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ARMED FORCES COVENANT PROJECT HIGHLAND AND MORAY



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Executive Summary

The Community Covenant was signed by Highland Council in 2012 to show its commitment to the Armed Forces (AF) community in Highland. The AF Covenant Project (Highland and Moray) was funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund to employ a project officer for 2-years to review and improve local authority service delivery for this community. The outcomes set in the funding application have either been completed or are still in progress as some have been adapted as the project has evolved. Whilst much has been achieved, opportunities to support the community continue to present themselves. Therefore, and with a clear continuing need to support both councils and the AF and veteran community, the overriding recommendation to be considered would be to establish a permanent Armed Forces and veteran liaison officer for the regions: this would be wholly in line with the endeavour of Scottish Government to make Scotland a destination of choice for this community.

Introduction

1. The AF Covenant is the nation's pledge to ensure that serving military personnel, those who have served, and their families are treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they have served.
2. Each year the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust identifies programmes to address specific areas of need. In 2016 the Trust launched a programme of funding to 'Strengthen local delivery of the Covenant' with the aim of helping local authorities to deliver their Community Covenant pledge. Highland and Moray Councils received a grant to develop the AF Covenant Project (Highland and Moray).
3. Although a joint application between Highland and Moray Council, the delivery of the project was specific to each, and thus the content of project was driven by the distinct geographical and operational differences between the two local authorities. This report will focus on delivery for Highland Council. It will provide background on the development of the project; lay out the five outcomes identified in the funding

application and how each of these were addressed: it will offer recommendations for future actions.

Background

The Covenant

4. The AF Covenant pledges that:
 - a. no member of the AF (AF) community should face disadvantage compared to other citizens when accessing public and commercial services; and
 - b. in some circumstances special consideration may be appropriate, especially for the injured and bereaved.

5. Highland Council signed the Community Covenant (now called the AF Covenant) in 2012, pledging to support the AF community in Highland across five key areas: economy, children and young people, caring communities, housing and empowering communities. Community Covenant partners are drawn from a range of statutory, military and third sector organisations. As one of Highland's largest employers, Highland Council signed the Covenant in 2018 to show they are a forces-friendly employer. Currently holding silver in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Employer Recognition Scheme, Highland Council is working to meet criteria to gain gold award.

6. In 2016 the Scottish Government's [Renewing our Commitments](#) to the AF community re-affirmed that it is:

'committed to ensuring that no member of the AF, Service family member or veteran in Scotland faces disadvantage when accessing services'¹

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/corporate-report/2016/02/renewing-commitments/documents/renewing-commitments/renewing-commitments/govscot%3Adocument>

7. A key aim of the Scottish Government is to make Scotland a destination of choice for veterans and their families, recognising the skills and experience the cohort brings.

8. To support them in this endeavour, the Scottish Veterans' Commissioner gives impartial advice on how to improve support for the veterans' community and is an ambassador for all veterans in Scotland. The post is independent of the Scottish Government and produces reports and recommendations for the government and other public sector organisations on matters veteran.

AF Covenant Fund Trust

9. To support organisations to deliver the Covenant, the [AF Covenant Fund Trust](#) provides funding for a wide range of projects at national and local levels. In 2017, a partnership between Highland and Moray Council successfully bid for a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund under "Priority 3: Strengthening of Local Government delivery of the Covenant". This project was designed with 5 key outcomes to ensure the principles of the Covenant are better understood and established throughout the region. As part of the project a further grant was awarded to develop a website for the AF community in Highland and Moray.

The AF Community

10. Before joining the military, a person is a civilian and on completion of service they will once again become a civilian. Most will spend more of their working life as a civilian – the average age of a service leaver is 29 years, and only 1% of military personnel will complete a full 22-year career. By 2028 almost half of veterans will be of working age². The majority of serving personnel transition from military to civilian life with little or no difficulty, but a significant minority experience challenges, often complex, that will require support. A particularly vulnerable group are early service leavers who have completed less than 4 years' service.

² <https://scottishveteranscommissioner.org/positive-futures/>

11. Military service has unique characteristics that can impact on the lives of serving personnel and their families. It has many positive influences such as the support that comes with being part of a large 'family', job security and comradeship. However, there can be adverse effects including physical and mental health conditions which may affect not only the serving person but also their family. Understanding how service life is different can help those that work with the community to ensure they receive the most appropriate and timely support.

12. The AF community comprises:

- a. Regular
- b. Reserve
- c. Ex-service (veterans)
- d. Merchant Navy in support of operations
- e. National Service
- f. Families of all above

13. A veteran is someone who has left AF having completed at least one day's service, so could be an 80-year old WW veteran or 16-year old who didn't complete training. The terms 'ex- service', 'ex-military', 'ex-forces' are interchangeable with veteran. For the purpose of this report the term veteran will be used. Most males currently over 75 will be classed as veterans having completed a period of National Service.

14. Highland has a long and proud tradition of supporting the AF community being an important recruitment area for the Army for many years. The Royal Regiment of Scotland (SCOTS) was formed in 2006 to amalgamate the many famous regiments of Scotland, many of which have their origins in Highland. Consequently, Highland has a considerable veteran community as service leavers often return to their home area. In 2016, Veterans Scotland estimated that a total of 11504 veterans lived in Highland.

15. Highland is home to one regular Army unit (3 SCOTS at Fort George) and 7 SCOTS Reserves based in Inverness. In total there are 8 reserve units across

Highland and Moray and although not strictly part of the AF community there are also 34 Army Cadet Units, 9 Air Force Cadet Units and 6 Sea Cadet Units across the region. A list of all units is at [Appendix 1](#). The Highland Council has a strong working relationship with these units and with local veteran and cadet organisations.

Highland AF & Veterans Community Covenant Partnership (HAFVCCP)

16. Formerly known as the Highland Community Covenant Partnership, the HAFVCCP brings together stakeholders from across Highland and in some cases Scotland. It works to support the AF community in Highland by ensuring the delivery of services pays due regard to the Covenant principles, and addresses identified needs and issues. It meets twice a year and has the following membership:

- a.* Highland Council departments (Housing, Promoting Positive Relationships, Inverness Central Ward)
- b.* 3 SCOTS and 7 SCOTS
- c.* DWP
- d.* SDS
- e.* Police Scotland
- f.* Scottish Fire & Rescue Service
- g.* NHS Highland
- h.* UHI
- i.* HIE
- j.* Armed Services Advice Project (part of CAB)
- k.* PoppyScotland
- l.* Royal British Legion
- m.* Royal Caledonian Education Trust
- n.* Veterans Scotland.

AF Champions

17. AF Champions are appointed in a range of organisations to act as ambassadors for the local AF community and to promote awareness and understanding of the Covenant. The current Champion for Highland Council is

Councillor Roddy Balfour who acts as a focal point for matters relating to the community in Highland, and he aims to ensure that Highland Council applies the principles of the Covenant and helps to resolve any issues.

18. Other organisations that have AF Champions are listed in Veterans Scotland's Information Guide and include:

- a. NHS.
- b. DWP.
- c. Police Scotland.
- d. Scottish Prison Service.
- e. Skills Development Scotland.
- f. Citizens Advice Bureau through its Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP).

19. Highland Council has an AF Lead Officer who has responsibility for matters pertaining to the community and the Council's consideration of the principles of the Covenant in delivery of services.

The Project

20. The project's aim was to ensure Highland Council applied the principles of the AF Covenant to its delivery of services for the local AF community. Five key outcomes were identified in the funding application.

Outcome 1

With a clear understanding of the locations, nature and needs of their AF communities, partners will be better placed to tailor their own service provision to fit identified needs.

21. The initial part of the project concentrated on a desktop review of Highland Council policies as they pertained to the community, available data sources, and

needs of the AF community as identified by meeting with members of the community and wide range of stakeholders in Highland.

Policy Review

22. The AF community may require access to several local authority services but particularly housing, education and health and social care. The level of support will depend on the status of person, i.e., service leaver, family member, veteran, and on the individual needs of the person. As with anyone from the civilian community, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution and each case should be addressed on an individual basis.

Housing

23. Access to housing is one of the key determinants of a successful transition for a service-leaver. Ideally with in-service support through the MoD's [Careers Transition Partnership](#) service leavers will have planned where they're going to live with the best housing option that fits their needs and income. There's still some misconception amongst serving personnel that the Covenant entitles priority to social housing. This myth's gradually being dispelled but can lead to some individuals not finding somewhere to live in time for their discharge, potentially facing homelessness as a result.

24. For applications to social housing, Highland housing policy supports service leavers by awarding additional points for recent service leavers in its [Highland Housing Register Allocations Policy](#)

*In line with Scottish Government Guidance ex-service personnel who are leaving or have just left AF will be awarded **20 points** regardless of whether they have a need to reside.³*

³ https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/3066/highland_housing_register_allocations_policy

25. The policy also awards an additional 10 points for applicants moving from HM forces accommodation.

26. Highland Council's housing service monitors the social housing register to identify applications from serving personnel and veterans. In September 2019 there were 18 serving personnel and 28 veterans on the list in the Inverness area.

27. As part of its commitment to supporting veterans in Highland a 'Homes for Heroes' development has been built in Balloan Road, Inverness. A further collaboration between Albyn Housing Society and Homes for Heroes to develop a second site of housing for veterans is receiving funding support from the Inverness and Highland City-Region deal.

28. Highland Council has ensured that it has adapted its housing policies and procedures to ensure that members of the AF community do not experience disadvantage when applying for social housing. Including provision for housing for veterans in its strategic housing plan shows an ongoing commitment to the community.

Education

29. Children and young people (C&YP) from AF families are afforded many opportunities and positive experiences that otherwise they may not have. They build resilience, adaptability, flexibility, skills, knowledge and understanding that comes with meeting people from varied backgrounds and cultures. However, there are also challenges brought about by frequent mobility of the family moving between different countries and different education systems, and long periods of family separation during training and operational deployments. As such, AF children in Scotland are recognised as a community that may have Additional Support Needs at times.

30. Highland Council's Promoting Positive Relationships team received funding from the MoD Education Support Fund to support C&YP from the AF community living in Highland. The funding was used to employ a Co-ordinator and lead for military liaison for AF families. The Military Liaison Group (Education), established by

the co-ordinator, supports the AF C&YP in an educational context. It provides a forum which brings together representatives from 3 SCOTS, 7 SCOTS, primary mental health, Poppyscotland, Royal Caledonian Education Trust, SDS, High Life Highland and head teachers to provide additional support for the children.

Information can be found on Highland Council's website through [AF: support for families and schools](#).

31. It is important to note that some C&YP of veterans can experience challenges even if their parents are no longer serving; parental mental health issues and associated challenges may not emerge until many years after the end of service.

32. Reservists and their families will live in the civilian community. The reservist may be exposed to many of the same challenges experienced by regular forces; however, the family may not have access to the wrap-around support and networks that are available to the families of regular service personnel. This can lead to a sense of isolation during mobilisation with consequent effects on the C&YP.

33. Highland Council's unique approach to supporting the C&YP from the AF community is being recognised as a good practice model for local authorities and is working to remove disadvantage as a result of their parent's military service.

Health and social care

34. The primary responsibility for health and social care for adults in Highland lies with NHS Highland. However due to the close working partnership with the Council, there are many areas where service provision overlaps. It is therefore important to understand some of the challenges that the AF community face in respect of health and social care.

35. Serving personnel, including reservists on training or mobilisation, receive full medical care through the Defence Medical Service. Their families access health and social care through NHS Highland and Highland Council services.

36. Situations where AF families may experience disadvantage as a result of service include:

a. Continuity of care. Families may move between different NHS regions on posting. Criteria for treatment for medical conditions can differ between regions which may result in not being able to access continued treatment in the receiving area.

b. Waiting lists. Moving between NHS regions can result in patients on medical waiting lists being put to the bottom of an equivalent list when moving to a new area. To negate this, they should be put at an equivalent place on the receiving waiting list. Unfortunately, this doesn't always happen due to lack of awareness of the Covenant principles.

c. Eligibility for treatment. Patients that qualify for a service in one NHS region may not be entitled in another area, for example, fertility treatment. This can lead to distress and anxiety and may ultimately mean a family choosing to live apart to facilitate access to treatment in their current place of residence.

37. Veterans access healthcare through the NHS. Any physical or mental health condition that is a result of their service entitles a veteran to priority treatment through the NHS, subject to clinical need. This relies on a person disclosing their service status when registering with a GP and an understanding of the Covenant commitment by primary and secondary healthcare providers. Some veterans, particularly those who completed national service (most males over 75), do not realise or consider themselves a veteran so may not disclose their AF status.

38. The Scottish Veterans Commissioner's report on Veterans' Health and Wellbeing: A Distinctive Scottish Approach⁴ provides an in-depth review of this

⁴ www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/research-and-analysis/2018/04/veterans-health-wellbeing-distinctive-scottish-approach/documents/00534530-pdf/00534530-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/00534530.pdf

subject and makes a series of recommendations on actions that could be implemented to improve services for veterans.

39. Registration with a GP, on hospital admission or on accessing specialist medical services, provides an ideal opportunity to identify if a person is from the AF community which may have implications for their treatment. GP registration forms ask if the person registering is a veteran or family member of someone currently serving. However, there does not appear to be a consistent approach to how this information is used and difficulties exist in sharing information between primary and secondary health care providers as well as with other agencies.

40. NHS Highland has received LIBOR funding for an AF and Veterans project, and this will hopefully create opportunities to address some of the health and social care issues above.

Data on AF community in Highland

41. To target services and resources for the AF community, it is necessary to identify where they live. The MoD provides statistics on a variety of topics relating to the serving and veteran population however, data on the location of the entire veteran community is limited.

42. *Figure 1* shows military veterans resident in Scotland based on an assumption of 55,000 veterans aged 26-65 in 2011.

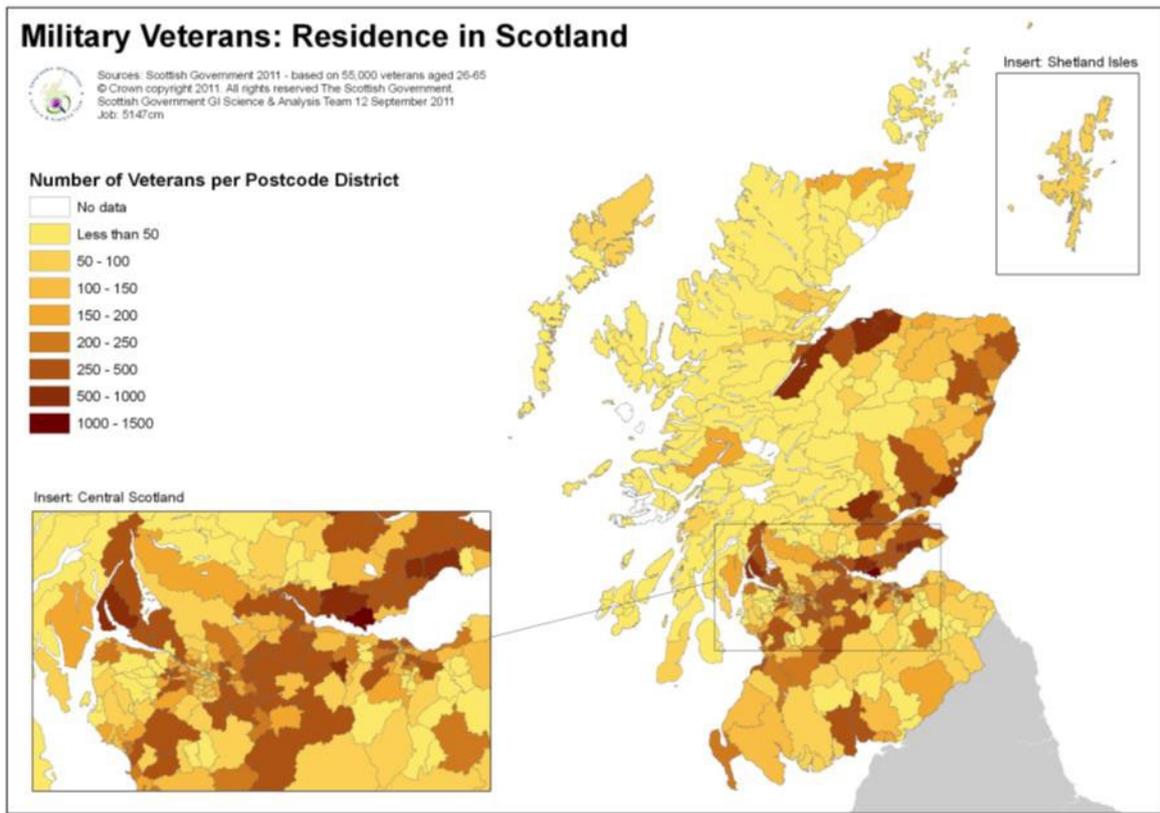


Figure 1. Military veterans resident in Scotland

43. Figure 2 depicts the findings of the 2016 Veterans Scotland exercise which estimated the size and location of the Veteran population across Scotland; it concluded that the total veteran community in Highland is 22773 which equates to 9.6% of the population.

Veterans resident in Highland	11504
Adult dependents	7513
Dependent children	3756
Total Highland Veteran Community	22773

Figure 2. Veteran population in Highland

44. Recipients of AF Pension, Compensation and War Pension Schemes⁵ can be identified by postcode from the MoD statistics.

⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/827504/20190829_-_Supplementary_Tables_-_O.xlsx

This information is shown pictorially in *Figure 3*.

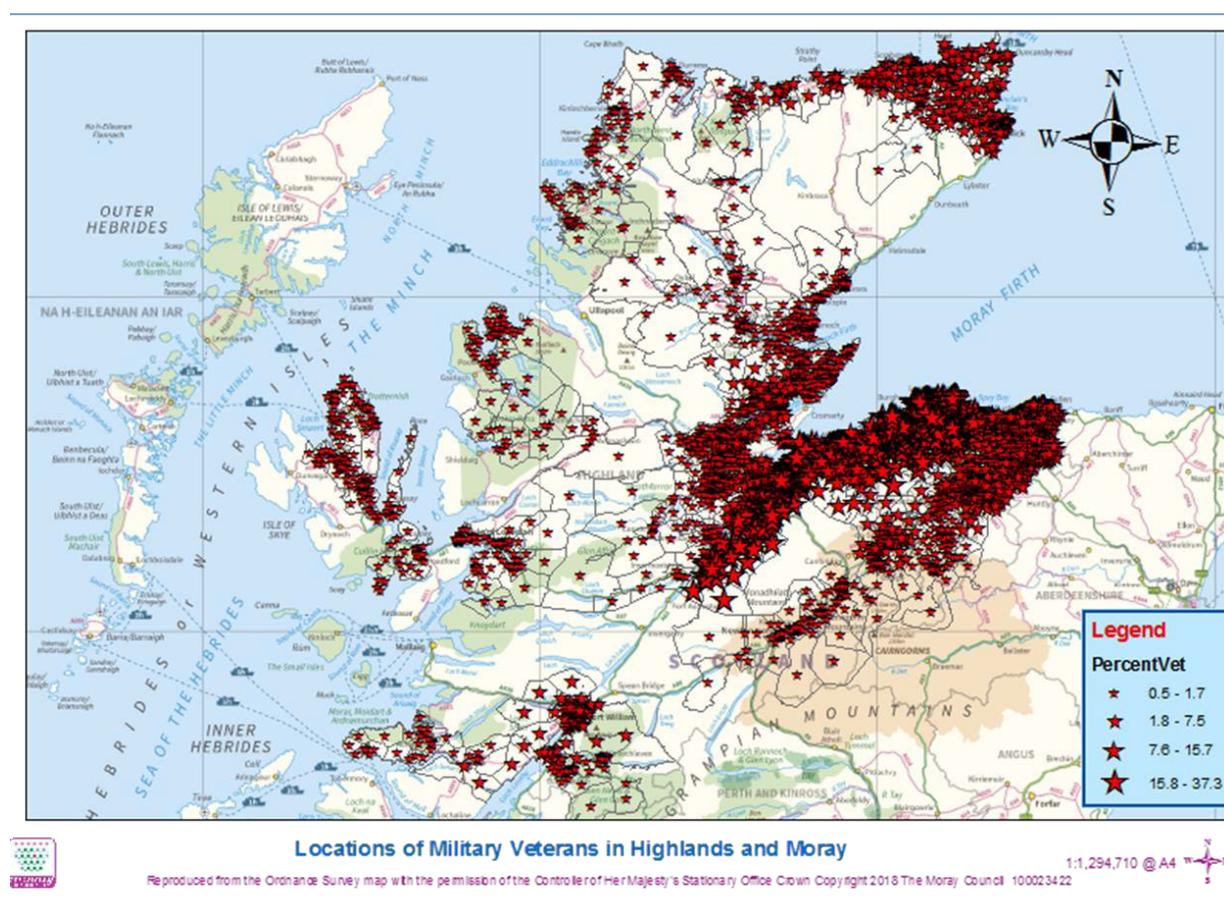


Figure 3. Map showing location of recipients of AF Pension, Compensation and War Pension Schemes

45. The total number of veterans identified as a recipient of one of these schemes in 2019 with a postcode in the Highlands is 2320 which is estimated to represent only 20% of the total number of veterans resident in the Highlands. *Figure 3* shows distribution is concentrated around Inverness and the Moray bowl with further concentrations up the north east coast, especially Wick and Thurso, and on the west coast from Skye to Fort William. It is reasonable to assume that this distribution pattern would be reinforced if the location of the 'hidden' veteran population could be identified. *Figure 4* shows the location of the recipients of the schemes by Highland Community Planning Partnership.

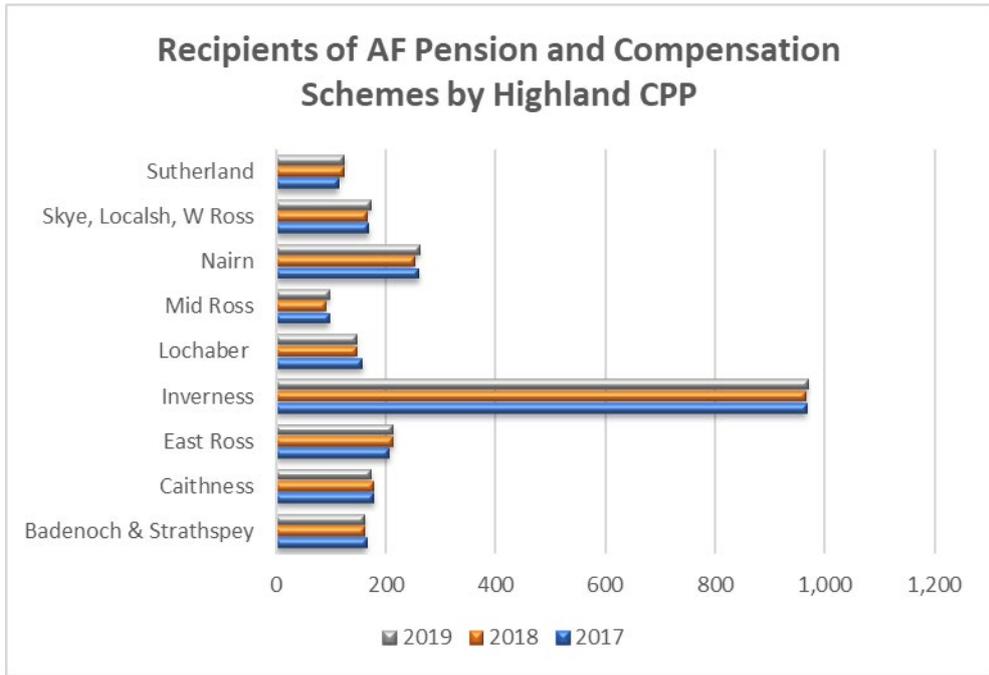


Figure 4. Recipients of AF Pension, Compensation and War Pension Schemes by Highland Community Planning Partnership

Whilst not providing a complete picture this does give an indication of the presence of significant veteran populations for Community Planning Partnerships.

46. To reinforce this data, the Scottish Census 2011 identified a total of 14,333 males over age 68 living in Highland. Most of this cohort would have been conscripted for national service and therefore classed as veterans.

47. In 2014, The Royal British Legion produced a report 'A UK Household Survey of the Ex-service community'⁶ following one of the most comprehensive surveys of the population. Key findings from the report show:

- a. There are around 6.2 million people within the ex-Service community in the UK.
- b. Nearly half of the adult ex-Service community are over the age of 75

⁶ https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/docs/default-source/campaigns-policy-and-research/rbl_household_survey_report.pdf?sfvrsn=5bcbae4f_4

c. The size of the adult ex-service community in Scotland is forecast to decrease from 385,000 in 2020 to 276,000 in 2030 which equates to a decrease of 28.3% in the size of this community over the next 10 years.

48. There is considerable uncertainty around the size of the veteran population which creates challenges for service providers. The Scottish Census 2021 is to include a question relating to veteran status which should provide a much clearer picture of where the veteran community lives.

Outcome 2

With comprehensive plans in place for each area, all partners (and the public) will see an action plan which is reviewed regularly, and which reflects current issues. These live documents will be the heart of the AF Covenant Partnerships and will guide the work of all partners.

49. [Forces in Mind Trust's report 'Our Community - Our Covenant'](#), gives guidance on the delivery of local Covenant pledges and includes a tool kit to help Councils think constructively about their local AF community and how best to provide support through implementation of local Covenant pledges. [Appendix 2](#) shows the current position of Highland Council based on this tool kit and clearly indicates it is in an excellent position in terms of having a solid structure in place to support Highland's AF community.

50. As part of the initial review of Outcome 1, priorities and actions were identified to develop an action plan ([Appendix 3](#)) to underpin the work for the HAFVCCP.

51. The key themes identified were:

- a. To review role and remit of HAFVCCP and develop an action plan.
 - i. Theme complete, with an action plan in place to guide the work of the HAFVCCP.

- b. To create a dedicated microsite for the Highland and Moray AF community.
 - i. Theme complete with the microsite launched January 2019.
- c. Awareness training.
 - i. Work incomplete but in progress and discussed in more depth under outcome 3.
- d. To promote Highland's education offer.
 - i. Theme is now carried out by MLG (Education)
- e. To promote and raise awareness of the Covenant and Highland's AF community.
 - i. This theme is being addressed through the development of awareness training for staff and through delivery of presentations to the Highland's Community Planning Partnerships.
- f. To identify opportunities to 'ask the question'.
 - i. Theme incomplete. The NHS Highland AF & Veterans project may provide opportunities to develop this.
- g. To improve business collaboration – see below.
- h. To support service leavers and spouses into employment and/or education.
 - i. Themes g and h have evolved to overlap and an important outcome from the introduction of the action planning process has been the formation of sub-groups to address these issues. This has enabled actions to be progressed in a timelier manner and with greater focus and collaboration amongst organisations providing similar services to the AF community.

52. An employability group has formed in the Inverness area with representatives from:

- a. Poppyscotland (Inverness).
- b. Skills Development Scotland.
- c. New Start Highland.
- d. Momentum Skills.
- e. Blue Arrow.
- f. RFEA – the Forces Employment Charity.
- g. Signpost.

53. They are exploring ways to work together to support and create better pathways back into employment for members of the AF community and the work will be guided by an action plan with progress being fed back into the HAFVCCP.

54. The action plan will be reviewed biennially, and priorities set for the forthcoming 2 years with the next review taking place at the meeting of the HAFVCCP in March 2020.

Outcome 3

Information for the AF will be more readily accessible and due to the ease of access, there will be a sense of welcoming and belonging. Provision of a dedicated area of each local authority's website will ensure effective signposting to support provided by partners.

55. According to a focus report produced by the Directory of Social Change 'AF Charities – Sector Trends'⁷, in 2018 there were 291 charities supporting the AF community in Scotland; 251 operate solely in country with 40 operating cross-border with England and Wales. On top of this, services are available through statutory organisations as for all members of the civic community. It is no wonder, therefore, that service leavers and veterans sometimes struggle to know where to go for support.

⁷ <https://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/DSC-Focus-On-Sector-Trends-2019.pdf>

56. Consideration was given to the best way to address the issue of providing targeted information for the Highland AF community and it was decided that the creation of a micro-site would go some way to meet this outcome. An application was submitted to the AF Covenant Fund Trust for funding to 5-years' support to the development of, and maintenance for, a site that would contain advice and guidance, localised for Highland and Moray, on topics including education, employment, finance, health and wellbeing, housing and moving to the north of Scotland. Information is directed at specific sectors of the community: regular, reserves, veterans and their families, as all have slightly different needs and challenges. The site also offers a directory of services which can be used by professionals working with the community to signpost to appropriate organisations for support.

57. The [AF Moray and Highland](#) website went live in January 2019 and is averaging over 200 unique views per month. Promotion of the site needs to be an ongoing process to ensure it remains visible. Veterans Scotland and RAF Families Federation currently display a link to the site however further opportunities for promotion should be identified as and when they arise. There will be an ongoing need to review content occasionally to ensure accuracy and currency, although Highland Council's web design team will be monitoring the validity of embedded links within the site. Several other local authorities in Scotland have shown interest in the site and are now creating their own versions of the Highland/Moray model.

58. A mobile app platform called [Forces Connect](#), funded by the AF Covenant Fund Trust, is being offered to local authorities across the UK as a tool to provide quick links to sources of local information in a similar way to that available through the microsite. Anecdotally, it is understood that serving families' preferred method of communication is social media and mobile apps. For those facing challenges in their lives, a mobile phone may be their only method of communication so this app would enable easier access to information. Looking to the future a consultation with members of the HAFVCCP will take place in early 2020 to determine if there is consensus as to the benefits of participating in this project.

59. Information for families and schools is available on Highland Council's website pages [AF - support for families and schools](#) and provides a range of dedicated information and guidance for AF families from the MLG (Education).

60. Together the microsite and Highland Council's web pages provide a streamlined source of information and create a sense of welcome for Highland's AF community.

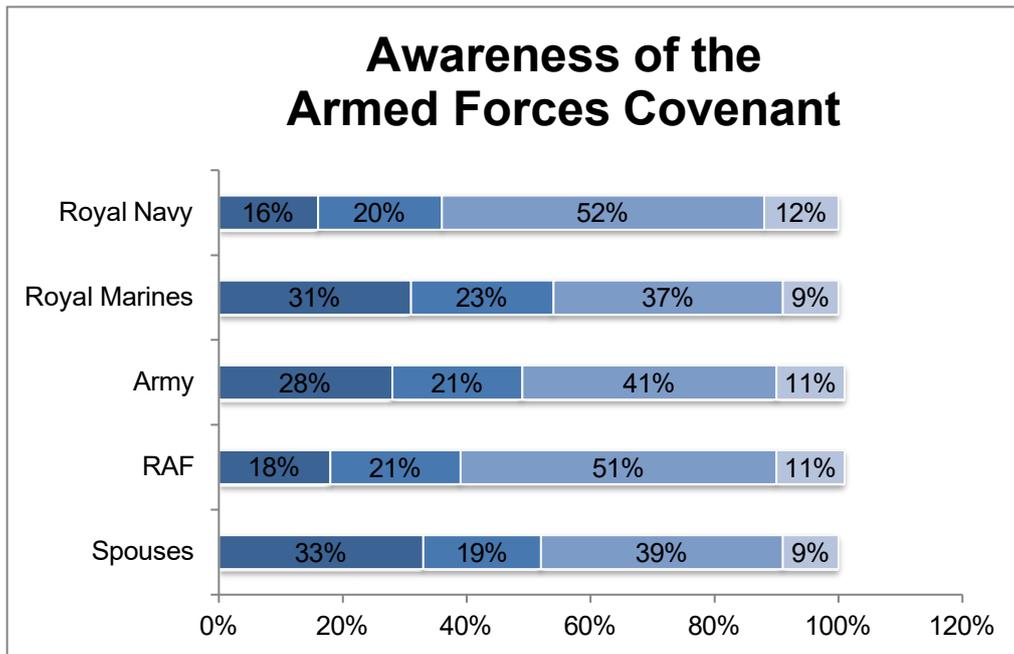
Outcome 4

Through closer engagement via intergenerational and other events, communities will have a better understanding and greater awareness of their 'own' AF community and will offer a more supportive environment as a result

61. Awareness of the Covenant and an understanding of the challenges that members of the AF community face is one area that is constantly raised as an issue, not just amongst the civil society but within the military itself. The MoD carries out annual attitude surveys of its serving personnel and families which contain a question about awareness of the AF Covenant. *Figure 5* shows levels of awareness taken from the AF continuous attitude survey 2019⁸ and Tri-service families' continuous attitude survey 2019⁹

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-2019>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>



Never heard of it	Heard of it but know nothing about it	Heard of it and know a little about it	Heard of it and know a lot about it
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Figure 5. Awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant by military service

Although awareness and understanding are improving, this shows there is still some work to do to progress this within the military.

62. Awareness in the general population is also an area of concern. It was identified that Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs), which bring together representatives from a wide range of organisations to support local communities, would provide an ideal forum to raise awareness across a wide audience. A presentation on the AF Covenant, community and work of the Military Liaison Group has been delivered to most of the CPPs across Highland. Data specific to each partnership on their local veteran community and number of AF children in their schools has given context to why the AF community should be considered as part of the development of Locality and Children and Adult plans. Inverness CCP is working closely with its AF community to develop specific actions for inclusion in its locality plans.

63. Collaborating with Veterans Scotland an 'Informing Scotland' event was held in Inverness Town House to update organisations on work being undertaken by

Scottish Government, Scottish Veterans Commissioner and key military charities such as Poppyscotland in support of the veteran community. Two recent service leavers talked about transitioning into 'Civvy Street' allowing the audience to hear first-hand some of the challenges they faced. This format has more impact and creates greater awareness, especially for those with limited experience of the community, and is worth considering as a way of 'informing' department managers and front-line staff who may encounter members of the AF community in their work.

64. Work has begun on organising events for veterans in the form of local veterans' breakfast clubs which is a tried and tested model for encouraging veterans to meet up. As with older people in the civic community, loneliness and isolation can be experienced by some veterans. Veteran-specific groups offer security and comfort and provide an opportunity to rekindle military comradeship and understanding from those with shared experiences. Working with Poppyscotland, two new breakfast clubs have been started in Dingwall and Alness which are proving very popular and it is hoped this will be replicated in other areas as awareness is raised.

65. This outcome offers the chance for development by identifying opportunities to further raise awareness through events such as the Highland Gathering and through the Community Planning environment.

Outcome 5

With a programme of training developed for front-line staff within the local authorities and other key partners, the AF community will receive a higher level of understanding and therefore a more effective response.

66. Members of the AF community do sometimes experience disadvantage in accessing local authority services due to limited understanding by staff of the commitment in Highland's Community Covenant. This can only be addressed by ensuring staff are given training on the Covenant and challenges that may come from service life.

67. It is acknowledged that training can be time-consuming and costly so finding the most suitable method to deliver awareness training is important. Whatever the method chosen, it is vital that the need for training is endorsed by senior management to emphasize the importance placed on the Covenant commitment.

68. [Forces Connect South East](#) is a collaboration of local authorities in southern England funded by the AF Covenant Fund Trust to create an awareness training programme for local authority staff across the UK. Highland and Moray Council took advantage of this and training took place in May 2019. Three tiers of training were delivered to:

- a. Councillors and senior managers.
- b. Section managers.
- c. Front-line/public facing staff

69. The Councillor training was well supported however, uptake for the other 2 tiers was limited. Those that did attend acknowledged that it gave them a better understanding of the Covenant, community and why there is a need to 'ask the question' to identify members of the AF community. Following a review of the training programme it was decided that a more 'localised' approach was needed to help foster a closer connection to Highland. A suite of eLearning modules is being developed with Highland Council Learning & Development team. The resources will include:

- a. eLearning module adapted from Lothian Veterans Project which will include short film clips featuring members of the AF community in Highland.
- b. Step Change – a short film created by a veteran to encapsulate the struggles that an early service leaver may encounter.
- c. Other resources for background reading.

70. The resources will sit on Highland Council's 'My online learning' platform in Reception Skills and scenarios relating to the AF community will be included in face-

to-face customer care training. Education staff, both teaching and non-teaching, will also be able to access the resources.

71. It should be noted that Scottish Government Defence Policy Unit are in discussion with COSLA and other stakeholders about developing a standardised eLearning resource for Scottish local authorities. However, there is still a desire by Highland Council to convey a welcome to veterans and service leavers through their contact with staff and therefore a more localised approach is preferred.

Conclusions

72. The outcomes of the project clearly indicate Highland Council's continued and progressive commitment to its AF community. The employment of a dedicated project officer has provided the capacity and impetus to move forward actions to help in strengthening delivery of its services to the community.

73. Review of policies and procedures indicate that the principles of the Covenant are already embedded in housing and education services. There are likely to be opportunities to improve service delivery for health and social care by collaborating with NHS Highland's AF & Veterans project which is due to begin early 2020.

74. The location of the AF community is now better understood in Highland which assists in targeting services and resources. However, limitations on reliable data on the location of the veteran population is still an area of concern. Estimations based on statistics available from MoD, National Records of Scotland and Office of National Statistics indicate that the AF community in Highland makes up approximately 10% of the total population spread across the whole region with concentrations around Inverness, the Moray bowl, Wick, Thurso and Fort William.

75. An action plan has provided guidance for the HAFVCCP to develop and improve support for the Highland AF community. The development of a dedicated microsite has improved access to relevant information. Raising awareness of the Covenant and challenges some of the AF community encounter through staff training

and CPPs will help to foster better understanding when dealing with members of the AF community. This needs to be an ongoing action to ensure awareness doesn't wane.

76. Collaboration between partners who provide employment support is evolving and this should provide a better targeted and clearer pathway back into employment for those veterans and service leavers who are struggling to adapt to the civilian employment market.

77. There is an ongoing need to identify opportunities to 'ask the question', not only to enable staff to target or signpost to the most appropriate support but also to facilitate more reliable data collection. The Scottish Census 2021 will contain a question relating to veteran status and this should produce a much clearer picture of the location of our veteran community.

Recommendations

78. The aim of the project was for Highland Council to apply the principles of the Covenant in its service delivery thus removing disadvantage for members of the AF community. Some of the outcomes have been embedded within day to day delivery however others are still evolving. The following recommendations for each project outcome address these and identify other actions that have materialised as the project has developed.

Outcome 1

79. This aimed to *deliver a clear understanding of the locations, nature and needs of their AF communities such that partners will be better placed to tailor their own service provision to fit identified needs*. This report offers that further work is required to:

- a. Improve data on veteran location.
- b. Establish links with NHS Highland's AF and Veterans Project to identify opportunities to collaborate on 'asking the question' and data sharing.

- c. Identify other organisations that collect data on the AF community, for example Police Scotland's custody records, to supplement existing data sources.

Outcome 2

80. This aimed to deliver *comprehensive plans in place for each area such that all partners (and the public) will see an action plan which is reviewed regularly, and which reflects current issues*. The project has fully delivered this outcome but states that:

- a. The revised plans are used as a basis for informing new priorities for action plan.

Outcome 3

81. This outcome looked at making *Information for the AF to be more readily accessible and due to the ease of access, there will be a sense of welcoming and belonging. Provision of a dedicated area of each local authority's website will ensure effective signposting to support provided by partners*. The project recommends that this outcome is continued in order to:

- a. Identify further opportunities to publicise the AF Highland and Moray microsite.
- b. Explore the possibility of using Forces Connect mobile app to further improve access to information.

Outcome 4

82. Outcome four looked to deliver *closer engagement via intergenerational and other events, such that communities will have a better understanding and greater awareness of their 'own' AF community and will offer a more supportive environment as a result*. The report recommends that the council continues to:

- a. Use events such as Veterans Scotland's Highland Gathering to advance understanding of the Covenant and AF community amongst staff, partners and other stakeholders.
- b. Engage with CPPs to ensure actions for AF community are considered in locality planning.

Outcome 5

83. Outcome five aimed to deliver *a programme of training developed for front-line staff within the local authorities and other key partners, such that the AF community will receive a higher level of understanding and therefore a more effective response*. The report recommends that the council

- a. Endorses and continues to promote awareness training for Highland Council staff and Councillors through My Online Learning platform.

84. In addition, it is recommended that a watching brief is maintained on:

- a. UK Government's newly formed Office for Veterans Affairs.
- b. [Scottish Government](#) updates on AF & Veterans support.
- c. [Scottish Veterans Commissioner reports](#).
- d. [SCQF Veterans Support Project](#) – mapping of military qualifications to Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.
- e. Research published by [Forces in Mind Trust](#) (FiMT) and [Veterans and Families Hub](#) (VFR).

85. The report's final recommendation is that, in order to continue to meet Scottish Government directives on improving support to the AF and veteran community in Scotland, a permanent post is established that will take all the above recommendations forward. Failure to do so will result in the loss of the previous 2-year's work and would not represent value for money for the AF Covenant Fund Trust.

Appendix 1 to
AFCP Highland and Moray
Dated 6 Jan 2020

HIGHLAND AND MORAY REGULAR UNITS						
Unrt		Address 1	Address 3	Address 4	Postcode	
3 SCOTS (Royal Regiment of Scotland)		Fort George		Inverness	IV2 7TE	
RAF Lossiemouth				Lossiemouth	IV31 6SD	
HIGHLAND AND MORAY ARMY RESERVE UNITS						
Unrt		Address 1	Address 3	Address 4	Postcode	
7 SCOTS	C Company HQ	51st Highland, 7th Battalion The	Gordonville Road	Inverness	IV24SU	
	C Company Detachment	51st Highland, 7th Battalion The	Edgar Road	Elgin	IV30 6YQ	
	C Company	51st Highland, 7th Battalion The	Church Street	Stornoway	HS1 2LS	
	C Company	51st Highland, 7th Battalion The	Macrae Street	Wick	KW1 5QB	
	B Company	51st Highland, 7th Battalion The	Union Street	Keith	AB55 3BP	
Royal Engineers	10 Orkney Troop/124 Field Sqn/71 Engr Regt		Weyland Park	Kirkwall	KW151LP	
Royal Army Med Corp	152 Med Sqn/225 Med Regt		Baltimore Road	Glenrothes	KY6 2PJ	
Royal Artillery	212 (Highland) Battery/105 Regt Royal Artillery		Fort Charlotte	Lerwick	ZE1 0JN	
HIGHLAND AND MORAY RAF RESERVE UNITS						
2622 (Highland) Sqn Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regt	RAF Lossiemouth		Lossiemouth	Moray	IV31 6SD	
HIGHLAND AND MORAY ARMY CADET UNITS						
UNIT		Address 1	Address 2	Address 3	Address 5	Postcode
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Alness Detachment	ACF Centre	Industrial Estate	Alness	IV17 0PJ
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Ardersier Detachment	ACF Centre	High Street	Ardersier	IV2 2RR
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Aviemore Detachment	Community Centre	Grampian Road	Aviemore	PH22 1RH
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Brora Detachment	ACF Centre	Gower Street	Brora	KV16 1PU
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Castletown Detachment	ACF Centre	MacKay Street	Castletown	KW14 8UG
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Kyle Detachment	ACF Centre	Church Road	Kyle	IV40 800
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Dingwall Detachment	ACFTC	Ferry Road	Dingwall	IV15 9QS
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Dornoch Detachment	ACF Centre	Meadow Park	Dornoch	IV25 3TB
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Dunvegan Detachment	Community Hall	Kilmuir Road	Dunvegan	IV55 8WA
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Elgin Detachment	Army Reserve Centre	Edgan Road	Elgin	IV30 3YQ
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Farr Detachment Detachment	Farr High School	Bettyhill	Carthness	KW14 7SS
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Forres Detachment	Army Cadet Centre	High Street	Forres	IV36 1BU
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Fort Augustus Detachment	Community Hall		Fort Augustus	PH32 4DG
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Fort William Detachment	ACF Centre	4 Croft Road	Fort William	PH33 6RT
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Fortrose Detachment	ACF Centre	Rose Street	Fortrose	IV10 8TN
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		Halkirk Detachment	ACF Centre	Crescent Street	Halkirk	KW12 6XN
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF		HRFCA Sub Office	ACF Centre	Gordonville Road	Inverness	IV24SU

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HIGHLAND AND MORAY ARMY CADET UNITS					
UNIT	Address 1	Address 2	Address 3	Address 5	Postcode
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF	Inverness Detachment	ACF Centre	Gordonvillie Road	Inverness	IV2 4SU
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF	Nairn Detachment	Cadet Centre	John Street	Nairn	IV12 5DR
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF	Ness Detachment	Barvas & Brue Community Cen	Barvas	Isle of Lewis	HS2 0QW
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF	Portree Detachment	ACF Centre	Park Lane	Portree	IV51 9EP
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF	Raigmore Detachment	ACF Centre	Gordonvillie Road	Inverness	IV2 4SU
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF	Stornoway Detachment	Army Reserve Centre	Church Street	Stornoway	HS1 2LS
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF	Thurso Detachment	Cadet Centre	Princes Street	Thurso	KW14 7DH
1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF	Wick Detachment	ACF Centre	MacRae Street	Wick	KW1 5QB
2nd Battalion The Highlanders ACF	Buckie Detachment	ACF Centre	East Cathcart Stree	Buckie	AB56 1PJ
2nd Battalion The Highlanders ACF	Bucksburn Detachment	ACF Hut	East Cathcart Stree	Buckie	AB56 1PJ
2nd Battalion The Highlanders ACF	Keith Detachment	Army Reserve Centre	Union Street	Keith	AB55 5BP
Orkney & Shetland Battery, 1 Highlanders ACF	Daliburgh Detachment	ACF Centre	Daliburgh	South Uist	HS8 5SZ
Orkney & Shetland Battery, 1 Highlanders ACF	Helibron Detachment	Army Reserve Centre	Weyland Park	Kirkwall	KW15 1LP
Orkney & Shetland Battery, 1 Highlanders ACF	Lerwick Detachment	Army Reserve Centre	Fort Charlotte	Lerwick	ZE1 0JN
Orkney & Shetland Battery, 1 Highlanders ACF	Myburg Detachment	Army Reserve Centre	Weyland Park	Kirkwall	KW15 1LP
Orkney & Shetland Battery, 1 Highlanders ACF	TA Centre	Army Reserve Centre	Fort Charlotte	Lerwick	ZE1 0JN
Orkney & Shetland Battery, 1 Highlanders ACF	TA Centre	Army Reserve Centre	Weyland Park	Kirkwall	KW15 1LP
HIGHLAND and MORAY AIR CADET UNITS					
Unit	Address 1	Address 2	Address 3	Address 4	Postcode
Highland Wing ATC	1730 (Lochaber)	Cadet Centre	Croft Road	Fort William	PH33 6RT
Highland Wing ATC	832 (Wester Ross)	ATC Hut	Loch Inn	Gairloch	IV21 2BP
Highland Wing ATC	1731 (Isle of Lewis)	Army Reserve Centre	50 Church Street	Stornoway	HS1 2LS
Highland Wing ATC	1068 (Nairn)	2 Firth Street		Nairn	IV12 4NJ
Highland Wing ATC	423DF (Speyside)	The Grant Hall	46-48 New Street	Rothies	AB38 7BJ
Highland Wing ATC	1731 (Isle of Lewis)	Army Reserve Centre	50 Church Street	Stornoway	HS1 2LS
Highland Wing ATC	1769 (Thurso & District)	Cadet Centre	Princes Street	Thurso	KW14 7AB
Highland Wing ATC	161DF (Ullapool)	Old Drill Hall	Ladysmith Street	Ullapool	IV26 2UW
Highland Wing ATC	1285 (Caithness)	Airport Industrial Estate		Wick	KW1 4QS
Highland Wing ATC	2405 (Dingwall)	ATC Hut	Ferry Road	Dingwall	IV15 9QS
HIGHLAND AND MORAY SEA CADET UNITS					
Unit	Address 1	Address 2	Address 3	Address 5	Postcode
Inverness SCC	TS Briton	44 Kessock Road		Inverness	IV3 8AJ
Moray SCC	Army Reserve Centre	Edgar Road		Elgin	IV30 6UJ
Lochaber SCC	Combined Cadet Centre	Croft Road		Fort William	PH33 6RT
Orkney SCC	TS Thorfinn, Unit HQ	Scapa		St Ola	KW15 1SD
Thurso SCC		Sir Archibald Road		Thurso	KW14 8HN
Wick SCC	Scout Hall	Kirkhill		Wick	KW1 4PN

Appendix 2 HIGHLAND Armed Forces Covenant SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL KIT (taken from Our Community – Our Covenant) Created Mar 2018. Updated Dec 2019 VISION & COMMITMENT		
Armed Forces Community Presence	Current Status	
What is AFC make-up in area	Total number of veterans in Highland	11504
	Total including adult and child dependents of veterans	11269
	Current serving population (regular & reserve) plus dependants	1346
	Total AFC Population of Highland	24119
	Total population of Moray	234770
	Therefore % AFC of total population	10.3%
	Serving population plus dependants as % of population	0.6%
	No of AF Children in Highland identified through SEEMIS	817
	As % of total no children in school	
		Units in Highland
	3 Scots (Black Watch)	
	7 Scots (51 st Highland) Reserves	
	Cadet (Army, Navy, RAF)	
What more could be done to understand footprint?	Question in Census 2021 relating to veteran status GP's asking the question of new and existing patients Identifying other sources of data collection, eg, police custody records Identifying other opportunities to ask and record AF status (housing, hospital admission)	
Potential for collaboration on delivery of AF Cov with neighbouring councils	Collaborating on new microsite for AFC – funding bid to Armed Forces Covenant small grants successful - £6500 for a 5-year project.	

AFC Needs				
	Housing	Health	Employment	Schools/Children's Services
Is there good understanding of needs of AFC in:	<p>Serving personnel – no need</p> <p>Service leavers may need access to social housing</p> <p>Veterans & families may need access to social housing if circumstances change (family separation, financial/medical stress)</p> <p>Policies have some amelioration for AFC</p> <p>Need to reside points (20) allocated to recent service leavers. People moving out of military accommodation (tied) receive additional 10 points.</p> <p>Homes 4 Heroes veterans housing in Inverness with further tranche planned</p> <p>Staff not given awareness trg of AFC</p>	<p>NHS Highland AF Champion attends HAFVCCP meetings.</p> <p>Good understanding of needs of community. NHS responsible for adult health and social care.</p> <p>Small issue raised of confusion with provision of housing adaptations and equipment as this is responsibility of LA but delay in referral can lead to 3rd sector satisfying provision. New LIBOR funding awarded Jan 18 for V1P-type project. Project launch early 2020.</p>	<p>Veterans and service leavers need advice on job ops in local area.</p> <p>Serving personnel with over 4 years' service should receive advice prior to leaving through CTP</p> <p>Job Centre plus, SDS, Poppyscotland, ASAP offer help to AFC</p> <p>Spouses provide source of skilled workers (teaching, NHS etc)</p> <p>Transfer of skills and qualifications can be barrier</p> <p>Service personnel need assistance in adapting to civilian employment market, how to adapt/write cv and sell soft skills they have</p>	<p>Yes – educators aware of need to support needs of children from AF families – categorised as ASN.</p> <p>PPR Military Liaison Group established with keyworker post who works directly with schools and military.</p> <p>In year postings can create problem finding place in closest school. Issue of Eng v Scot system – more info and education for parents needed</p> <p>Need to encourage more AF families to disclose AF affiliation. Also need to identify which sector of AFC (reg, res, vet) as issues will differ between groups</p> <p>Need to identify if any AF children are young carers</p>
How were needs identified	<p>Meetings with LA housing officers, 3rd sector and veteran organisations</p> <p>Information from policies, reports and other documentation</p>	<p>Meeting with NHS Highland AF Champion.</p> <p>Discussions with 3rd Sector organisations</p>	<p>Discussion with base reps, service providers, DWP, SDS, 3rd sector charities</p> <p>Eg PoppyScotland, ASAP</p>	<p>Discussion with base reps and education specialists in LA</p> <p>RCET advice</p>
Which orgs would be able to help address needs (Council, AF, charities)	<p>If presenting as homeless person may contact 3rd sector or LA first.</p> <p>Collaboration of 3 sectors</p>	<p>NHS</p> <p>LA</p> <p>Military charities</p>	<p>LA – community planning</p> <p>DWP, CTP. HRFCA</p> <p>SDS</p>	<p>LA</p> <p>RCET</p>

	may produce best outcome LA key worker		3 rd sector – PoppyScotland, Veterans Scotland	
What is currently being done to address needs	Proof of local connection not required for AF families	GPs registration forms ask the question but need to determine how information is used and whether this is standard practice. Is there a way collection and use of data could be improved?	DWP SDS and CTP looking at packages to support spousal employment HRFCA looking to link with local employers to promote reserve ops	Each case handled on individual basis. Parents given info through school when registered. ADES provides info for parents New website – Forces Children’s Education. Info and help for families moving to Scotland School app forms request parents to disclose AF affiliation (reg, res, vet)
What else can be done	Scottish Gov to give clearer advice to LA on local connection Streamline info for AF on website so easier to find LA would benefit from early notice of service leavers & their needs wanting to settle in area	Awareness training for frontline staff and GPs. AF Champion looking at informing using stories through staff newsletters Improve rate of disclosure of AF status Establish mechanism for making data available to support commissioning	Identifying skills gaps and advertising to service leavers and spouses Approach Chamber of Commerce to initiate programme to raise awareness amongst local businesses and skills that AF leavers offer	Improve available info for parents. ADES website will assist. Improve info available on LA website Encourage disclosure of AFC
Future Direction				
Is there shared understanding of what successful implementation of Covenant would look like	Yes. All parties involved in the HAFVCCP recognise the need to ensure members of the AF community have equal access to services. Profile of community is constantly being raised through community planning, education, housing, and 3 rd sector partners			
Action Planning Process				
Have areas for action been defined	Yes – action plan created April 2018 and put to HAFVCCP for consideration. Adopted. Reviewed biannually.			
Is there agreed method to AP process	Yes. Plan reviewed and updated prior to 6-monthly HAFVCCP where it is agenda item for discussion.			
How is action monitored and reviewed	As above. New priorities to be identified and action plan to be drawn up based on these. Next review of priorities March 2020.			
INDIVIDUALS				

AF Champion	
Is there an elected member AF Champ	Yes
What does role involve	The Highland Council AF Champion acts as an ambassador for the armed forces community, working to resolve issues and highlight areas of concern. He represents the community on several working groups that support the military community.
Are there areas in which role can evolve	This largely depends on capacity of Champion who has many other commitments.
Officers	
Who is snr officer responsible for delivery of AFCov & who has day to day responsibility for it	Snr Ward Manager
How can role be further supported	Operational 'champions' with interest in and awareness of AF community and associated issues, particularly in services that involve face-to-face contact with community
COLLABORATION	
Forum co-ordinating group	
Is there a Cov forum in place	Yes, the Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership formed in 2012. It was renamed Highland AF & Veterans Community Covenant Partnership in 2018 to reflect ensure veterans explicitly included.
Who are members?	Cllrs, Snr Ward Mgr and snr mgrs. (housing, Inverness), military reps, DWP, Police Scotland, SFRS, NHS Highland, ASAP, PoppyScotland, Veterans Scotland, RFEA, SACRO, TRBL, Combat Stress, RCET, DMWS
How frequently does it meet	Twice a year
What are key items covered	Update from participants and any issues brought to the table
How are any actions monitored	Through minutes and action plan that underpins work of group
To what extent are goals of forum achieved	The action plan acts as a guide for the forum and sets anticipated deadlines for completion of actions. These are reviewed and amended as necessary. Completion indicates action achieved.
What could be done to increase impact	Ensure the work of the HAFVCCP is highlighted and widely publicised. Annual report to Council acknowledges work of group.
How frequently is forum's membership, agenda & frequency of meeting reviewed	Reviewed every 2 years along with review of priorities. However, new members invited as appropriate in the interim.
Would a sub-regional forum with neighbouring councils help	The geography of the Highlands and different working practices do not lend themselves to a joint forum however, occasional meetings do involve cross-border collaboration with Moray.
Relationships	

Are there mechanisms in place to maintain relationships between AF stakeholders	Through HAFVCCP meetings, Military Liaison Group (Education) meets regularly, ad hoc meetings as required Work is now spreading through CCP's across Highland
Could the council, AF and charities work together more closely	All AF stakeholders in Highland work very closely together. There is increasing collaboration evidenced by employability working group and inclusion in Community Planning environment.
Would increase in sub-regional collaboration help with delivering local Cov pledges	The joint microsite for the AF community in Highland and Moray has been a successful sub-regional collaboration. Other opportunities to be explored as they arise. Due to the differing structure of Highland and Moray councils and geographical area this could be difficult. Each council adapts policies slightly differently
COMMUNICATION	
Internal	
How are council/MoD/char officers/front line staff briefed on Cov	Awareness training delivered by Forces Connect May 2019 – limited uptake. New suite of resources being prepared by Learning and Development to sit in 'My online learning' platform. Awareness raising presentations delivered to Community Planning Partnerships.
How is knowledge & info gathered	Project Officer has conducted review of AF community and issues faced. Need to identify how this will be continued at end of project term
How could knowledge sharing within orgs be improved	Consider using awareness training, internal newsletters, social media, new microsite
External	
How is action on local Cov pledges disseminated to public	Local press releases but need to improve information sharing with public and military communities. Increase social media presence in line with development of microsite
How could dissemination of info be improved	Social media, news stories on websites. Events identified for awareness raising, eg, Highland Gathering
Is there up to date website which is easy to use and reg updated	Microsite for AF Highland and Moray launched Jan 2019 www.armedforcesmorayandhighland.co.uk
Who hosts website (Council/Hive/Char)	Highland Council
How is support on offer to AFC communicated to hard to reach	Identify areas through CPPs. Use veterans 'old boys' network. Open more veterans breakfast clubs or drop-in sessions such as Poppyscotland to encourage veterans to engage
How is impact evidenced?	Determine how this can be done. Case studies?

PRIORITY 1					BRAG
1.1 Appendix 3 Review Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership (HAFVCCP)					Complete
					Sig delay
					Slight delay
					On schedule
Theme	Action	Who	Outcome	Update	
HAFVCCP <i>Project Outcome 2 Timescale Oct 18</i>	<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 2 Timescale Oct 18</i>	<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>Further Action HAFVCCP to review and set new priorities at meeting March 2020</p>	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.					
Theme	Action	Who	Outcome	Update/Further Action	
Better supported AFC	Microsite first point of call for AFC moving to Highland and those already here. Staff and public better informed about the Covenant and AFC Promote educational support provided by HC	<p>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</p> <p>Staff able to provide better support from sound knowledge base</p> <p>Families aware of priority given to supporting children from the AF Community under the Covenant</p>			
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. Further action: 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

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Dated 6 Jan 2020

<p>Awareness Training</p> <p><i>Project outcome 4</i> <i>Timescale Jun 18 – Jun 19</i></p>	<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 social care 	<p>Proj Off HC Learning & Dev Team Other providers</p>	<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 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"> 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. 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 	<p>WORK IN PROGRESS AMBER</p>
<p>Education Pamphlet</p> <p><i>Project outcome 3</i> <i>Timescale End 18</i></p>	<p>Produce a promotional pamphlet as per Argyll and Bute 'Welcoming AF to ...'</p>	<p>HC Ed staff Proj Off RCET</p>	<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>	<p>No Action Remove</p>
<p>Education offer</p> <p><i>Project outcome 3</i> <i>Timescale Ongoing</i></p>	<p>Promote positives of education in Highland – small class sizes, support under ASL, military keyworker/MLG GIRFEC Free uni tuition fees if qualify</p>	<p>Highland PPR team Proj Off</p>	<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 	<p>BLUE</p>

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</i> <i>Timescale</i> <i>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 seminars in areas of high AF population (eg Inverness, Wick, Thurso) 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 	CPP Chamber of Commerce (Inverness & Lochaber) Federation of Small Businesses Ward Mgrs Cllrs DWP SDS HRFCA	<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 AFC 	Further action <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. 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. 	GREEN
Promotion of Covenant and AFC <i>Project outcome 4</i> <i>Timescale</i> <i>Jan 18 – Jun 19</i>	<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 	Presentations to all CPP are now complete with exception of East Ross, Badenoch & Strathspey, Sutherland and Skye, Localsh and Wester Ross. Further Action <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 roles and where this can be obtained		
Theme	Action	Who	Outcome/Outputs	Update/Further Action
Service leavers employment & FE/HE <i>Project outcome 5 Timescale Dec 18</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with CPP to map employment gaps and promote these to service leavers through existing channels (CTP/SDS/DWP) 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 	CPP Proj Off DWP SDS CTP UHI NHS Chamber of Commerce Military Reps HRFCA Veterans Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment opportunities identified early and promoted to local service leavers 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working group for employment. Members: Poppyscotland, SDS, Newstart Highland, Momentum Skills, Blue Arrow, RFEA, Signpost. 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 of work of HAFVCCP – Scot Gov progress against SVC recommendations https://scottishveteranscommissioner.org/sgprogress/ 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

**AMBER
WORK IN PROGRESS**

<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 opportunities for spouses 	<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 • Local businesses sign Covenant – improved engagement – increased employment opportunities 	<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 WORK IN PROGRESS</p>
<p>3.2 Asking the Question</p>					
<p>Accurate data on AFC in Highland</p>	<p>Explore ways of improving available data on HC AFC</p>	<p>Service providers have access to more reliable data about location of veteran population</p>			
<p>Theme</p>	<p>Action</p>	<p>Who</p>	<p>Outcome/Outputs</p>		
<p>Opportunities</p> <p><i>Project outcome 5 Timescale Dec 18</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With partners work to identify opportunities to 'Ask the Question' • Develop standard protocols to enable 	<p>NHS Education Highland Council DWP SDS</p>	<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. 	<p>AMBER WORK IN PROGRESS</p>

	data sharing amongst agencies			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NHS Veterans project may offer opportunities to ask the question through GP's and hospital admissions.	
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Acronyms			
HC	Highland Council	SERI	Scotland's Employment Recruitment Incentive
MC	Moray Council	JSHAO	Joint Service Housing Advice Office
LA	Local Authority	FE/HE	Further Education/ Higher Education
CCP	Community Planning Partnership	HRFCA	Highland Reserve Forces and Cadets Association
AFC	Armed Forces Community	DWP	Department of Work & Pensions
UHI	University of Highlands & Islands	RFEA	The Forces Employment Charity
HIE	Highland & Islands Enterprise	SACRO	Scottish Assn for Care & Resettlement of Offenders
CTP	Career Transition Partnership	DMWS	Defence Medical Welfare Service
SDS	Skills Development Scotland	ASAP	Armed Services Advice Project
		RCET	Royal Caledonian Education Trust