



Doncaster
Council



Armed Forces and Veterans

Annual Report

April 2021 – March 2022

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FOREWORD FROM DONCASTER'S ARMED FORCES CHAMPION – CLLR MARK HOULBROOK

The Doncaster Armed Forces and Veterans Steering Group network has successfully navigated another challenging year and continues to deliver an effective and cohesive suite of support for our armed forces, veterans and their families.

I have had the honour in my role as Armed Forces and Veterans Champion to participate in some excellent partnership work for raising awareness, collaborating and recognition for our forces in Doncaster over the last year. These include, the Opening of the Museum and dedicated display for the King Own Light Infantry, Minden Day, REME 30th Anniversary, Freedom of the borough for the Coldstream Guards, Employee Recognition Gold Awards, Royal Forces Cadets Association Awards, Annual General meetings for charities and organisation supporting our local forces and veterans, a visit to Wellington Barracks and connecting with Doncaster Gurkhas.

I am proud of all the fantastic achievements of every member of the network. 2022 is an important year for commemorations, such as the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the 40th anniversary of the Falklands conflict and of course the annual delivery of Armed Forces Day. With this in mind it is vital that we continue to recognise the personal sacrifices made by our armed forces personnel and their families and to celebrate them as valued members of our communities here in Doncaster.

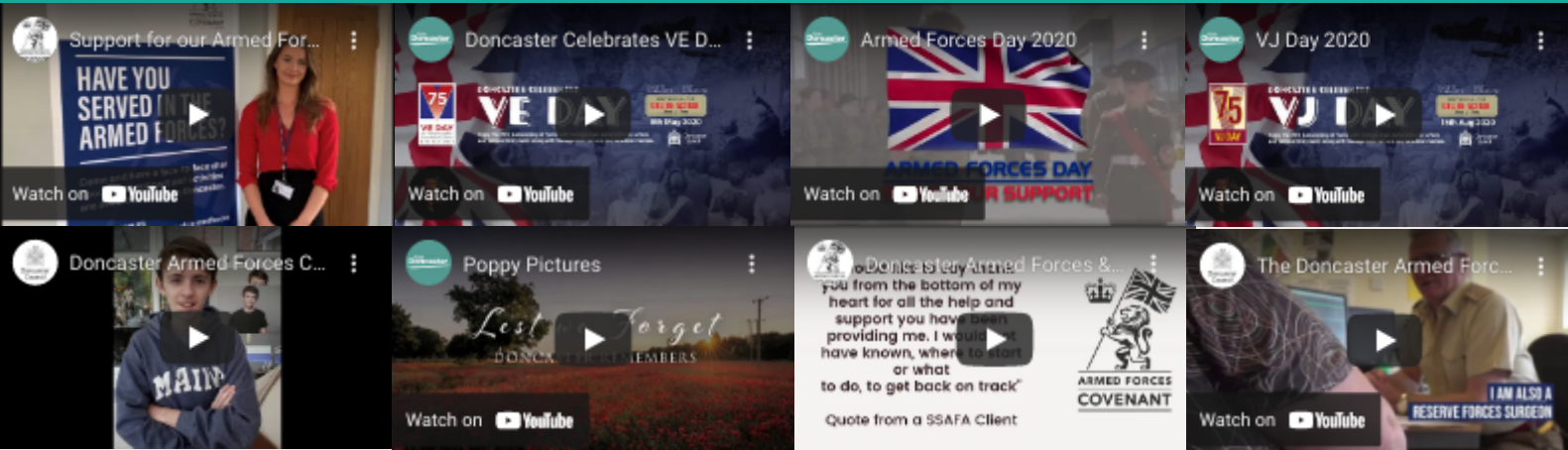
I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my deepest sympathy to the brave people of Ukraine, as we all hope for a swift and peaceful resolution





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Virtual Drop In Sessions now available for the armed forces community



Doncaster Council

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Doncaster Armed Forces and Veterans

VISION

The Armed Forces and Veterans Steering Group was established with the purpose of identifying key issues across partnerships affecting the Armed Forces Community and work together to ensure that these are challenged and changed.

Recognition

Doncaster is seen as best practice regionally in its coordination of support to the Armed Forces Community

Support

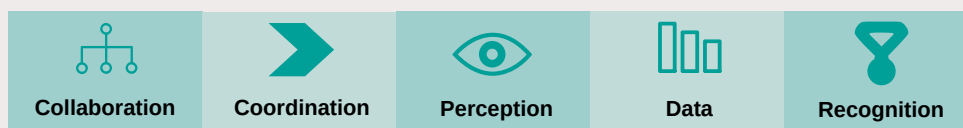
Doncaster Armed Forces and Veterans Steering Group have supported over 2000 members of Doncaster's armed forces

Collaboration

Two regional partnerships have continued throughout the year with significant progress and developments

CROSS-CUTTING FACTORS

That affect service provision for Veterans across all Key Themes



KEY THEMES

That emerged as affecting Veterans' lives



Community and relationships

319 veterans identified and supported by Doncaster Council Communities teams

The Veterans Support Officer role has been vital in driving the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant in Doncaster

Sheffield Mind have provided three community groups, a craft group, book club and peer support group for Veteran Families

"Thank you so much for the support, I did not realise the services that were out there, you have made such a difference."

Quote from a DMBC Communities Wellbeing Team Client



Employment, education and skills

295 Children accessing Service Pupil Premium across 80 Doncaster Schools

39 Doncaster Businesses have now signed the Armed Forces Covenant

Doncaster Council were awarded £16,000 by the Sheffield City Region to support homeless veterans with individual innovative support

"I can't believe you have done all this for me and so quickly, thank you so much, you will never know what this means to me."

Quote from a Royal British Legion client



Finance and debt

The Royal British Legion supported 220 new cases with 40 of these cases in crisis

Citizens Advice Bureau are now an active partner of the steering group, working collaboratively to address the issues affecting veterans and their families

"Thank you so much for helping me find a home for me and my family, I really could not have done it without you"

Quote from a St Leger Homes Client



Health and wellbeing

RDASH have continued to support the development of the High Intensity Service and are developing plans for their journey to Gold Armed Forces Covenant accreditation

Keeping Families In Mind supported in excess of 52 military families by providing 525 hours of therapy over the past year.

Over 25% of GP practices in Doncaster are now Veterans Friendly accredited practices



Housing

16 Veteran families were rehoused of which 4 were in the Platinum band. 82 members of the Armed forces community on the housing register.

The Help 4 Homeless Veterans (H4HV) charity has continued to deliver their services throughout the pandemic

RBL supported 45 cases with housing issues as primary area of need



Veterans and the law

Project Nova continues to work with and support all veterans in the South Yorkshire and Humberside area .

SYP have an appointed single point of contact within the force for Doncaster

Committed representative from HMP working with veterans across the Doncaster Borough

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between the people of Doncaster and our local Armed Forces Community. The Covenant ensures that the Armed Forces community face no disadvantage when it comes to accessing support and services around housing, health, education, employment and welfare and that special consideration is given where appropriate, particularly to those who have given the most.

Throughout the last 12 months, the delivery of the Doncaster Armed Forces and Veterans Steering Group (DAFVSG) has been strengthened through the introduction of new members and consistent communication centred around collaborative working and co-promotion of services.

Collaboratively, the Doncaster Armed Forces and Veterans Steering Group have supported over 2000 members of Doncaster's armed forces community in relation to a variety of needs such as housing, homelessness, mental health, wellbeing and employment

The partnership will continue to be delivered into 2022-2023, with a refreshed action plan focusing on the key themes outlined in the new Armed Forces Covenant duty which is due to be formalised towards the end of the year.

Doncaster Council continue to help shape the new National Legislation and have prepared for its implementation by producing literature to be shared with internal colleagues and external partners that highlights the implications of the new covenant duty and how these will look on a localised level.

The two regional partnerships have continued throughout 2021-2022 and significant progress and developments have been made across the South Yorkshire region. We have continued to adhere to a joint action plan which also aligns with the key priorities laid out in the new Armed Forces Covenant Duty.

2. INTRODUCING THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT – OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation to ensure that they face no disadvantage when it comes to accessing public and commercial services. It is a statement of our intent to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in Doncaster and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by its members, particularly those who have given the most. This includes those currently serving, those who have served, and their families.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Doncaster provides a strong recruiting ground for the Armed Forces, and is also thought to attract significant numbers of ex-service personnel who come to the borough to live. It is suggested that approximately 10% of Doncaster's population of 300,000 could be members of the Armed Forces Community.

The DAFVSG brings together key representatives from a range of organisations and services that support Doncaster's Armed Forces Community, to identify key issues affecting the Armed Forces community and to work together to ensure that these are challenged and changed. Organisations and services that are part of the DAFVSG all support the Armed Forces Community with representatives attending from a wide range of organisations including health, housing, leisure, public services and armed forces charities. The partnership is continually developing and refreshing its membership, welcoming any organisation or service that supports the Armed Forces Community to become part of the group.

*"In Doncaster we have a large number of both serving and veteran Armed Forces personnel. We are proud to support them and their families, they serve us so we must honour them". - **Quote from the Mayor of Doncaster, Ros Jones***

3. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS – THE COVENANT REFLECTED

The delivery of the DAFVSG has continued throughout the last year adapting to the gradual easing of COVID restrictions. Meetings have remained virtual to afford all partners the opportunity to attend with minimal impact on their day to day duties in their respective roles. The dedicated action plan has enabled the group to have a clear direction and be able drive the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant forward, achieving key actions outlined in the plan.

Doncaster Council has continued to co-ordinate these meetings to help in maintaining a consistency and clarity of information. The partnership has allowed organisations to effectively share information, and access support and best practice easily in order to best support the Doncaster Community. Throughout 2022-2023, meetings will become more frequent to allow the steering group to focus on the key themes and priorities laid out in the new Armed Forces Covenant Duty which is due to be passed through parliament towards the end of 2022.





3.1 COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

Doncaster Council Communities Teams

Over the last year Doncaster Council communities teams have identified and supported 319 Veterans across Doncaster. The communities teams have adapted throughout the past year, seeking new and innovative ways of delivering community led support alongside military charities such as SSAFA, The Royal British Legion and Project Nova.

The Veterans Support Officer role has been vital in driving the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant in Doncaster, as well as ensuring consistency through the regional projects with other local authorities. To further highlight Doncaster's commitment to the armed forces community and their families, the Veteran Support Officer role is no longer a funded post but instead is now a permanent fixture in the Doncaster Council team.

"Thank you so much for the support, I did not realise the services that were out there, you have made such a difference."

Quote from a Doncaster Council Communities Wellbeing Team Client



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ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club

The Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club (AFVBC) is an international initiative that encourages veterans to come together and reminisce on their time in the forces. Their involvement subsequently reduces their social isolation and gives them a sense of belonging, which many of them lost when they left the forces. There is currently one active breakfast club in Doncaster.

The Breakfast Club was established four years ago by local residents who served in the Armed Forces. The Doncaster Council Communities Team identified the Breakfast Club as a growing network of Armed Forces Community members that they could engage with; to support and guide them in becoming an established, self-sufficient community group. The team used their community Facebook page and other online platforms, in particular the Your Life Doncaster website to promote the group and encourage other Armed Forces Community members to attend. This resulted in a significant increase in the clubs membership.

The Royal British Legion

The Royal British Legion took on 220 new cases with the reporting period in South Yorkshire. 40 of those cases came to them in crisis meaning they were either homeless, had no food, no clothes, no gas or electric or in many cases all of these.

Housing has been a prevalent issue which is appears to be intensifying year on year. They have had 45 cases where housing issues has been the primary area of need. Royal British Legion are seeing the issues and stresses around housing having a very negative impact on the mental health of their beneficiaries.

“I can’t believe you have done all this for me and so quickly, thank you so much, you will never know what this means to me.”

Quote from a Royal British Legion client



3.2 Finance and Debt

Whilst all partners within the Doncaster Armed Forces Veterans Steering Group provide advice, support and signposting around finance and debt, below are some examples of this in practice.

Citizens Advice Bureau

The Citizens Advice Bureau in Doncaster provide excellent support to members of the Armed Forces Community particularly with financial issues. The team are able to assist with issues such as benefits, debt management and the law surrounding family, health and immigration.

The Doncaster Citizens Advice Bureau joined the Doncaster Armed Forces and Veterans Steering Group in 2021, agreeing to add veteran markers to their internal systems to monitor engagement and feed this data into the wider Doncaster armed forces picture. They now also attend steering group meetings to discuss the issues affecting veterans and their families and collaboratively these can be best managed and supported.

"I'm so thankful for all the advice and support you have given me, calling the Citizens Advice Bureau have turned my life around"

- Quote from a Citizens Advice Bureau Client

Doncaster Homeless Veterans Wellbeing Fund

Doncaster Council were awarded just over £16,000 by the Sheffield City Region in order to support homeless veterans in the community. The Veterans Innovation fund is used to provide individual innovative support to help either sustain housing tenancy, prevent homelessness or to support a homeless Veteran back into housing provision. The Veterans Innovation Fund will be available through 2022 to purchase items, to support sustainability in housing.



3.3 Health and Wellbeing

Sheffield Mind's Keeping Families in Mind Service

Sheffield Mind's Keeping Families in Mind Service (KFIM) is a service for families of serving and veteran personnel, including parents, partners, siblings, grandparents and children and other family members over the age of 18. The service provides free counselling with a qualified therapists and alternative support options for the whole of South Yorkshire including Sheffield, Doncaster, Rotherham and Barnsley. From the beginning of April 2021, KFIM have responded to the reduction in Covid restrictions in a way that is meaningful for the individuals using their services by adapting a blended approach, to help support the accessibility of our service provision.

They have maintained telephone and video counselling as well as returning to face to face services. In total, KFIM have supported in excess of 52 military families by providing 525 hours of therapy over the past year. They have continued to provide three community groups, a craft group, book club and peer support group and recently launched a new monthly Yoga group. The book club and peer support groups have continued via video calls, in response to the needs for our members. The craft group has returned to the community with great success resulting in the group being increase from one group to two sessions per month.

Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust (RDASH)

Rotherham Doncaster and South Humber NHS Foundation Trust continue to value their place on the Doncaster Armed Forces Steering Group and remain committed to supporting developments for the Armed Forces Community in Doncaster. Over the last 12 months, they have continued to support the roll out and development of the High Intensity Service and have begun to develop plans for their journey to Gold Armed Forces Covenant accreditation. Moving into 2022/23 the focus will be assessing our response to the changing Armed Forces Covenant Statutory Duty and translating this into actionable development opportunities.

Doncaster CCG– ‘Veteran Aware’ Accreditation

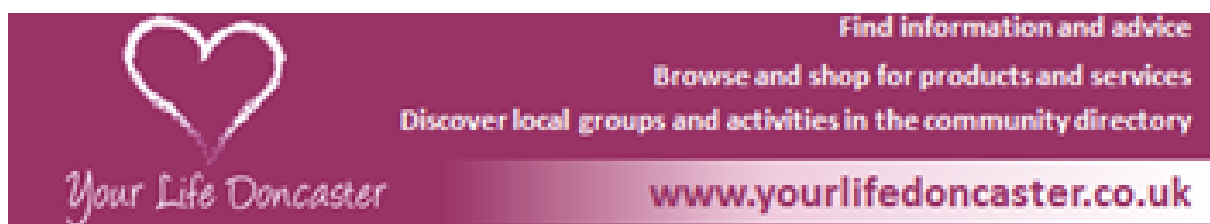
The Veteran Friendly GP Practice accreditation scheme supports practices to deliver the best possible care and treatment for patients who have served in the Armed Forces. It also provides important reassurance to veterans that a practice understands their specific health needs and can support them.

Over 25% of GP practices in Doncaster and more than 1100 practices nationally are now accredited through the scheme. Accredited practices pledge to:

- Actively identify and record veterans utilising their practice so that they receive the appropriate care relevant to their needs.
- Ensure that members of the armed forces community face no disadvantage compared to other patients when seeking healthcare for them or their families.
- Providing training to all frontline staff around military culture and veteran specific health conditions.
- Making both staff and patients aware of statutory and non-statutory support services available to the armed forces community.

The Doncaster Armed Forces and Veterans Steering Group continue to work collaboratively with the Clinical Commissioning Group to raise awareness and promote the benefits of the accreditation to practitioners

www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/ArmedForces



The banner features a white heart outline on a dark red background. To the right of the heart, there are three lines of white text: 'Find information and advice', 'Browse and shop for products and services', and 'Discover local groups and activities in the community directory'. Below the heart, the text 'Your Life Doncaster' is written in a white script font. At the bottom right, the website address 'www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk' is displayed in a white sans-serif font.



3.4 Housing

St Leger Homes

St Leger homes offer platinum priority banding for those who; have left the Armed Forces that have a housing need within 5 years of discharge; are injured or disabled needing urgent rehousing; bereaved spouses or civil partners who are no longer entitled to reside in MoD accommodation. Applicants that are; members of the armed forces/former service personnel, where the application is made within 5 years of discharge; bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the armed forces leaving family accommodation are exempt from the Local Connection Criteria.

In 21/22 16 applicants who indicated yes to the Armed Forces question were rehoused of which 4 were in the Platinum band. As of April 1st 2022 there were 82 applicants on the Housing Register who answered yes to the Armed Forces question of which 3 are in the Platinum band.

"Thank you so much for helping me find a home for me and my family, I really could not have done it without you"

Quote from a St Leger Homes Client

South Yorkshire Housing Association

South Yorkshire Housing are now pleased to confirm the launch of Working Win. Working Win is a support service for people who want to find employment, who are off sick from work, or struggling to stay in their job role. The service supports people living in South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw with mild or moderate mental health conditions and or physical health conditions to find or stay in work and referrals are open until 31st May 2022. The service has now supported more than 4,000 people to either find or stay in work. Clients receive one-to-one support from a dedicated employment specialist around job searching, CV writing and interview skills.

Help 4 Homeless Veterans

The Help 4 Homeless Veterans (H4HV) charity has continued to deliver their services throughout the pandemic. The charity has been successful with numerous funding applications which have been used to enable the continuous delivery of their support and services. The Veterans Foundation has been a major supporter of this work and in January 2022 made a further grant to assist them with their core work. H4HV's new project, that of the Therapy Farm for Veterans is gaining momentum and all veterans are encouraged to book a free day out. The number of veterans they have supported has once again exceeded what was traditionally an annual average of 50 and last year's record of 90. The Charity Founder Tom Wood was awarded the MBE and received it from the Lord Lieutenant of South Yorkshire last Summer for his work supporting homeless veterans throughout the pandemic.

*"I would like to thank everyone at help 4 homeless Veterans
Without your support I would still be homeless thanks so much for
your support in my time of need" - **Quote from a Help 4 Homeless
Veterans Client***





3.5 Veterans and the Law

Project Nova

Project Nova, delivered in partnership between RFEA – The Forces Employment Charity and Walking With The Wounded, is there to offer help to those who have been arrested and enter Police Custody. It also supports veterans who have self-referred or been referred by specialist Police teams or other statutory organisations, because they are at risk of arrest. The scheme was launched in 2014 and currently operates across South Yorkshire and Humberside, the North East, North West, Midlands, South West and East of England.

Project Nova caseworkers understand the experiences of ex-servicemen and women both during and after their military careers – empathy which gives veterans the strength they need to make changes to their lives and access support through health and specialist services.

'I urge anyone to work with Project Nova, they have turned my life the right side up again and it's the first time in twenty years I've been this balanced and secure.'

- Quote from Project Nova Client

South Yorkshire Police

South Yorkshire Police have an appointed single point of contact (SPOC) within the force for Doncaster who ensures continuity and drive for the Armed Forces work in Doncaster and works one to one with veterans and undertakes cell interventions with veterans in custody.

The South Yorkshire Police SPOC continues to develop the knowledge and confidence of colleagues around working with members of the Armed Forces Community. A key achievement within this difficult year has been that all new students entering into South Yorkshire Police undergo mandatory training around the Armed Forces Covenant and are required to support and refer veterans they come across to the appropriate agencies as part of their duty.

4. Regional Projects

4.1 South Yorkshire Region

Doncaster is a member of the South Yorkshire regional partnership network appointed officers and elected members from Barnsley, Sheffield and Rotherham

Research

In 2021 Homeless Link and Stoll worked together alongside the South Yorkshire Armed Forces Covenant Group, in order to strengthen the local government delivery of the national Armed Forces Covenant. The South Yorkshire Covenant Group identified that veterans may be underreported in the monitoring data of homelessness services across the region, therefore a review was commissioned to ensure homelessness services are identifying and responding to the needs of veterans and their families appropriately.

From this review, Doncaster Council, in partnership with the Sheffield City Region (SCR), launched The Veterans Innovation fund, used to provide individual innovative support to help either sustain housing tenancy, prevent homelessness or to support a homeless veteran. Individuals or organisations can apply for grants of up to £250 to facilitate the purchase of items to support sustainability in housing.



4.2 Hull Region

Doncaster is a member of the Hull regional partnership network with Hull, East Riding, North and North East Lincolnshire.

The Armed Forces Act 2021 further enshrines the Armed Forces Covenant into law to help prevent service personnel and veterans being disadvantaged when accessing public services. All councils have voluntarily signed the Armed Forces Covenant. The further enshrinement of the Covenant into law is an opportunity to build upon the work Doncaster Council is already leading to help serving personnel, reservists, veterans, and their families to have the same equality of access to public services as their civilian neighbours. This includes the areas of focus in the Act – housing, education and healthcare.

The Hull partnership continues to work together to ensure the legislation is appropriately interpreted at a localised level and that our respective local authorities have made the necessary preparations to implement the new Armed Forces Covenant Duty in 2022-2023



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Future Focus 2022-23

- Re-align the Doncaster Armed Forces and Veterans Steering Group with the themes laid out in the Armed Forces Covenant
- More frequent DAFVSG meetings and thematic sub-groups working towards specific priorities
- Support partners in becoming ERS Bronze, Silver and Gold award holders

Doncaster Network

DMBC Internally

- Focus internally on the promotion of support services available to veterans and their families
- To refresh the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- To prepare internal teams for the impending changes to the Armed Forces Covenant Duty
- Continue to deliver Veterans Aware training to all new members of staff

- Develop and deliver a formalised communication plan to support the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant
- To utilise our virtual platforms cohesively to raise awareness of support available to the armed forces community

Our Communication

Regionally

- Collaboratively seek out and apply for funding to support the delivery of Armed Forces Covenant regionally.
- Continue to share best practice, and success stories to influence the development of partner organisations.
- Evaluate and respond cohesively to any changes in legislation or guidance to ensure a consistent approach