

Agenda Item	19
Report No	HC/64/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Date: 9 December 2019

Report Title: HIGHLAND ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT UPDATE

Report By: Acting Head of Policy

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the work carried out by the Highland Armed Forces and Veterans' Community Covenant Partnership (formerly the Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership) in the last fourteen months and sets out future priorities and actions.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- note the considerable progress made with partners over the past 14 months across a range of activities which support the Armed Forces Community Covenant;
- support the creation of a specific Reserves Special Leave Scheme which will be reported to a future Corporate Resources Committee;
- note that the Council is working towards a submission for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource: If bids are made for further funding for projects or officer time this would be subject to the normal approval processes.
- 3.2 Legal: there are no implications

- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island): the ongoing work of the Partnership will deliver positive impacts on the Armed Forces Community in Highland ensuring they have effective access to services and support from a wide range of partners.
- 3.4 Climate change/Carbon Clever: there are no implications
- 3.5 Risk implications: there are no known implications arising from this report at this time
- 3.6 Gaelic: no implications

4. Background

4.1 In October 2012 The Highland Council signed the Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant along with twelve other partners – the Armed Forces Community; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service (*Scottish Fire and Rescue Service*); Highland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association; Highland Third Sector Interface; Job Centre Plus; NHS Highland; Northern Constabulary (*Police Scotland*); Royal British Legion Scotland; Scottish Natural Heritage; SSAFA (Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association) Forces Help; University of the Highlands and Islands.

4.2 The Covenant is a statement of support between the Armed Forces and the civilian community. The aim is to encourage support for the service community in a local area and raise awareness of issues affecting service personnel. A copy of the Highland Covenant is at:

http://www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/4566/armed_forces_community_covenant_for_highland

4.3 Highland Council has demonstrated its support to the Armed Forces Covenant with the appointment of an Armed Forces and Veterans' Champion. This role is currently held by Cllr Roddy Balfour. The Highland Armed Forces & Veterans Community Covenant Partnership (HAFVCCP) continues to benefit significantly from the leadership and enthusiasm shown by the Champion particularly in the role of Chair of the HAFVCCP.

5. Highland Armed Forces and Veterans' Community Covenant Partnership Activity

5.1 The Highland Armed Forces and Veterans' Community Covenant Partnership (HAFVCCP) ensures effective cross sector cooperation and partnership working. Representation on the Partnership is taken from a wide variety of agencies and includes:

- Highland Council - representatives from Chief Executive's Office, Community Services and Care and Learning
- NHS Highland
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- DWP/Job Centre Plus
- University of the Highlands and Islands
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Service Personnel and Veterans Agency
- Services representatives from the Army (Regular and Reserve forces), RAF and Cadets
- Service Charities: Veterans Scotland, RBLS, Combat Stress, SSAFA, Poppyscotland, Royal Caledonian Educational Trust, Armed Services Advice Project etc.
- Other third sector organisations as appropriate.

5.2 In April 2017 a bid to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund under the "Strengthening Local Government Delivery of the Covenant" strand was successful. This, with funding from the Inverness Common Good Fund and in-kind support from Moray Council, allowed the employment of a Development Officer for two years. In October 2017, Jo Lenihan took up this role (which is shared between Highland and Moray) and she has progressed the work of the Partnership significantly. Due to an underspend on the project the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust agreed to an extension of the project until 31 December 2019. The outcomes set in the funding application have largely been met. The end of project report will provide details of the project and how the outcomes have been achieved.

5.3 As previously reported the Partners reviewed the key outcomes in February 2015 to test their ongoing relevance. The agreed key outcomes to support the Armed Forces Community are as follows:

- The Economy
- Children and Young People
- Caring Communities
- Housing
- Empowering Communities

The actions to deliver against these outcomes are contained within an Action Plan (Appendix1) and the HAFVCCP continues to monitor progress at its bi-annual meetings.

5.4 Following a further successful bid to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust in 2018 the Project received a supplementary £6,500.00 towards the cost of creating a

microsite for the Armed Forces community in Moray and Highland. This was successfully launched in January 2019. The site brings together localised information, advice and guidance on education, employment, health and wellbeing, housing, finance and moving to the north of Scotland. The site has been widely publicised and attracts over 200 individual hits each month. South Lanarkshire Council were so impressed with the site they are in the process of creating their own version for their local Armed Forces community.

The website can be viewed at www.armedforcesmorayandhighland.co.uk

6. Housing

- 6.1 We have continued to work with partners to improve information and advice on housing options to forces personnel and veterans. Specific areas of activity are as follows:
- 6.2 The Council and other landlords who are part of the Highland Housing Register continue to subscribe to the MOD Referral Scheme, which helps people leaving the forces find social rented housing.
- 6.3 Partners are continuing to work with colleagues in the Armed Forces to ensure provision of targeted housing information and advice to service personnel to help them consider and plan for their future housing needs as early as possible.
- 6.4 The Council already ensures that Armed Forces personnel are treated on an equal basis to other housing applicants under our Housing Allocation Policy. This means that Forces personnel or veterans receive the same priority for housing as other applicants with the same housing needs. Armed Forces personnel automatically receive 'need to reside' points in housing allocations and homelessness policies. Applicants also receive insecure tenure points where they are housed in Forces accommodation.
- 6.5 As part of the Highland Housing Register's review of its allocations policy, consultation will take place with stakeholders in early 2020 to identify how the particular housing needs of this group can be met in Highland.
- 6.6 The Homes for Heroes specialist housing development in Inverness has been successfully concluded. The Council and partners are continuing to liaise with Homes for Heroes on a further development in Inverness, which is being supported through the Highland City-Region Deal. It is intended that this project will include a cluster of homes in Inverness to suit the needs of veterans

7. Health

- 7.1 Following the submission of an application to Libor, NHS Highland has received a second Libor Grant of £1.02 million to provide continued support for veterans. Recruitment for an Armed Forces & Veterans Project Manager was initiated mid-November.

The project, funded for 3 years, aims to:

- Improve services to veterans
- Develop a recruitment pathway for service leavers into NHS/public sector jobs
- Increase public and staff knowledge about NHS obligations under the Armed Forces Covenant

Five full-time posts will be created during over the course of the project. The Project Manager will be responsible for the development and delivery of NHS Highland's approach to increase public and staff knowledge of the NHS Armed Forces Covenant using a wide range of media and ensuring future sustainability around information platforms.

- 7.2 Poppyscotland's MacRobert Centre continues to provide support to veterans and the Armed Forces community for a range of needs, including financial assistance, employment, mental health, housing and benefits. Over the last 5 years they have received 3,037 enquiries and provided one-to-one support for 380 individuals through their case management service. Poppyscotland's [5-year Impact Report](#) provides details of their work.

8. Education

- 8.1 Highland Council's Promoting Positive Relationships (PPR) Team continue to work with Armed Forces families and embed this in their core duties. A Strategic Lead within the team ensures Forces families are included in the Council's service at a strategic level. Support at the operational level, is provided by the PPR Team Co-ordinator and through the Military Liaison Group (MLG). This post is funded by the Ministry of Defence's Education Support Fund (ESF) until July 2020. A further bid to ESF has recently been successful to enable this excellent work to continue and develop.
- 8.2 Military Liaison Group. Lou Kinnear, Co-ordinator and lead of MLG, has been instrumental in progressing and supporting work to raise awareness, train and support a wider responsibility for the Forces families. The Group action plan keeps the work and direction on track. Partners include Highland Council Care and Learning, Army Welfare Service, Royal Caledonian Education Trust (RCET), Skills Development Scotland Armed Forces Champion, Armed Forces Community and Highland Council's Armed Forces and Veterans Champion. The wide professional

representation on this group is invaluable. The MLG are partners to the Service Improvement Plan and take ownership for the plan being carried out and enabling progress and success to be monitored. A quarterly Newsletter is produced to highlight support, events, news and views (tri-service) with a wide distribution across Highland. The MLG model has been cited as good practice nationally and the Team have recently presented at the RCET conference in Edinburgh.

- 8.3 Training is a major part of the PPR Team's core work: Emotional Cycles of Separation, Roots of Empathy, My World of Wellbeing are universal learning resources that support children to develop their own emotional literacy and Forces families are highlighted throughout delivery of these courses.
- 8.4 Recording of Forces family's data is considered to remain underrepresented on SEEMIS; disclosure for families is optional. Work continues to encourage identification at school enrolment, and there is now a link on the enrolment form to a leaflet explaining "Why we want to know"? Work is ongoing to improve access to reliable statistics enabling deeper scrutiny to make sure that in comparison to the general statistics for Highland's children, Forces families are not being compromised.
- 8.5 A programme of presentations is being delivered to the 9 Highland Community Planning Partnerships by the Co-ordinator and Covenant Project Officer with the purpose of creating an awareness and understanding of our Forces families, the Covenant and the challenges for children and young people from this community.
- 8.6 Underpinned by the principals of good transitions future priorities will:
- add a Highland flavour to the Forces Families Welcome Pack and develop a Welcome Pack specifically for Children and Young People.
 - create a checklist for transition highlighting the responsibilities for Family/Welfare/School and promoting partnership and engagement
 - create a one-page transition document to support and guide schools
 - work with Schools Information Hub to add an Armed Forces section.
 - create an eLearning Suite for Highland Council staff with information, training slides, videos and links to further information; this will sit in My Own Learning (MOL) platform.
 - incorporate a generic welcome statement to Forces families in school handbooks with a link to the website for information and support
 - engage with Early Years settings to develop key messages and support strategies with practitioners.
- 8.7 It is known that Forces Families live across the whole of the Highlands although the main serving population is in the Inverness Area. The aim is to replicate the success achieved in Inverness and target areas with smaller numbers of Forces families with

limited access to the support networks already established. Whilst collaboration with the local serving community is primarily through 3Scots and 7Scots, links to the RAF and Navy are being forged. The progress already achieved will continue to be developed and replicated throughout the Highlands engaging more with the Tri Service Community and our Community Partnerships.

- 8.8 Royal Caledonian Education Trust (RCET) and the Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance - research from University of Winchester suggests that children whose parent or carer works or has worked in the Armed Forces have particular experiences and characteristics that may be contributory factors affecting access to higher education. Many Service families repeatedly experience the impact of separation and deployment, high mobility and an increased risk of other factors such as caring responsibilities. A Creative Forces day gives HE providers an opportunity to bring Service children from a variety of schools together to experience a day on a university campus and explore their identity as Service children. It is also an opportunity to build the capacity of schools to understand and support their Service children. Moira Leslie, Education Manager with RCET is working with UHI to investigate the possibility of holding Creative Forces days in Highland and Moray.

9. Employment/Employability

- 9.1 It was recognised that partners engaged in supporting employment needed to come together more frequently to ascertain how best to identify and meet need. To this end an Employment Group was formed in June 2019 with the aim of being able to:
- better co-ordinate employability efforts across partner organisations
 - increase/improve partnership working for the benefit of the Armed Forces community who are experiencing barriers to employment

In order to achieve this a key requirement for the group is to build the knowledge of what support is available to individuals at various stages of the employment pipeline and share this knowledge. Since forming the group has met twice and is currently in the process of formulating an Action Plan that will serve towards meeting need as well as feed into and inform the HAFVCCP.

10. Other Highland Armed Forces and Veterans' Community Covenant Partnership Activity

- 10.1 Since the last report, two Partners' meetings have been held and continue to be very well attended with an increasing representation from a range of supporting organisations. These meetings present an opportunity for all partners to share information and updates and to identify opportunities for joint working. Regular updates from the Armed Forces help agencies and partners to identify issues which may develop over the next 1-3 years and beyond, allowing preparation time for

relevant actions to be put in place. Most of the actions contained in the current Action Plan that underpins the work of the HAFVCCP have been completed and will be reviewed by partners in Spring 2020 to set new priorities.

The close working relationship which has been developing over recent years has seen more efficient service delivery across a number of areas, including handling of welfare cases with the support of the appropriate organisations.

10.2 University of the Highlands and Islands is fully engaged with the HAFVCCP and the Head of Careers and Employability now sits on the partnership. Part of UHI's support for the Armed Forces community will create a network of Armed Forces Champions across the 13 university campuses. UHI hope to collaborate on future projects with the recently established employability group, Highland Council's transition officer and RCET.

10.3 A programme of awareness training was delivered in May 2019 by Forces Connect, an organisation that received funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to develop and deliver the programme to local authorities across the UK. The target audience for the 3 levels were:

- Councillors and senior council executives
- Service champions, creating focal points for the delivery of in-house training
- Customer support and front-of-house roles

Feedback from the training indicated that there was the need for a more 'Highland-focussed' training suite. Consequently, the Project Officer, MLG Co-ordinator and Highland Council Learning & Development team are developing a suite of eLearning resources that will be delivered through Reception Skills and Care and Communications (challenging behaviour) which sit on the MOL platform. It is anticipated this will be available in early 2020.

10.4 In collaboration with Poppyscotland, the Armed Forces Covenant Project supported the establishment of 2 veterans' breakfast clubs in Dingwall and AIness, both of which are proving extremely popular and helping to tackle loneliness and social isolation amongst veterans and their families/carers. This is a model that could be easily replicated in other locations with minimal cost.

11. Events

11.1 Final Centenary Commemorative events were held across Highland towards the end of 2018 and the Military Wives Choir put on performances on 9th and 10th November. On 20 November 2018 the first Highland Gathering as part of Veterans Scotland 'Informing Scotland' programme was held in the Town House. Comprising a number of informative presentations from partners covering health, employability

and transition.

11.2 Looking ahead to 2020, commemorative events will be held recognising:

- Victory in Europe – 8th May – VE75
- 80th anniversary of the battle at St Valery en Caux – 12th June
- Victory over Japan Day – 15th August.

2020 is also the 80th anniversary of the formation of the Commandos and events will be held to mark this at the Commando Memorial.

12. Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust

12.1 The Armed Forces Covenant Fund receives £10 million/year to support the Armed Forces community through a range of large and small programmes. Priorities for the fund are set each year with the Ministry of Defence to address identified challenges. These programmes are monitored for any opportunities they may offer for future Highland bids.

13. Future Priorities

13.1 The Highland Council area continues to be viewed by the military in Scotland as one of the leading Local Authorities in the implementation of the Armed Forces Community Covenant and its close linkages and collaboration with Moray Council is particularly noted.

13.2 The Highland Armed Forces and Veterans' Community Covenant Partnership will continue to monitor the changing situations with regard to its Armed Forces community. Actions to mitigate any negative change will be identified and any necessary support instigated through the Partnership and working groups, underpinned by a relevant and up-to-date action plan that is reviewed and monitored regularly.

13.3 It is also considered that there may be an opportunity for closer engagement with the private sector who could be invited to send a representative to Partnership meetings. This would help to develop further areas of work around eg employability, work placements etc. This is a key activity within the Action Plan.

13.4 It is recognised that the Military Family are very important to the Highland community. As Community Partnerships continue to develop their Locality, Children and Adult plans, engagement and support through the HAFVCCP will be encouraged to ensure the Armed Forces community are represented and considered in the plans. The Inverness Community Partnership is to include 4 identified actions in its plans that will support the Armed Forces community in

Inverness. These could be considered for replication through other Partnerships.

- 13.5 The HAFVCCP will consider future priorities at its meeting in March 2020 and will continue to deliver identified improvements in support for the local Armed Forces community.

14. Armed Forces Covenant and Highland Council

- 14.1 Highland Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant as a major employer in November 2018.
- 14.1 The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS) encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the Armed Forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.
- 14.2 In 2015 the Highland Council was awarded a Silver Award and was encouraged by the Highland Reserves Forces' and Cadets' Association to apply for the Gold Award in 2019. In Scotland currently 7 Local Authorities hold the award. For this to be awarded, the Council needs to be able to evidence its support for members of the Armed Forces community; ensure that its workforce is fully aware of its positive policies towards the Armed Forces community and actively inspire other organisations to support Defence and the Armed Forces community.
- 14.3 The Council is currently working towards the Gold Award, with a submission being put forward in 2020.

Designation: Acting Head of Policy

Date: 25 November 2019

Author: Dot Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager, Ross, Skye and Lochaber
Jo Lenihan, Moray and Highland Armed Forces Project Officer

HIGHLAND ARMED FORCES & VETERANS COMMUNITY COVENANT PARTNERSHIP (HAFVCCP) ACTION PLAN

Appendix 1

1.1 Review Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership (HAFVCCP)					BRAG
					Complete
					Slight delay
					On schedule
Theme	Action	Who	Outcome	Update	
HAFVCCP <i>Project Outcome</i> 2 <i>Timescale</i> Oct 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review remit of group to ensure membership and aims relevant. Agree and issue TORs for group Establish working/focus groups to implement actions Contact members who have not attended recent meetings to ascertain reason – refer to commitments made as signatories of Covenant. Amend membership as appropriate 	Members of HAFVCCP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAFVCCP's membership has representatives of appropriate organisations Members are aware of the role of the HAFVCCP and of working groups Documented roles/remits available for new members or when change of personnel Signatories of Covenant reminded of original commitment and purpose, ensuring membership remains relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current format of group appropriate – members agreed that use of working/focus groups would be more effective way to deal with specific issues (as per MLG Education) All Covenant signatories re-engaged with group 	BLUE
Action Plan <i>Project Outcome</i> 2 <i>Timescale</i> Oct 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAFVCCP agrees, monitors and reviews action plan Agree procedure for reviewing and monitoring actions 	Members of HAFVCCP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plan provides vehicle for the HAFVCCP to improve support for AF community in Highland Action plan evolves in line with legislation and recommendations from Scottish Gov, UK Gov and other stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First draft action plan accepted at HAFVCCP meeting March 18 Action plan updates - Aug 18, Oct 18, Mar 19, Jul 19 Agreed HAFVCCP to review and update action plan every 2 years <p style="color: red; margin: 0;">Further Action</p> HAFVCCP to review and set new priorities at meeting March 2020	BLUE
1.2 Highland Armed Forces Community (AFC)					
Explore ways of focussing support in areas of provision where gaps have been identified through review of policies and procedures.					
Better supported AFC	Microsite first point of call for AFC moving to Highland and those already here. Staff and public better	Focussed information on practical 'life' issues (housing, education, work, healthcare, facilities, and leisure) ensures the AFC are better informed about moving to and living in Highland and support available Staff able to provide better support from sound knowledge base			

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Theme	Action	Who	Outcome	Update/Further Action	
	informed about the Covenant and AFC Promote educational support provided by HC	Families aware of priority given to supporting children from the AF Community under the Covenant			
Microsite <i>Project Outcome 3 Timescale end Oct 18</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a microsite for AFC with input from Highland Council, service providers and external organisations • Arrange relevant focus group to test effectiveness of site • Identify reciprocal links with key organisations • Display logos of key partners • Identify responsibility for updating post Oct 19 	Proj Off Highland Digital Services Highland Council Focus groups to be decided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear statement of the Covenant and what it will and won't do for AFC • Clear, relevant information easily accessed for all sectors of AFC (serving, reserves, veterans, cadets, families) • Clear advice and sources of support on education, employment, health, housing, finance, news, events, moving to Highland • Searchable directory of services for front line staff/professionals • Clear statement on adaptations within policies for AFC (eg housing, ed) • AFC aware of the microsite as a source of local information and where to go for help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsite launched at Highland Care & Learning Committee 24 January 2019. Accompanying press releases in Highland & Moray. Link distributed to Covenant partners in Highland and Moray for onward distribution and to key national organisations (families federations) • Website analytics report – total 1676 unique page views from 1 Feb to 30 Jun. Unique page views equates to unique users. <p style="color: red;">Further action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to publicise the microsite to AFC and Highland service providers • Determine mechanism for notifying Highland web team of any amendments/updates needed • Redirect website contact email 	BLUE
Awareness Training <i>Project outcome 4 Timescale Jun 18 – Jun 19</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an effective training programme to raise awareness of AF Covenant and AFC • Investigate best format for delivery – online, face to face, newsletters and stories • Identify staff for targeted awareness training eg Access point, housing, benefits, school staff, health and 	Proj Off HC Learning & Dev Team Other providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently high forces-friendly service delivery where needs both anticipated and if possible mitigated to reduce disadvantage. • Members, Ward Managers and Area Service Managers in all wards briefed on the Covenant and the AFC • Covenant better established and understood and staff able to apply its principles through service provision and policies • Staff aware of issues that may affect the lives of serving AF personnel and how this may 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forces Connect training delivered in Highland and Moray early May. Limited uptake from staff. • 51 Brigade working group to develop Forces Connect resources for use in Scotland. First meeting 16 July. <i>Members:</i> Scot Gov Defence Policy Unit, 51 Brig, Veterans Scotland, Poppyscotland, National Transitions Officer (Ed), Navy, RAF Transitions, Veterans Welfare Service, Moray /Highland Proj Off, Lothian Proj Off. Next meeting scheduled Jan 20 – representation from HC/MC tbc. • Discussion with Scot Gov (Nov 19) – Minister for Parliamentary Business & Veterans keen to see action to support veterans. A quick fix would be to take Lothian eLearning and make adaptable for any LA to use so consistent message across Scotland. Scot Gov to progress this initially. 	AMBER

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	social care		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> impact on families, particularly children Staff aware that a small proportion of ex-service personnel may be adversely affected by their service and may present with a complex range of issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HC Learning & Development, MLG Co-ordinator and JL developing eLearning for frontline and education staff. Lothian eLearning to be 'Highlandised' and put on My Own Learning platform (HC internal system). Short film clips to be included from regular, reserve, veteran, spouse and C&YP. Will be in Reception Skills and Customer Care & Communication Skills along with film 'Change Step' and other resources. Anticipated completion early 2020 	
Education Pamphlet <i>Project outcome 3 Timescale End 18</i>	Produce a promotional pamphlet as per Argyll and Bute 'Welcoming AF to ...'	HC Ed staff Proj Off RCET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information booklet available for families moving to Highland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How education systems correlate Details of schools Explanation of early years provision Link from microsite Link to ADES 'Forces Children's Education' website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review with Lou Kinnear. Linda Thom to see if still required due to increased information on Highland Council website for AF families <p style="color: red;">Remove as action – MLG (Education) producing literature to support AF families combined with information on microsite – no longer required</p>	No Action Remove
Education offer <i>Project outcome 3 Timescale Ongoing</i>	Promote positives of education in Highland – small class sizes, support under ASL, military keyworker/MLG GIRFEC Free uni tuition fees if qualify	Highland PPR team Proj Off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents aware that all children supported under ASL if needed Support for children of AF families through MLG and keyworker ensures issues identified allowing early intervention and support as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on MLG included on microsite under 'Schools and Learning' and link to Highland Council information page for AF families under ASN 	BLUE
Priority 2					
Raise awareness of the Armed Forces community and the Covenant amongst local businesses and the civilian population					
Theme	Action	Who	Outcome	Update/Further Action	
Business collaboration <i>Project outcome 4 Timescale Jan 18 – Jun 19</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate how CPP, Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses can work to raise profile of AF Cov and benefits of employing service leavers/veterans – possible business 	CPP Chamber of Commerce (Inverness & Lochaber) Federation of Small Businesses Ward Mgrs Cllrs DWP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local businesses sign a Covenant pledge Employers are aware of how military skills translate to civilian employment market Recruitment of AFC (service leavers, reserves, veterans, spouses,) increased and more opportunities identified Attraction/retention of more of 	<p style="color: red;">Further action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore whether event like Highland Gathering with CPP/Chamber of Commerce/CTP/HRFCA would facilitate better engagement with commercial partners/businesses Employability Group – collaboration between Poppyscotland, SDS, New Start Highland, Momentum Skills, Blue Arrow, RFEA, Signpost working to improve employability pathways for veterans/service leavers. Linking to HRFCA, Chamber and UHI employers' network could create further opportunities. 	GREEN

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	<p>seminars in areas of high AF population (eg Inverness, Wick, Thurso)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage signing of Covenant to show commitment Raise awareness of MOD Employers Recognition Scheme (ERS) Explore use of Knowledge Hub to investigate best practice models for taking to commercial partners 	SDS HRFCA	AFC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework Veterans Project – has mapped infantry soldier's skills to SCQF. This project will hopefully expand this work to include other specialisations and services https://scqf.org.uk/media/1661/scq-109-armed-forces-brochure-web.pdf HC to consider writing to their suppliers/contractors commending the advantages of employing reservists – support for Gold ERS. 	
<p>Promotion of Covenant and AFC</p> <p><i>Project outcome 4 Timescale Jan 18 – Jun 19</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities/ events/platforms for raising awareness in all HC wards. Work with military units and other interested parties to raise awareness Dates of note: Organisations (HC, NHS Highland) to engage with HRFCA to work towards Gold ERS. 	Proj Off Units Community officers Ward Mgrs Cllrs HRFCA Veterans Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider civilian community aware of covenant, AFC and contribution make to local society/economy Military/civic community engagement improved Military families understand entitlement/support available under the Covenant from HC and other stakeholders HC's commitment to the AFC and Covenant rewarded by Gold ERS recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations to all CPP are now complete with exception of East Ross, Badenoch & Strathspey, Sutherland and Skye, Localsh and Wester Ross. <p>Further Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify other opportunities for breakfast clubs (integrate communities and help lonely/socially isolated AFC) – through CPP briefings? Continue engagement with CPP's Meeting ICPP on 14 November to discuss actions to support Veterans through locality plan. HC to reapply for Gold ERS subject to consideration of following: review HR policies to align with Gold ERS criteria (10 days additional paid leave not subject to deduction of MOD pay and allowances, consideration of guaranteed interview scheme, write to HC suppliers/contractors about advantage of employing reservists, staff survey on AF status. 	GREEN
Priority 3					
3.1 Improve employment and education opportunities for service leavers and spouses					
Better supported AF Comm	Work with partners to identify employment and education opportunities	Service leavers provided with early information about local employment and education opportunities, including information on training required for particular roles and where this can be obtained			
Theme	Action	Who	Outcome/Outputs	Update/Further Action	
Service leavers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with CPP to map employment 	CPP Proj Off	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment opportunities identified early and promoted to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working group for employment. Members: Poppyscotland, SDS, Newstart Highland, Momentum 	

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<p>employment & FE/HE</p> <p><i>Project outcome 5 Timescale Dec 18</i></p>	<p>gaps and promote these to service leavers through existing channels (CTP/SDS/DWP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to identify opportunities for home working • Work with Chamber of Commerce to identify SME opportunities • Identify opportunities for recruitment fayres working with other orgs • Work with FE/HE to promote education as an opportunity 	<p>DWP SDS CTP UHI NHS Chamber of Commerce Military Reps HRFCA Veterans Scotland</p>	<p>local service leavers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on qualifications/training requirements and where these can be obtained – possible use of resettlement grant, • Opportunities/grants identified eg SERI, SDS Individual training accounts (ITA's) • SME opportunities identified • FE/HE offered as positive alternative to employment on leaving service 	<p>Skills, Blue Arrow, RFEA, Signpost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDS/CTP running pilot project 'A96 corridor' – SDS offer service leavers a 1-hour careers advice session with trained advisor prior to CTP programme with aim of helping leaver to tailor resettlement training. • 51 Brigade/CTP/SDS working on transition support for service leavers. Await outcome of this work before taking this action forward to avoid duplication and ensure consistent approach for Scotland. <p>Further Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback to HAFVCCP on work of employment group • Watching brief on work of Scot Gov and impact on work of HAFVCCP – Scottish Government Progress against SVC Recommendations <p>https://scottishveteranscommissioner.org/sgprogress/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UHI AF Champion to engage with partners for links to UHI employers' network. • Organisations to consider using Forces Families Jobs to advertise vacancies – free platform targeting AF community 	<p>AMBER</p>
<p>Spousal employment & FE/HE</p> <p><i>Project outcome 5 Timescale Dec 18</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with CPP/SDS to map employment gaps and promote these to AF families Eg NHS, teaching, early learning/childcare • Work with FE/HE organisations to identify training ops for employment gaps and promotion of FE/HE as an alternative to work • Work to identify opportunities for home working • Work with units to identify personnel on posting to allow early promotion of 	<p>CPP/SDS Proj Off HC Comms DWP UHI NHS SDS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment opportunities identified • Information on qualifications and training requirements available and where these can be obtained • FE/HE offered as positive alternative to employment • Information promoted to families on posting notification to allow spouse to consider training before moving • Information on communications available for those interested in working from home • Information on special arrangements for teachers with non-Scottish qualification more widely publicised • Reserve opportunities identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See priority 2 Business Collaboration and 3.1 Service leavers' employment & FE/HE as overlapping outcomes. • UHI courses flexible in content and delivery– suits mobility of AF. UHI establishing an AF Champion in line with SVC recommendations. • Forces Families Jobs – new website to be launched in Sept 19 (joint venture NFF, AFF, RAF FF) as a one-stop-shop for Armed Forces family members to search for suitable jobs and training. <p>Further action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add details of Forces Families Jobs to microsite • Information for spouses on posting – medical reference from GP needed for certain jobs (registering as a child-minder) so obtain before moving in case delay in transferring medical records. • Watching brief on outcome of spousal employment projects funded by Covenant 	<p>AMBER</p>

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	opportunities for spouses		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local businesses sign Covenant – improved engagement – increased employment opportunities 		
3.2 Asking the Question					
Accurate data on AFC in Highland	Explore ways of improving available data on HC AFC	Service providers have access to more reliable data about location of veteran population			
Theme	Action	Who	Outcome/Outputs		
Opportunities <i>Project outcome 5 Timescale Dec 18</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With partners work to identify opportunities to 'Ask the Question' Develop standard protocols to enable data sharing amongst agencies 	NHS Education Highland Council DWP SDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved mapping of AFC and its needs will assist organisations in planning and commissioning of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A question on a person's AF status to be included in 2021 census Promotion through MLG to encourage parents to disclose on school registration forms. LK to investigate early years disclosure. NHS Veterans project may offer opportunities to ask the question through GP's and hospital admissions. 	AMBER