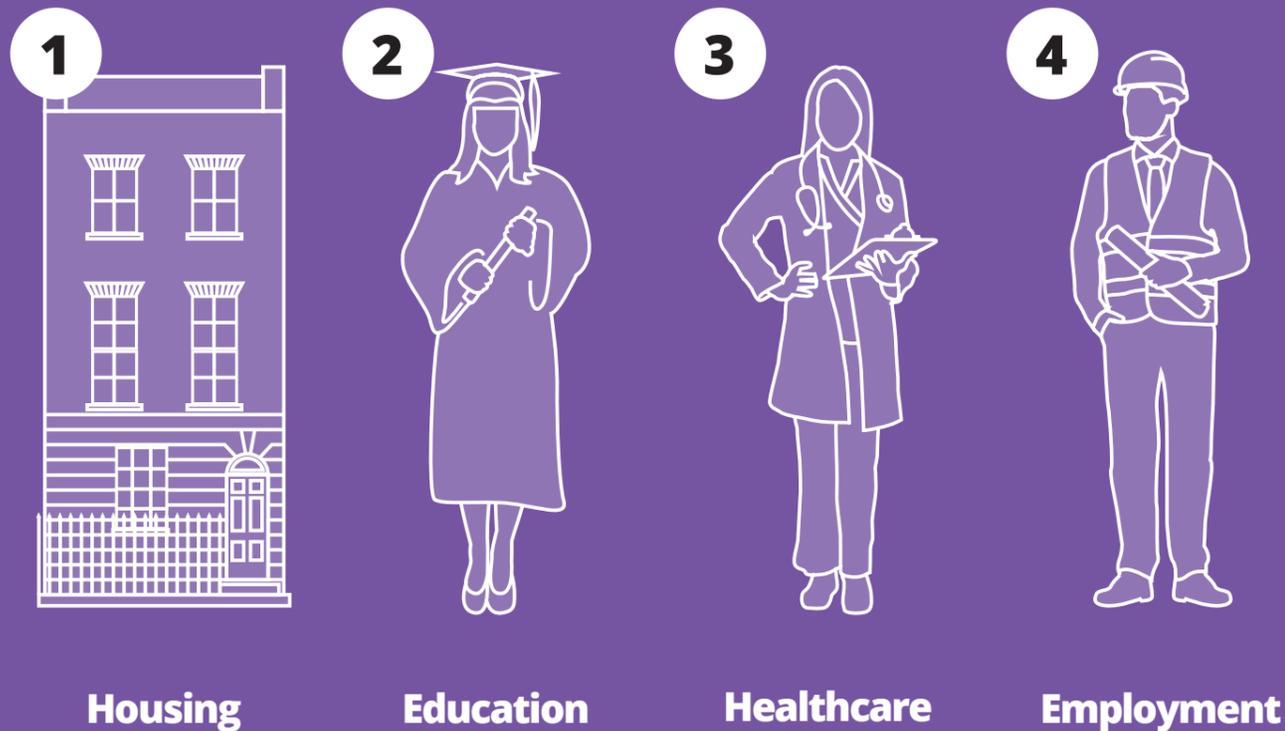
as housing, education, financial assistance, employment and health care.

For the purposes of this Report, the Armed Forces Community is defined as individuals currently serving in the Royal Navy, the British Army or the Royal Air Force, Reservists, Veterans and their immediate family.

Research showed that AFC Northamptonshire was able to identify the problems experienced by the Armed Forces Community and was able to address the findings related to the problems experienced, and used them to implement actions.

Key Problems

The main dimensions which concerned the Armed Forces Community were:

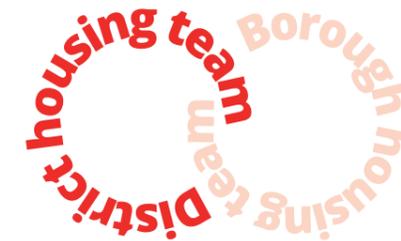


Housing

The Armed Forces Community lacked knowledge of the housing services available to them, whilst Housing Organisations lacked awareness of the needs of this group. The AFC acted in two main areas to alleviate this issue;



Providing support and accommodation advice to service personnel



Collaborating with District and Borough housing teams which provided support and advice about accommodation for Veterans and their families.

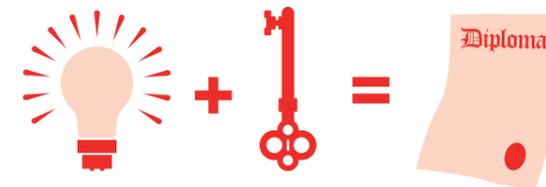
In particular, the District and Borough housing teams provided quarterly statistics on Veteran homelessness and housing cases. The AFC also encouraged all Housing Associations operating in Northamptonshire to sign up to the Covenant. In relation to future actions, in the next two years the AFC aims to ameliorate the impact of the MOD Future Accommodation Model (FAM) within the County and to participate in the RAF Wittering FAM pilot.

Homelessness: the costs to the State can be severe, particularly in relation to healthcare. Indeed, estimates of the total cost to society of one individual being homeless for one year state a minimum cost of £37,543 to society¹.



1x homeless individual = £37,543 in healthcare costs

Education



Data collected showed that support is needed in the educational dimension, especially with respect to the awareness of and access to accredited training (NVQ Levels 3-7) at University and College level.



For the future, the AFC aim to provide training, courses, and awareness-raising events for school staff. They also will ensure that Schools are aware of the process for claiming the Service Pupil Premium.



Cost of NEET to the State = £97-300,000

Educational Exclusion: For those young people who are absent from School, are more likely to be Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)² the cost of becoming NEET to the State is significant - between £97,000 and £300,000³.

Healthcare

In relation to the difficulties of transitioning Armed Forces personnel into civilian life, with alcohol, drug abuse and mental health problems, all are factors.



To alleviate this the AFC supported an accreditation scheme for GP surgeries and also raised awareness with Veterans and families that they should register and make their GP aware of their Armed Forces connection. Moreover, the AFC supported the Veteran's Mental Health Service Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS).



Depression: Depression/anxiety costs society £8,065 per individual⁴.



Social Isolation: This increases mortality rates by 29% , which equates to an additional 21 deaths per year based upon a 1% increase in social isolation⁶⁻⁷.

Transitioning

Issues were reported in being able to recover and to find a new role in civilian life, especially with respect to the economic and financial dimensions.



To better understand this, the AFC are undertaking research into employment and training needs.



Moreover, they provided career advice and identified job opportunities for service leavers and family members.



Employer engagement

The AFC maximised employer engagement by promoting the benefits of employing members of the Armed Forces;



We worked to encourage businesses to sign the Covenant, and liaised with local employers' groups in relation to employment and training opportunities.

Future support will also include ensuring frontline employees in support services are trained and able to signpost relevant services effectively. In addition, the AFC will be facilitating access to support services such as debt counselling.



Unemployment: The cost of unemployment to the State equates to a minimum of £5,320.09 in lost income tax, lost National Insurance and Job-seekers Allowance payments⁸.

Veterans

They are a key group in the Armed Forces Community. No explicit actions were defined in the first Action Plan; however, the AFC was able to identify issues relating to access to:



Health and social care services



Substance misuse



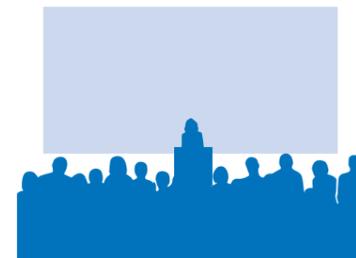
Mental health issues

From a social impact perspective, the costs previously referred to in respect of Health are similarly applicable.

Partners

The responses of the Armed Forces Covenant Partners were investigated through the evaluation of two training courses, which showed positive results demonstrating knowledgeable and efficient training to better communicate with the Armed Forces Community. According to the first Action Plan, AFC has partly achieved actions in line with this dimension.

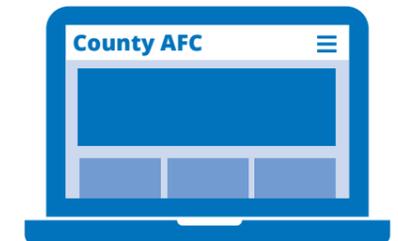
All Partners provided and ensured that their front-line employees:



Attended relevant training courses



Awareness-raising events



Ensured the County AFC website is relevant and up to date

For the future, the AFC is seeking to recruit and train volunteers so that they can attend community events and develop a range of marketing material to raise awareness.

Online Learning

Modules are now provided including:

The Armed Forces Covenant for frontline staff in statutory and voluntary organisations

Housing, Homelessness and the Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant for Armed Forces personnel

The Armed Forces Covenant for families of Armed Forces personnel

Adjusting to life after the Armed Forces.

These offer support to all the stakeholder groups referred to in this Report by offering detailed learning modules that can be accessed freely by anyone at any time⁹.

Sources

¹ Crisis and New Policy Institute (2003) 'How many, how much? Single homelessness and the question of numbers and cost'. Available from: <https://www.npi.org.uk/publications/housing-and-homelessness/how-many-how-much-single-homelessness-and-question-numbers/> Original figures from 2003 were £24,500, this has been updated to 2018 levels to account for inflation and rounded to the nearest Pound (£).

² DfE, (Feb 2018), Characteristics of young people who are long-term NEET, DFE-RR773, available online at

³ Nelson, J and O'Donnell, L. (2012). Approaches to Supporting Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training: a Review (NFER Research Programme: From Education to Employment), Slough: NFER, available online at <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/RSRN01/RSRN01.pdf>

⁴ McCrone, P., Dhanasiri, S., Patel, A., Knapp, M. & Lawton-Smith, S., (2008), Paying the price: The cost of mental health care in England to 2026, Kings Fund Publication, available online at https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/Paying-the-Price-the-cost-of-mental-health-care-England-2026-McCrone-Dhanasiri-Patel-Knapp-Lawton-Smith-Kings-Fund-May-2008_0.pdf

⁵ Holt-Lunstad J., Smith, T.B. & Baker M. (2015), Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: A meta-analytic review, Perspectives on Psychological Science, 10(2), pp. 227-237.

⁶ ONS, (2017), Age-standardised mortality rate: 1991-2017, 10th August 2017, available online at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/aboutus/transparencyandgovernance/freedomofinformationfoi/agestandardisedmortalityrate1991to2017>

⁷ Based upon an age-standardised mortality rate in Northamptonshire of 980 per 100,000 (equivalent to 7,264 deaths per year). These calculations were first reported in: Fassam, L. & Hazenberg, R., (2019), Social Value effect of Food supply chains and Brexit, Report for DEFRA, January 2019.

⁸ This is based upon an adult aged over 25 years of age, working a 37-hour week and earning the minimum wage of £8.21/hour. Therefore, the minimum loss in income tax is £659.21, the minimum loss in NI is £859.68, and the minimum payment out in welfare benefits is £3,801.20, equating to a total of £5,320.09.

⁹ The online modules can be found at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/community-safety/armed-forces-covenant-e-learning-programme/2?documentId=339&categoryId=20087>

