



East Riding Community Covenant Delivery Group Action Plan (2019 – 2024) Annual Progress Report – 2020/21

Introduction

This report highlights the key progress made during 2020/21 against the themed actions outlined in the East Riding Community Covenant Delivery Group's Action Plan.

Cross-Cutting Factors

- The East Riding Community Covenant Delivery Group and themed sub-groups set up to support delivery of actions in the plan have continued to meet virtually during the pandemic.
- New Council webpages have been developed (<https://www.eastriding.gov.uk/council/working-with-our-partners/armed-forces-community/>), which include information on the Armed Forces Covenant and details of how the Council and its partners are working together to improve the support for the Armed Forces community. A copy of the action plan and progress reports, along with minutes and terms of reference for the Delivery Group are also available online.
- The new webpages outline the wide range of services and support available for the local Armed Forces community and are also useful as a signposting resource for family and friends or those working with members of the Armed Forces community. A social media communication campaign, intended to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and promote the new webpages took place in November 2020, in the week leading up to Remembrance Sunday. The campaign was estimated to have reached over 179,000 people and the webpages (as of 31 March 2021) had received 2,260 hits – an over 400% increase in visits compared with the total in the previous 12 months of visitors to the old webpages.
- The distribution of leaflets, posters and pens developed to support this campaign had to be postponed due to the pandemic. Plans are in place to distribute these once restrictions are lifted. The leaflets and posters raise awareness of the Covenant and webpage resource, as well as encouraging individuals to let professionals know that they are a member of the Armed Forces community when accessing services such as healthcare, housing and benefits, so that they have the opportunity to access certain services or support that are specifically aimed at members of the Armed Forces community.
- Outline proposals for a second communication campaign, focusing on challenging public misconceptions about veterans and encouraging local businesses to look at how they can further support members of the Armed Forces community have been approved by the Delivery Group.
- The Council continues to work together with other local authorities including Hull City Council, North East Lincolnshire Council and North Lincolnshire Council, sharing best practice and collaborating on preparation for the upcoming Armed Forces Covenant legislation.

- The Council coordinated a response from staff and partner organisations to the Ministry of Defence's survey in December 2020, which asked for comments on the initial proposals for the Armed Forces Covenant legislation.
- Work was undertaken with the local Census Engagement Manager and the Council's Marketing team to develop Armed Forces specific media posts to encourage veterans to answer the new question in the Census regarding whether they have previously served in the Armed Forces.

Community and Relationships

- A wide range of information relating to community and relationships is now available on the new Council Armed Forces community webpages. This covers topics including local support groups and activities, volunteering, events and accessing support.
- During the pandemic, a number of Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Clubs continued to meet virtually. Yorkshire Veteran Modelling Group sessions were also held virtually to support those experiencing social isolation.
- Defence School of Transport (DST) successfully bid for funding from the Ministry of Defence's Force for Change grant to support development of a new Community and Welfare Hub. There are over 100 members of the Armed Forces community employed or living closely who will reap the benefits. The project aims to provide a self-sufficient ecological outdoor experience to the DST community, encouraging people to become more active in the local community and reducing social isolation. DST have also indicated that they would be happy to host briefing and advice sessions from partner organisations at the Hub for serving personnel and their families.
- HEY Smile Foundation can provide support to veteran groups and Breakfast Clubs through their Charity Chats initiative, which covers topics such as governance, policies, funding and future planning.
- Information on local support and services available has been circulated to Breakfast Club administrators for them to use as a reference guide to support members.
- Information has also been circulated to Breakfast Clubs on where they can access support and advice on how to re-open the Clubs safely (Covid restrictions dependent).

Employment, Education and Skills

- A wide range of information relating to employment, education and training is now available on the new Council Armed Forces community webpages. Information to help encourage local businesses see the benefits of employing veterans has also been included.
- Details of volunteering programmes have been provided by the University of Hull to be shared on the Council webpages.
- Links to a range of open access national e-learning packages are included on the Council webpages.
- Information has been sent out by the DWP to a range of local employers, encouraging them to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant. This work will continue as restrictions are lifted.
- HEY Smile Foundation are currently supporting a veteran charity through their Charity Chat initiative.
- East Riding College achieved a Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award.
- Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations and East Riding College gave a presentation to the Delivery Group in December 2020 to raise awareness of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.
- Proposals for a second communication campaign, focusing on challenging public misconceptions about veterans and encouraging local businesses to look at how they can further support members of the Armed Forces community are being supported by the sub-group, with the campaign likely to support delivery of a number of actions relating to Employment, Education & Skills.
- HEY Smile Foundation's Volunteer Your Way programme encourages individuals to register and get involved within bitesize volunteering roles, giving confidence and awareness, while promoting regular

volunteering opportunities with other community groups. Details of Armed Forces-related e-learning available for volunteers to undertake as part of this programme have been shared.

- The Council recognised Reserves Day 2020 as part of a social media campaign, as well as signposting to additional support available to Reservists.
- Discussions have taken place with a representative for Humberside and South Yorkshire Army Cadet Forces to explore how the Council and its partners might provide support. Initial work will focus on the promotion of the Council's Apprenticeship and Work Experience schemes to Cadets.
- Reference to the Armed Forces Covenant and support for the Armed Forces is now included in the Council's corporate induction.
- The Council supported British Forces Resettlement Services through local promotion of their virtual Career Fairs.
- HEY Smile Foundation and the Council's Employment, Education & Skills team are currently exploring options for promoting an Award in Volunteering to veteran groups.

Children and Young People

- A wide range of information for military families, children and young people is now available on the new Council Armed Forces community webpages. This covers topics including education and childcare, practical and emotional support, safeguarding and bereavement.
- Analysis of the number of service children on Education Health Care Plans has been undertaken.
- Details of the Thriving Lives Toolkit, which helps schools support Service children have been circulated to all East Riding schools via the Headteachers' Bulletin. A link to the toolkit has also been included on the Council's webpages.
- To assist education settings to support the emotional wellbeing needs of children and young people during the pandemic, specific needs/concerns of service children/young people were included in the advice document produced by the Educational Psychology Service '*The East Riding Local Guide to Assist Education Settings to Support the Emotional Wellbeing Needs of Children/Young People During COVID-19*'. A copy of this is available on the [East Riding Local Offer website](#).
- Improved communication between the network of support services/organisations and military families and children, resulting in an increased understanding of their specific needs, along with a better understanding for families about the support available to them locally.
- The sub-group have agreed to focus on the Service Pupil Premium (SPP), looking at how it is used in local schools, and identifying ways in which registration of Service children might be encouraged and promoting best practice in the utilisation of SPP. Research carried out into how other local authorities address these challenges will inform future work.
- In response to the move of a number of service families from Deepcut Barracks to the Defence School of Transport, designated days for service children from these families to visit schools were arranged to support their transition.
- A number of options which could be considered to support improvement of delivery in the Education policy area of the upcoming Covenant legislation were proposed to the Ministry of Defence in the Delivery Group's survey response. Suggestions included dedicated transition days for Service children, nominating a Service child champion in each school, ensuring oversight of the progress of Service children through an identified strategic group and encouraging schools, where reasonable, to consider flexibility with exam boards for Service children of examination age who join their school mid-way through this period.

Finance and Debt

- A wide range of information relating to finance and debt is now available on the new Council Armed Forces community webpages. This covers topics including pensions, claims for injury or illness, financial help for those who are disabled, grants and benefits, discounts, savings, loans, insurance and other money advice and support.
- Following identification of need for a dedicated resource to support veterans with financial advice and other related issues, the Council provided a grant to Hull & East Riding Citizens Advice to fund a part-time caseworker from March 2020 to February 2021. Referral arrangements were widely circulated. This was supported by a joint social media campaign between the Council and Hull & East Riding Citizens Advice in June 2020 to promote awareness of the service.
- During the year, the part-time caseworker supported 42 clients with over 120 advice issues, including management of over £70,000 of debt, homelessness and housing support, access to food provision and legal advice.
- The sub-group has focused its efforts on securing longer term funding to maintain the service. A bid submitted by Citizens' Advice Hull & East Riding to the Tudor Trust to secure longer term funding for the East Riding Armed Forces Money Advice Service was unsuccessful. This was not unexpected due to a large proportion of funding programmes focusing on supporting Covid-19 recovery projects.
- The Council has provided a grant to secure delivery of the East Riding Armed Forces Money Advice Service for a further year (March 2021 – February 2022). It is expected there is likely to be an increase in referrals over the coming months due to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic. Future work will be focused on securing longer-term funding for this service.
- Work to look at ways in which the financial education and awareness of local serving personnel can be further supported was postponed due to the pandemic, but will be a focus of future work, supported by the Council's Welfare team and HEY Credit Union.
- HEY Credit Union have signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Health and Wellbeing

- A wide range of information relating to health and wellbeing is now available on the new Council Armed Forces community webpages. This covers topics including alcohol and substance misuse, carers, healthcare, registering with a GP or dentist, support for those with mental health issues and/or physical injuries, help for those who are disabled, and other health and wellbeing services/support.
- A question asking whether someone has ever served in HM Armed Forces or are a close family member of someone who has, has been incorporated into the Council's adult social care assessment process.
- The team are currently working with East Riding of Yorkshire Clinical Commissioning Group to explore various opportunities for encouraging GP practices to become 'Veteran Friendly' accredited practices. This work was initially postponed due to the pandemic but targeted work is now being planned. Details about the scheme are also now included on the Council webpages.
- Wording encouraging individuals to let professionals know that they are a member of the Armed Forces community when accessing services such as healthcare, housing and benefits, so that they have the opportunity to access certain services or support that are specifically aimed at members of the Armed Forces community, have been included on the leaflets and posters developed as part of the first communication campaign.
- The Council's Public Health team have launched a three year campaign called 'Healthy Minds in East Riding' (<https://www.eastridinghealthandwellbeing.co.uk/healthy-minds/>) which includes a phased programme of work with targeted high risk groups, one of which will be Veterans/Armed Forces.
- Representatives from NHS England and NHS Improvement have been invited to join the sub-group.

- The Council, along with health partners from East Riding of Yorkshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust developed a joint response to the health policy element of the Ministry of Defence's Covenant legislation survey.

Housing

- A wide range of information relating to housing is now available on the new Council Armed Forces community webpages. This covers topics including affordable housing, council housing, homelessness, renting from a private landlord, service family accommodation, council tax support, household bills, emergency assistance, help if facing eviction, housing benefit, repairs, neighbour issues and other housing related support and advice.
- A link to the Council's Allocation Policy is now included in the new Covenant webpages. The Policy is currently being reviewed and will include additional priority to divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who need to move out of accommodation provided by Ministry of Defence following the breakdown of their relationship.
- All service personnel at the Defence School of Transport receive a Service Leavers Guide. This guide, along with general housing advice (e.g. mortgage issues, repairs, neighbour issues) for veterans available from Citizens Advice is now signposted on the Council webpages.
- 80% of the cases dealt with as part of the East Riding Armed Forces Money Advice service also required support with housing as well as financial help.
- Work has begun to develop a Private Sector Housing Guide for Veterans.
- A link to the e-learning package 'Housing, Homelessness and the Armed Forces Covenant' is now included on the Council webpages. The Council housing team has also promoted and encouraged completion of the 'Housing, Homelessness and the Armed Forces Covenant' e-learning package amongst staff.
- The Council, together with Hull City Council, has supported the development of plans for the Hull 4 Heroes Veterans Village, a site designed specifically for the ex-Armed Forces community. The Veterans Village will provide 48 houses for single occupants and will also provide some housing for veterans with families. The housing will be 'transitional', providing accommodation during the period in which a veteran needs rehabilitation and support. Veteran residents and their families will have access to a wide range of support services.
- The Council's Housing team collects data on the number of live housing applications for serving personnel and veterans. It also now monitors the numbers of veterans supported through EMMAUS, the rough sleeper outreach service.

Veterans and the Law

- Project Nova continues to support veterans in the East Riding who have been arrested and enter Police custody, as well as supporting veterans who are referred by specialist police teams, or other statutory organisations, because they are at risk of arrest. An outline of the support provided by Project Nova and details of how to access this is now included on the Council webpages.
- The Council is currently working with Hull City Council and the Probation Service to develop a joint multi-agency complex case review process for vulnerable veterans leaving the criminal justice system.