



The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Project Model



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July 2019

Executive summary

In 2017, a partnership between Sheffield City Council, Rotherham, Doncaster and Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council's, Sheffield Hallam University and York St John University bid successfully for a Covenant Fund grant. The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant project was designed to:

- Raise the awareness of Covenant initiatives and dedicated services availability
- Produce local authority Covenant Action Plans and a regional Action Plan
- Enhance ownership of the process and improve connections across the region
- Commission military awareness training for front-line staff in South Yorkshire
- Produce the South Yorkshire model for strengthening the regional delivery of Covenant pledges, ensuring a lasting and replicable project legacy

The project began in consultation with the Armed Forces community across the region, which informed the development of a community-specific regional survey tool. The regional community survey results informed the local authority and regional Covenant Action planning events.

Key project outputs

The following key project outputs were conducted between June 2017 and June 2019:

- Publication of South Yorkshire Armed Forces community-specific survey findings¹
- Four local authority Action planning development events
- A regional Action planning consistency event
- Four local authority Covenant Action plans produced
- A regional South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Action plan produced
- Military awareness training delivered to 1000+ front line staff
- Publication of the South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Model
- Presentation of the South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant model to 160 delegates at a 'Bringing the Armed Forces Covenant to Life' conference

Key project impact

The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant project activities generated the following key impacts:

Raising the regional awareness of Covenant initiatives

- The Armed Forces Community Survey provided details of the UK's national Covenant to the 30% of Armed Forces community respondents who did not know about it

¹ Albertson, K., Albertson, K., Stevenson, J., and Murray, E. (2018) The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Project: Mapping of the Armed Forces Community across the region, Data report (July 2018), Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice: Sheffield Hallam University, ISBN: 978-1-84387-423-2, available on-line at: <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/media/9597/the-south-yorkshire-covenant-project-mapping-report-albertson-et-al-july-2018.pdf>

- The 48% of staff attending the training having never heard of the Covenant dropped to 3% post training attendance
- The Armed Forces Community Survey provided details of local Covenant initiatives to the 53% of Armed Forces community respondents who did not know their Council had signed the Covenant
- The 34% of staff reporting being aware their Council had signed the Covenant was more than doubled to 70% after attending the front-line training

Raising the regional awareness of dedicated services available

- The community survey provided details of dedicated services available to 53% of the Armed forces community respondents who reported poor awareness of them
- 96% of Covenant Action planning event attendees reflected the event had operated well in terms of raising awareness of dedicated services availability
- Training attendance resulted in a significant increase in the awareness of dedicated support services, rising from 43% to 89%

Informing the work of regional front-line staff through military awareness training

- Staff reporting feeling extremely to relatively well equipped to work with this community nearly doubled from 48% to 95% after attending training
- The 56% of staff feeling confident about working with members of the Armed Forces community increased to 96% on attending the training
- 72% of staff reported having cascaded their learning from the training via a full staff briefing, meeting, training day or memo - thereby increasing the numbers of front line agency staff with an awareness of Armed Forces community related issues

The delivery of realistic and consistent Covenant Action Plans

- As a direct result of the project activities delivered, realistic, locally appropriate and consistent local authority Covenant Action plans have been developed across the region and a regional South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan has been agreed

Enhancing regional ownership and connections between agencies

- 70% of Covenant Action planning event attendees reported a sense of collective ownership of the Action planning process as a direct result of project participation
- 88% of Covenant Action planning event attendees reported meeting at least one new contact or learning about a service, agency or resource
- More than half (55%) of staff reported having met representatives from other relevant agencies as a result of attending the training
- The Action planning events and Covenant conference have resulted in a more joined up and regionally strategic approach to addressing the needs of the Armed Forces community across South Yorkshire

Legacy of the South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant project

The South Yorkshire Covenant project was designed to have a lasting impact and replicable legacy beyond the project funding timescale. These project legacy aims have been achieved through:

- The presentation of the South Yorkshire's regional community capacity building approach to strengthening Covenant delivery pledges - encapsulated in the figure below:



- The South Yorkshire Covenant model was launched at the 'Bringing the Armed Forces Covenant to life' conference held at York St John's University in June 2019
- The South Yorkshire Covenant project has attracted national interest from other local authority regions regarding the potential for replication and the project impacts have received civil endorsement from Dan Jarvis MP
- The project has ensured that when members of the Armed Forces Community engage with community services across the region, front-line staff not only have an understanding of the military journey and transition experience for service personnel and their families, they also have access to the wide range of support available

As a direct result of South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant project activities the region now has consistent local authority and regional Covenant Action Plans that can be used as a road map to strengthen the delivery of Covenant pledges for the Armed Forces community that live here.

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Section 1:

The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Project

1.1 A regional partnership project

In 2017, a regional partnership, consisting of Sheffield City Council, Rotherham, Doncaster and Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Councils, Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) and York St John University (YStJ), successfully bid for a Covenant Fund grant, under "Priority 3: Strengthening of Local Government delivery of the Covenant". This project was designed to enable the delivery of consultation and mapping research, training for front line staff, strategic Covenant Action Plan consistency building activities and providing an impact evaluation of these undertakings. The Sheffield Hallam University led research and evaluation team were made up of staff from Liverpool John Moores and Manchester Metropolitan Universities and *Inspiration NW*[®]. For full academic organisational details please see Appendix 1. The project was designed to provide a better understanding of the experiences of the Armed Forces Community living in the region and to strengthen the consistent delivery of Covenant pledges across South Yorkshire. The project was delivered by the multi-agency partnership between June 2017 and July 2019.

1.2 Project aims

The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Project utilised innovative and collaborative working practices to improve the consistency with which Armed Forces Covenant pledges are delivered across South Yorkshire, focusing on four key strategic project outcome aims:

- To raise the awareness of both national and local Covenant initiatives and the dedicated Armed Forces community specific services available
- To produce realistic, locally appropriate and consistent Covenant Action plans across the region
- To enhance engagement, ownership and improvement in the connections between agencies across the region
- To publish the 'South Yorkshire Covenant model', for strengthening local government delivery of Covenant pledges, as a lasting project legacy and to produce an evaluation of project activities

1.3 Project objectives- a regional community capacity building approach

The strategic project aims outlined above were designed to be realised through the delivery of four core South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant project objectives, developed from a regional community capacity building approach. These activities are summarised in the table below:

Component	Core activity	Activity detail
1	Research: consultation and mapping	Consultation with and mapping of the Armed Forces Community in South Yorkshire

2	Action planning activities and ensuring consistency in best practice	Covenant Group Action Learning Set activities to build strategic and consistent Covenant Action Plans
3	Staff awareness training	Delivery of training to front-line staff to inform the practice of those working directly with the Armed Forces Community
4	Evaluation	Evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of project activities

1.4 Project activities conducted

Between June 2017 and June 2019, the following South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant project activities took place:

1.4.1 Component 1 - Consultation with and survey mapping of the Armed Forces Community in South Yorkshire (SHU)

A consultation and mapping research activity was conducted between March 2017 and June 2018. This activity involved conducting consultation activities with the Armed Forces community themselves, designed to mobilise the grass roots community across South Yorkshire. This resulted in an Armed Forces community-specific survey data tool being developed collaboratively in consultation with all stakeholders in the region. Data findings from this survey are included where relevant in this report. For full details of the community survey methodology please see the first of this projects' two project report outputs - the survey data report 'Mapping of the Armed Forces Community across the region' (Albertson 2018²). This current report is the second and final reporting output from this project.

1.4.2 Component 2 - Covenant Group Action Learning Activities (Inspiration NW[®])

A total of five Action Learning events were facilitated by Inspiration NW[®] between November 2018 and February 2019, with each of the four local authorities Armed Forces Covenant Groups, to digest survey research findings and to galvanise Action plan development. The Action Learning approach was designed to enhance Covenant groups sense of ownership of the process and augment connections between agencies operating locally and regionally. A regional consistency Action planning event was held showcasing the four local authorities Action plans in February 2019, amalgamating the development of the regional South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan.

1.4.3 Delivering Military Human[™] training to front-line staff (YStJ)

The training of frontline staff across the region continues to be provided by our partners at York St John University. The CPD accredited course, entitled “The Military Human[™]: Understanding Military Culture & Transition” is to be delivered to 1000 front-line staff over

² Albertson, K., Albertson, K., Stevenson, J., and Murray, E. (2018) The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Project: Mapping of the Armed Forces Community across the region, Data report (July 2018), Sheffield Hallam University: Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, ISBN: 978-1-84387-423-2, available on-line at: <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/media/9597/the-south-yorkshire-covenant-project-mapping-report-albertson-et-al-july-2018.pdf>

2 years. The training began in June 2017 and sessions will continue to be run across the region until October 2019. At the time of writing, more than 1000 staff from across the region have completed this training.

1.4.4 Evaluation of the impact of the project activities (SHU)

This report contains the impact and process evaluation of the project activities, designed to establish the impact of project activities. This present report contains the findings of the evaluation of the impact of the staff training and the Covenant Action Planning activities. This report also showcases the South Yorkshire Covenant model for strengthening local government delivery of Covenant pledges.

Section 2:

Project methodology and evaluation methods

2.1 Methodology

This projects design and execution was underpinned by viewing the Armed Forces Community through a 'Human Rights as perspective' theoretical framework (Harvey 2018³) which acknowledges that human rights values need to accurately reflect the current needs of our communities (see, Walgrave 2018⁴; Gavrielides 2018⁵; Van Ness 2018⁶). Likewise, the identification of the struggle for recognition and active participation in society for communities such as the Armed Forces community in terms of access to social justice was key (Fraser 1995⁷) to informing this project design. The methodological approach adopted to the evaluation of the project activities were underpinned by these notions and tied directly to the aims of the impact and process evaluation methods detailed in the remainder of this section.

2.2 Impact and outcome evaluation

The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant project was designed to secure lasting impact across the region. The key evaluation aims are to establish the impact of project activities in meeting the project impact aims, as detailed below:

- To establish the extent of impact of project activities on the awareness of Covenant initiatives and dedicated services availability
- To establish the impact of attending Military Human™ training for front-line staff
- To establish the impact of project activities on the production of realistic and locally appropriate Covenant Action Plans and a South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan
- To establish the extent to which project activities enhanced ownership and improvement in the connections between agencies across the region
- To substantiate the publication of the 'South Yorkshire Covenant model' and the evaluation of project activities

2.3 Evaluation methods

The data collection tools used to evaluate the aims described above were specifically designed to establish the impact of each of the project activities with direct reference to the outcomes and process impact aims of the project. A mixed methods approach to evaluation was adopted as follows:

³ Harvey, C. (2018). Reconstructing and Restoring Human Rights. In Gavrielides, T. (ed.), Human Rights and Restorative Justice (pp. 13-27). London: RJ4ALL Publications. Fouché, C., & Light, G. (2011). An Invitation to Dialogue: 'The World Café' In Social Work Research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 10(1), 28-48.

⁴ Walgrave, L. (2018). Restorative Justice and Human Rights in a Democratic Society. In Gavrielides, T. (ed.), Human Rights and Restorative Justice (pp. 112-131). London: RJ4ALL Publications.

⁵ Gavrielides, T. (ed.) (2018b) Human Rights and Restorative Justice. London: RJ4ALL Publications.

⁶ Van Ness, D. (2018). Living in a Relational and Moral Universe. In Gavrielides, T. (ed.), Human Rights and Restorative Justice (pp. 8-12). London: RJ4ALL Publications.

⁷ Fraser, N. (1995) 'From redistribution to recognition: dilemmas of justice in a "postsocialist" society', *New Left Review*, July-August, 68-93.

2.3.1 Evaluation of staff training

The evaluation team led by Sheffield Hallam University designed two project-specific surveys for attending staff to complete voluntarily, one to complete before they attended the training and one afterwards in order to systematically establish impact of attending the training. A repeat measure (before and after) method was designed to systematically establish the extent of impact of attending York St John's Military HumanTM training on South Yorkshire's front line staff. These activities were conducted to establish the extent to which the training program helped in meeting the objectives of the South Yorkshire Covenant project (see 1.2), by specifically establishing the degree to which attendance has impacted or not on:

- levels of awareness of national and local Armed Forces Covenant initiatives
- levels of awareness of AFC dedicated support services available
- the extent to which attendees felt confident, equipped and knowledgeable, after the training to work effectively with the Armed Forces community

Four selected training sessions, one in each South Yorkshire area, were observed by evaluation team members. Due to funders report writing deadlines, the evaluation data was accessed earlier than the end of the timeline for training delivery. Pre and post survey data were downloaded from the electronic Survey Monkey site between the training delivery start date of 14/06/2017 and 05/06/2019. Resulting in a total evaluation data sample of 718 pre-training evaluation survey responses (n=718) and 140 post-training evaluation survey responses (n=140).

2.3.2 Evaluation of Covenant Action planning activities

A core covenant infrastructure⁸ review conducted by the project evaluation team in 2017 established that 3 local authorities in South Yorkshire required Covenant Action plans to be developed in order to aid consistency of Covenant delivery (see Albertson et al., 2018⁹). The facilitation of the Covenant Action planning stages of this project were designed to achieve impact in three discreet ways, which formed the basis for the methods adopted to the evaluation of these activities, as detailed below:

i: Action plan outputs evaluation

At the start of this project 3 local authorities in South Yorkshire did not have any Covenant Action plans in place and a regional South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Action did not exist. The Action plan outputs evaluation data sample was premised on establishing the existence of 4 area and 1 regional Covenant group produced Action Plans post project activity.

⁸ Shared Intelligence, Local Government Association and Forces in Mind Trust (2016) Our Community, Our Covenant, available at: <http://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Our-Community-Our-Covenant-Report-30.08.16.pdf>

⁹ Albertson, K., Albertson, K., Stevenson, J., and Murray, E. (2018) The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Project: Mapping of the Armed Forces Community across the region, Data report (July 2018), Sheffield Hallam University: Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice, ISBN: 978-1-84387-423-2, available on-line at: <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/media/9597/the-south-yorkshire-covenant-project-mapping-report-albertson-et-al-july-2018.pdf>

ii: Action plan event process evaluation

Inspiration NW[®] facilitated 5 separate Action Learning¹⁰ planning sessions using a World Café¹¹ approach. The Action Learning events were directly informed by the data from the survey mapping activity - as sessions began with a summary of area Armed Forces community survey findings. The process evaluation data were generated through short evaluation forms which were designed by the evaluation team to generate data focusing on three key areas of impact:

- productive networking and linking with other appropriate services
- the extent to which attendees felt the event had facilitated collective ownership of the process

Evaluation feedback forms were provided to each of the Action Learning set attendees at the end of each day's activities. The total numbers of evaluation forms returned to the research team are detailed below:

Location	Total attendees	Date conducted	Total Evaluation forms returned
Sheffield	12	Nov 1	4
Doncaster	18	Nov 14	9
Rotherham	23	Nov 12	9
Barnsley	16	Nov 23	12
Regional event	50	Feb 22	23
Total	119	-	(n=57)

iii: Action plan consistency event evaluation

The evaluation of the regional Action planning consistency event was designed to establish the extent to which the South Yorkshire Covenant project activity has impacted on the efficacy of consistency in Action planning across the region. This phase of the evaluation focused on generating data via circulating event evaluation forms to Regional event attendees at the end of the day's activities. A total of 23 regional event evaluation forms were returned to the evaluation team.

2.4 Limitations

The evaluation of the staff training relied on two self-completing surveys per staff member attending and the numbers of post-attending surveys completed (n=140) was much lower than the pre-training survey (n=718). Likewise, the Action planning events relied on attendees to complete the evaluation form and returns were also low.

¹⁰ Action learning sets are a methodology by which one can foster learning in the workplace, providing a structured way of working in groups which can provide help us learn from what we do, and improve our practice as a result. References: Revans, R. W. (1982). What is action learning?. *Journal of management development*, 1(3), 64-75.

¹¹ The World Café is a whole group interaction method focused on conversations. A Café Conversation is a creative process for leading collaborative dialogue, sharing knowledge and creating possibilities for action in groups of all sizes. References: Carson, L. (2011). Designing a public conversation using the World Cafe method: The Value of Techniques. Martin, Brian (ed.). *Social alternatives*, 30(1), 10.

Section 3:

Findings - Evaluation of staff training

This section contains the findings from the independent evaluation of the 'Military HumanTM' staff training (n=718¹²). For further details of methods see section 2.3.

3.1 Attendee and agency engagement profile

The training was designed to be attended by front-line staff across the region, in order to raise their awareness of local and national Covenant initiatives and the dedicated services available to the Armed Forces community across the region.

3.1.1 Training attendees

Of the front-line staff across South Yorkshire who attended the training and completed the pre-training evaluation survey (n=718):

- 72% work directly with the public
- 15% manage staff who work directly with the public
- 7% operate at strategic commissioning level roles
- 5% worked in Training, Administration, Human resources and research roles

Of the agencies represented by their staff members attending the training, levels of regularity of contact with the Armed Forces Community ranged from 26% identifying as regularly working with members of the Armed Forces community, 55% as occasionally and 16% as rarely coming into contact with members of the Armed Forces community.

3.1.2 Identification of the Armed Forces Community in partner agencies

The pre-training survey asked staff if their agency routinely identify members of the Armed Forces community (n=718). 44% reported that their agency did; 19% reported they 'did not' and 36% reported they were 'unsure'. By the post-training survey (n=140), a larger proportion of staff - 56%, had identified that their agency did indeed routinely identify members of the AFC and 39% had identified their agency did not routinely members of this community and most significantly, the proportion of staff who were unsure had dropped from 36% to 11%. While this situation cannot be directly attributed solely to attending the staff training, it can be acknowledged that having had the issue raised during the training, staff had actively queried their agency protocols around identification of this community.

3.2 Knowledgebase and confidence

Levels of self-identified aptitude and knowledge about the Armed Forces community were established via the pre (n=718) and post (n=140) training attendance surveys scaled question regarding the extent to which staff felt trained, able, knowledgeable or equipped to work with members of the Armed Forces Community at both time points.

¹² None responses to particular survey questions are not presented throughout this section.

3.2.1 Levels of self-identified aptitude and knowledge

Attending the training had a significant impact on staff's sense of feeling equipped to work with this community. The proportion of staff reporting feeling 'not very' or 'not at all' equipped to work with members of the Armed Forces community declined from 50% to 1% after attending the training. The proportion of staff reporting feeling 'extremely', 'very' and 'relatively' well equipped at pre-training rose from 48% at pre-attendance (n=718) to 95% post training attendance (n=140).

3.2.2 Confidence when working with members of the Armed Forces Community

Staff were asked via the pre (n=718) and post (n=140) training attendance survey's to assess the extent to which they felt confident when faced with working with members of the Armed Forces community. Data analysis reveals that training attendance had a significant impact on front-line staff's confidence, as the proportion of staff reporting 'not very confident' or 'not confident at all' dropped from 33% to 0%, whilst those reporting feeling 'extremely', 'very' and 'relatively' confident rose from 56% to 96%. Further, at post-training attendance 76% reported their confidence was directly as a result of attending the training.

3.3 Awareness of national and local Covenant initiatives

Staff's awareness of the national Armed Forces Covenant were established via comparison of the pre (n=718) and post (n=140) training surveys scales indicating the extent of awareness of national and local Covenant initiatives at both points in time.

3.3.1 Awareness of the UK's national Armed Forces Covenant

Data analysis demonstrates that attending the training had a significant impact on the awareness of front-line staff's awareness of the national Armed Forces Covenant and its key principles. At pre-training, 48% of staff reported having 'never heard of it', whilst at post training attendance survey data collection - this had dropped to 3%. The proportion of those reporting 'they know of the Covenant and know what it means' rose from 23% to 72% post training attendance.

3.3.2 Awareness of local Armed Forces Covenant initiatives

Staff's awareness of local Armed Forces Covenant initiatives, such as their Council having signed the Covenant, were established via the pre (n=718) and post (n=140) training survey's. Data analysis demonstrates that attending the training had a similarly striking impact on the awareness of front-line staff's awareness of local Covenant initiatives. At pre-training, 61% were 'unsure' or thought they had 'not signed', this dropped to 26% post training attendance. The 34% of staff pre-training reporting being aware their Council had signed the Covenant was increased to 70% post training attendance.

3.3.3 Agencies signing the covenant

The pre-training survey asked staff if they were aware if their agency or organisation had signed the Armed Forces Covenant (n=718). 33% were aware that their agency had signed the Covenant, which rose to 67% by the post-training survey (n=140) and most significantly, the proportion of staff who were 'unsure' had dropped from 59% to 24%. While this

situation cannot be directly attributed solely to attending the staff training, it can be acknowledged that having had the issue raised during the training, staff had actively gone and found out if their agency had signed the Covenant post training attendance.

3.4 Awareness of dedicated services and impact on future practice

Analysis of evaluation data demonstrates that attending the training had a significant impact on the awareness of front-line staff's awareness of the dedicated Armed Forces support services available.

3.4.1 Awareness of dedicated AFC services available

Pre and post evaluation survey data were compared to ascertain levels of current knowledge regarding the availability of Armed Forces specific support services to which service users can be signposted to. Pre-training attendance, 54% of staff could identify 'none' or 'one' dedicated service to signpost the Armed Forces community to. At post-training, this proportion dropped dramatically to 7%. Pre-training attendance, 43% could identify 'five or more' dedicated services available, post training attendance this proportion rose to 89%.

3.4.2 Key learning impacting on future practice

Staff who had attended the training were asked to identify the most useful or key piece of learning from attending the Military HumanTM training. 50% identified the learning around transitionally-link issues and challenges for the community that would inform their future practice as the being the most useful. 27% acknowledged the identification of dedicated support services availability as having the most impact on their future practice. 17% reported that the significance of ensuring protocols is in place to identify members of the Armed Forces community as the key learning they gained.

3.5 Wider dissemination and connections made

As part of agreeing to participate in the free staff CDP training provided by the South Yorkshire Armed Forces project, those attending agreed to cascade the learning from the training through their agencies.

3.5.1 Organisational cascading activities

Having attended the Armed Forces Community awareness training session, 72% of staff reported having cascaded their learning from the training via a full staff briefing, meeting, training day or memo. Of these activities 65% were disseminated to staff teams of between 3 and more than 10 members of their agency.

3.5.2 Regional connections made

Of the staff having attended the training, more than half (55%) reported having met or networked with representatives from other agencies working with the Armed Forces community that they found informative and as potentially useful contacts for their future work with this community. Comments regarding the usefulness of the training are included below:

"All the participants were very interesting with roles that I was I was unaware of. They shared lots of personal and professional knowledge which will be very useful (Staff training attendee, 015).

3.5.3 Overall rating of the training course

Having completed the training, attendees were invited to rate the Understanding Military Culture and Transition training session. 89% rated the training session as 'excellent' or 'very good' and 6% as 'good'. As a further part of the evaluation, survey respondents were invited to reflect on their experience of the training in a free text box. A selection of these comments is featured below:

"This has been the most useful training day I have ever attended" (Staff training attendee, 023).

"Really good to take time out to discuss the importance of cultural competency when working with this cohort" (Staff training attendee, 140).

"Really enjoyed the training and have a much deeper understanding of the armed forces culture and what support is available after leaving the forces" (Staff training attendee, 121).

"The best training course I have ever attended. The trainer was amazing. It was informative, emotional, educational, interesting...the session went by too quickly" (Staff training attendee, 104).

"I have always believed I had a good knowledge and understanding of the support available for members of the Armed Forces community however, this highlighted to me that there is lots out there that I am not aware of which I can now consider" (Staff training attendee, 085).

Section 4:

Findings - Evaluation of Action planning activities

The findings from the evaluation of the Action planning activities are presented in this section. These findings are structured around the results from Action plan outputs evaluation, the Action plan event process evaluation, and an evaluation of the Action plans regional consistency (see 2.3.2).

4.1 Action plan outputs impact evaluation findings

As a direct result of the activities delivered by the South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant project, the following Covenant Action plans have been produced:

1. Barnsley Armed Forces plan 2019
2. Doncaster Armed Forces and Veterans Community Covenant Action Plan 2019 – 2020
3. Rotherham Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan 2019- 2024
4. Sheffield Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan 2019-20
5. A regional South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan 2019- 2020

4.2 Action plan event process evaluation finding

From an analysis of the returned evaluation forms (n=57), the following findings are presented. See 2.4.2 for full details.

4.2.1 Augmenting collective ownership of the Action planning process (n=57)

70% of Covenant Action planning event attendees, who completed an evaluation form, reported a sense of collective ownership of the Action planning process as a direct result of participation in the facilitated Learning set sessions.

"Definitely- genuinely collective commitment from the group attending today"
(22/02 21).

"Yes- sense of commitment and ownership across the room" (12/11 01).

"Yes. It is important that we reach out from the existing forum to the other organisations who can contribute and have a role to play- a whole system approach" (23/11 01).

4.2.2 Enhancing connections between agencies (n=57)

88% of Covenant Action planning event attendees, who completed an evaluation form, reported meeting at least one new contact during the event or learning about a service,

agency or resource that supports the Armed Forces community that they did not know existed previously.

"We found out about parts of the Council we did not know were there!" (23/11 07).

"Today was a fantastic opportunity for networking and making links- lots of positive actions taking place that [my agency] can tap into" (14/11 04).

"I met someone from Royal Signals association- didn't know they existed before" (12/11

4.2.3 Raising the awareness of dedicated services

96% of Covenant Action planning event attendees, who completed an evaluation form, reflected that they felt the events activities had operated well in terms of raising local and regional awareness of dedicated AFC services available across the region.

"Great way to raise awareness of other services and organisations activities in the region and we have several common priority themes emerging too" (12/11 04).

"I met three agency people I'd never met before- Housing, Poppy factory and Project Nova" (01/11 01).

"Learning what everyone else is doing was really good" (22/02 21).

4.3 Action plan consistency evaluation

4.3.1 Regional event attendee evaluation findings

As part of the regional Action planning consistency event, each Council's Covenant area lead presented their Covenant Action plan to delegates across the region. 74% of attendees at the regional event (n= 23) who completed the evaluation form, reported this session as being an effective way of enhancing regional consistency in Action planning.

"Listening to others Action plans was an excellent opportunity to share ideas and good practice and was the most effective part of the day" (Event attendee, 22/02 01).

"The Q and A after the presentations of area plans was excellent" (Event attendee, 22/02 05).

"Trading [Action] plans was great- helped us work out how we sub-divide regional and local priorities" (Event attendee, 22/02 16).

The South Yorkshire regional Action Plan has been drafted around the six themes from the six themes from the Government's 'Veteran's Strategy'¹³. Each of the four local authorities in South Yorkshire have produced Covenant Action plans which are appropriately structured around locally agreed priorities. While Sheffield and Barnsley have largely adopted the six key Veteran strategy themes to structure their Covenant plans, Doncaster's Action Plan is structured via existing Council strategic planning reporting mechanism headings and Rotherham's plan is structured around the four key themes identified from their Action Planning workshop session, as demonstrated in the Action plan priority table below:

Figure 4.3.1: Action Plan - priorities

Barnsley	Doncaster	Rotherham	Sheffield
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Relationships • Employment, Education & Skills • Health and Well-being • Strategy and Governance, communication and capacity • Making a Home in Civilian Society • Veterans in the CJS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Equality • Performance and Monitoring • Housing • Health and Wellbeing • Education, children and Young people • Employment • Awareness and Training • Promotion and Communication • Events • Regional Work • Funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • Prioritise access to service based on need • Information exchange • Communication and engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Relationships • Employment, Education & Skills • Health and Well-being • Finance and Debt • Making a Home in Civilian Society • Veterans in the CJS

Each area has identified named leads for each themed activity, provided timescales and applied a RAG¹⁴ rating to these activities. The Barnsley plan has also included a section entitled "How will we know things are improving?" containing the beginnings of thinking around potentially effective performance measurement mechanisms.

In terms of Action plan content consistency, each of the four area plans cover similar ground and are compatible. Each area plan has content actions that involve aspirations of: alignment with all area strategies to include the needs of the Armed Forces community; communications and marketing strategies; the development of work areas to engage local employers and schools; and reviewing, extending or raising awareness processes around housing allocations. The Action plans are constant and adhere to the same principles, which once embedded into mainstream Covenant provision will result in members of the Armed Forces community receiving a similar offer wherever they live in South Yorkshire.

¹³ Her Majesty's Government, The Northern Ireland Office, The Scottish Government and Welsh Government (2018) The Strategy for our Veterans: Valued, Contributing, Supported SG/2018/236, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/755915/Strategy_for_our_Veterans_FINAL_08.11.18_WEB.pdf

¹⁴ RAG Rating in Project Management and Status Reports- the RAG system is a popular project management method for rating status reports. Basically, it's based on traffic lights using red, amber (yellow), and green to signify different scale ratings to identify activity status.

4.4 Action plans- good practice examples

In terms of enhancing consistency, the Action planning mapping exercise demonstrated good practice examples in area Action planning, which could easily be shared and replicated in other Covenant local authorities across South Yorkshire. Best practice examples are as follows:

Barnsley Armed Forces plan 2019

Strategy and Governance, communication and capacity- to include a review Covenant group TOR, training, funding, co-ordination of events and review of BMBC AFC website

Doncaster Armed Forces and Veterans Community Action Plan 2019 - 2020

Armed Forces eLearning Module to be made mandatory as part of induction at DMBC

Rotherham Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan 2019

To develop awareness training and practices around the Service Pupil Premium and service children with special Education needs

Sheffield Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan 2019-20

Work to align all of Sheffield's strategies (e.g. JSNA, HWB) with the work of the Covenant Action Group

Section 5:

The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant model

5.1 A regional community capacity building approach

The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant project model is a regional community capacity building approach to strengthening local government delivery of Covenant pledges. Whilst acknowledging political debates about what one defines as 'community' (e.g. Mowbray, 2005¹⁵), for the purpose of this project, we define community as an orientation for action. The project design was ultimately intended to facilitate a process of fostering assets, resources, and networking possibilities (Simpson et al., 2003¹⁶; Walter, 2007¹⁷) orientated around the Armed Forces community in South Yorkshire. In terms of adopting a community capacity building approach, we consider this South Yorkshire project as a regional co-ordination of human capital, organisational resources and social capital 'existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems, and improve or maintain the well-being of that community' (Chaskin, 2001¹⁸, p 295). In this way, the South Yorkshire model is underpinned by the commitment to promoting the capacity of local communities to develop, implement and sustain their own solutions in a way that helps them shape and exercise control over their physical, social, economic and cultural environments. Thus our South Yorkshire approach sought to foster a sense of ownership and empowerment, so that our community partners gain greater control over their own future development and strategy around Covenant Action planning for the Armed Forces community that live here.

5.2 The South Yorkshire Covenant model

The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant model is a regional community capacity building approach to strengthening the delivery of Covenant pledges. This model involved consultation with members of the community and key stakeholders in the region, a community survey-based research element, the delivery of military awareness training to frontline staff and the facilitation of Covenant Action planning activities. This report details the project activities conducted and their evaluation against project impact objectives. The graphic below illustrates the South Yorkshire model for strengthened local government delivery of the Covenant as a lasting and replicable legacy that will continue to have impact post project funding timescales.

¹⁵ Mowbray, M. (2005). Community capacity building or state opportunism? *Community Development Journal*, 40, 255-264.

¹⁶ Simpson, L., Wood, L., & Daws, L. (2003). Community capacity building: Starting with people not projects. *Community Development Journal*, 38, 277-286

¹⁷ Walter, C. L. (2007). Community building practice: A conceptual framework. In M. Minkler (Ed.), *Community organizing and community building for health* (2nd ed., pp. 66-78). Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

¹⁸ Chaskin, R. J. (2001). Building community capacity: A definitional framework and case studies from a comprehensive community initiative. *Urban Affairs Review*, 36, 291-323.

Figure 5.2: The South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant model: A regional community capacity building approach



5.3 Key project impact and outcome achievements

This report details the activities conducted for the South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant project. The evaluation of these activities demonstrates key successes in terms of impact, which are summarised here:

Raising the awareness of Covenant initiatives and dedicated services

Awareness of Armed Forces Covenant initiatives

- The evaluation of staff training demonstrated a significant impact on the awareness of the national Armed Forces Covenant, as the 48% of staff reporting having 'never heard' of the Covenant dropped to 3% post training attendance and the proportion of those reporting their awareness of the Covenant rose from 23% to 72%.
- The staff training also resulted in a significant rise in awareness of local Covenant initiatives, as the 34% of staff reporting being aware their Council had signed the Covenant was more than doubled to 70% after attending the training.

Awareness of dedicated services available

- The evaluation of Action planning activities demonstrated that 96% of Covenant Action planning event attendees reflected that they felt the events activities had operated well in terms of raising awareness of dedicated services available across the region.
- The staff training evaluation demonstrated a significant increase in the awareness of dedicated support services, as before attendance 43% of staff could identify 'five or more' dedicated services, while post training this proportion more than doubled to 89%.

Informing the work of front-line staff through military awareness training

- Findings from the evaluation of the staff training demonstrate an increase in the sense of being fully equipped to work with members of the Armed Forces community, as the proportion of front-line staff reporting feeling 'extremely' to

'relatively well' equipped to work with this community nearly doubled from 48% to 95%

- A significant increase in staff self-confidence was reported, as the proportion of staff reporting feeling 'extremely' to 'relatively confident' if faced with working with members of the Armed Forces community increased from 56% to 96%.
- 72% of staff reported having cascaded their learning from the training via a full staff briefing, meeting, training day or memo- thereby increasing the numbers of front line agency staff with an awareness of Armed Forces community related issues

The production of realistic, locally appropriate and consistent Covenant Action Plans

- As a direct result of the project activities delivered, realistic, locally appropriate and consistent Covenant Action plans have been delivered across the region and a regional South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan has been agreed.

Enhancing ownership and improvements in the connections between agencies

- 70% of Covenant Action planning event attendees reported a sense of collective ownership of the Action planning process as a direct result of participation in the facilitated Learning set sessions.
- 88% of Covenant Action planning event attendees reported meeting at least one new contact or learning about a service, agency or resource that they did not know existed previously.
- Of the staff having attended the training, more than half (55%) reported having met representatives from other relevant agencies as potentially useful contacts for their future work with this community.
- The Action planning events and Covenant conference have resulted in a more joined up and regionally strategic approach to addressing the needs of the Armed Forces community across South Yorkshire

5.4 Legacy of the South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant project

The South Yorkshire Covenant project was designed to have a lasting impact and replicable legacy beyond the project funding timescale. These project legacy aims have been achieved through:

- The presentation of the South Yorkshire's regional community capacity building approach to strengthening Covenant delivery pledges
- The South Yorkshire Covenant model was presented at the "Bringing the Armed Forces Covenant to life" conference held at York St John's University in June 2019
- The South Yorkshire Covenant project has attracted interest from other regions across the UK regarding the potential for replication and has received civil endorsement from Dan Jarvis MP, Mayor of Sheffield City Region
- The project has ensured that when members of the Armed Forces Community engage with community services across the region, front-line staff not only have

an understanding of the military journey for service personnel and their families,
they also have access to the wide range of support available

As a direct result of South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant project activities the region now has consistent local authority and regional Covenant Action Plans that can be used as a road map to strengthen the delivery of Covenant pledges for the Armed Forces community that live here.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Academic partnership organisational details



The Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice (HKCIJ)

The HKCIJ is a leading centre for social justice and human rights. It provides a vibrant environment at the cutting edge of legal and criminal justice practice, championing human rights and social justice. The centre is home to a range of social justice and human rights activities that include:

- innovation in teaching and education
- research and scholarship work
- international projects
- impact on policy
- professional training and advocacy

At the HKCIJ, our central values are those of widening access to justice and education, the promotion of human rights, ethics in legal practice, equality and a respect for human dignity in overcoming social injustice. Our involvement in this project demonstrates our commitment to research and scholarly activity concerning often marginalised and vulnerable populations, in order to challenge stigma and exclusion, and to enable communities to fulfil their potential.



Future Economies

The Future Economies Research Centre at Manchester Metropolitan University responds to policy challenges and both political and economic changes ranging from social and demographic changes, Brexit and devolution to mega-sporting events and trade governance. The fundamental question that sits at the heart of this research centre is “what are the future policy challenges that communities will face and how should business, policymakers and civil society respond?” Our academics answer this through scholarly research and close-working with businesses, public authorities and the voluntary sector to learn from practice and embed ourselves within the organisations responding to these challenges. Our inter-disciplinary approach, combining the fields of economics and political economy, means our world-leading scholarly outputs and our applied research are directly both leading and shaping policy and business change across Greater Manchester, the Northern Powerhouse, the United Kingdom and beyond.



The Faculty of Arts, Professional and Social Studies offer interdisciplinary research solutions to the challenges of the 21st Century. At the centre of all our activities is a commitment to the public health and well-being of communities, criminal and social policy for better service provision and support, community development, culture and society, evidence based practice, enhanced monitoring, and evaluation schema - developing and demonstrating impact and social value from investment and knowledge exchange beyond the university.

The Centre for the Study of Crime, Criminalisation and Social Exclusion (CCSE) is based in the School of Humanities and Social Science. It was established in 2010 to provide a space for critical, rigorous, interdisciplinary research and scholarship. It was and remains a space where academics and activists work together to share and disseminate ideas with respect to the study of crime, criminalisation, social harm and state institutions. The CCSE is also committed to critically engaging with policy makers and practitioners. These interventions are designed to influence social policy and to contribute to achieving social justice for a range of socially marginalised groups.



York St John University is a leading education, training and research institution that has been changing lives through learning since 1841. Founded on an ethos of equality, ambition and social justice, the University serves a global campus of students who thrive on academic excellence, graduate employability and a strong sense of community.

The Advantage is a dedicated team at York St John University, providing award-winning professional training and development opportunities. Proudly working collaboratively with a range of organisations, they deliver study days, workshops and short courses that are tailored to specialist professional requirements. 'The Military Human: Understanding Military Culture and Transition' Short course is offered as part of their Military Human CPD Series. The Advantage has been awarded a prestigious MoD Silver Employer Recognition Award for supporting teams across England and Wales who provide services for the Armed Forces community. This highlights the outstanding commitment of the team who deliver the Military Human CPD series.



Inspiration NW® and are an independent company who in terms of strategy and planning are experienced in delivering collaborative learning to synchronise and sustain continuous improvement. Inspiration NW is dedicated to raising the profile and importance of experience of care outcomes and to improving experience for both patients and staff by:-

- Building knowledge and insight of what matters
- Embedding a clear strategy and plans for improvement and sustainability
- Working with front line staff to develop behavioural competencies for experience
- Designing innovative approaches to measure and methods of experience with staff, patients and their communities