Executive Summary

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

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

Key Problems

The main dimensions which concerned the Armed Forces Community were:

1. Housing
2. Education
3. Healthcare
4. Employment

Housing

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

- Providing support and accommodation advice to service personnel.
- Collaborating with District and Borough housing teams which provided support and advice about accommodation for Veterans and their families.

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

Education

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

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

Educational Exclusion: For those young people who are absent from School, are more likely to be Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET): the cost of becoming NEET to the State is significant - between £97,000 and £300,000.1

Awareness Day

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1. Cost of NEET to the State = £97,000 and £300,000.
Healthcare

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

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

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

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

Transitioning

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

To better understand this, the AFC are undertaking research into employment and training needs. Moreover, they provided career advice and identified job opportunities for service leavers and family members.

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

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

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Veterans

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

Health and social care services
Substance misuse
Mental health issues

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

Partners

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

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

Attended relevant training courses
Awareness-raising events
Ensured the County AFC website is relevant and up to date

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

Modules are now provided including:

- The Armed Forces Covenant for frontline staff in statutory and voluntary organisations
- Housing, Homelessness and the Armed Forces Covenant
- The Armed Forces Covenant for Armed Forces personnel
- The Armed Forces Covenant for families of Armed Forces personnel
- Adjusting to life after the Armed Forces.

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

Sources


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


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

8. This is based upon an adult aged over 25 years of age, working a 37-hour week and earning the minimum wage of £8.21/hour. Therefore, the minimum loss in income tax is £669.21, the minimum loss in NI is £859.68, and the minimum payment out in welfare benefits is £3,801.20, equating to a total of £5,320.09.

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