

HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD

16 January 2024

ARMED FORCES COVENANT DUTY AND HEALTH INEQUALITIES UPDATE

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Health

Strategic Aim:	Healthy and well	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Councillor Diane Ellison, Portfolio Holder for Adults and Health	
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Ward Councillors		

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

1. Notes the progress made against the action plan which supports the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty;
2. Endorses the approach to amalgamate actions from all previous needs assessments and surveys in relation to the Armed Forces in Rutland.
3. Considers any additional actions partners could undertake to support the Armed Forces Community in Rutland, and any additional identified issues to be included.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the actions set out in response to the Armed Forces Community Health and Wellbeing Survey undertaken in 2023, alongside the various recommendations from earlier work. It should be noted that many of the actions overlap with those identified more recently, and still stand. It is proposed therefore that the recommendations be amalgamated into a single action plan to ensure earlier recommendations which remain pertinent are not lost.
- 1.2 The Board is also asked to consider whether there are additional actions partners

can undertake to support the recommendations and whether there are additional issues which they have identified which ought to be included.

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 Rutland has a significant armed Forces population of serving, dependents, reservists and veterans. Estimates using available data suggest around 20% of the population is part of the Armed Forces Community.
- 2.2 Over the past 4 years, there has been a significant amount of work to identify the needs of the Armed Forces community in Rutland and consider potential improvements in support of their health and wellbeing.

3 ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING SURVEY 2023

- 3.1 As a result of the 1st Battalion Royal Anglian Regiment's return from Cyprus to Kendrew Barracks, Cottesmore, during the Summer 2023, and the potential change in the demographic locally, a survey was commissioned by Public Health, the purpose of which was to understand the health and wellbeing needs of the armed forces community in Rutland.
- 3.2 The survey was undertaken in April/May 2023 and the findings were reported to the Rutland Health & Wellbeing Board in June 2023 (Report No. 93/2023). The Board agreed recommendations and an action plan was developed by the Staying Healthy Partnership. Actions and progress can be found in Appendix A.

4 PREVIOUS SURVEY AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT WORK

4.1 Health Needs Assessment of Serving Personnel and their Families 2019

- 4.1.1 Public Health undertook a needs assessment, completed in January 2019, focussed on the personnel based at Kendrew and St Georges at that time, and their families. At the time, the population in scope was c2,000 serving (including civilians and reservists) and a further 700-800 dependents across the two barracks.
- 4.1.2 It considered a range of health needs including physical, dental, sexual, and mental health; lifestyles factors; risk taking behaviour; physical activity; and social connectedness. The needs assessment took into account both qualitative and quantitative data.
- 4.1.3 The needs assessment identified five local recommendations, along with two further wider recommendations that have national implications. The recommendations are shown in Appendix B.

4.2 Armed Forces Covenant Survey 2019

- 4.3 In 2019 RCC commissioned a survey, in partnership with Harborough District Council and South Kesteven District Council, to understand the health and wellbeing needs of the Armed Forces communities across the 3 local authority areas. The survey included over 700 responses from serving personnel, their families, reservists, and veterans. The survey was designed to provide evidence in support of issues already identified, test assumptions, direct existing services, and assist in securing possible funding streams in a number of health-related areas. The 2019 survey report produced several recommendations that were not taken forward at the

time due to the Covid pandemic.

- 4.4 The specific recommendations from 2019 that are within the scope of health and wellbeing included: support for the mental health needs of veterans, understanding and support of the mental health needs of serving personnel, tackling isolation and loneliness of spouses, and investigating the issues affecting families and children. Again, these are set out in Appendix B.

5 ARMED FORCES COVENANT DUTY

- 5.1 The Armed Forces Act 2021 enshrined in legislation a legal duty (the Armed Forces Covenant Duty), public bodies to give 'due regard' and 'special consideration' to the Armed Forces community when developing policy, procedures and making decisions in the specified policy areas of:

5.1.1 **Education** including general functions of Local Authorities; admissions and school places; and identification of and education provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

5.1.2 **Housing** including allocation of social housing; homelessness applications; adaptations and Disabled Facilities Grants; tenancy strategies; and improvements of living conditions.

5.1.3 **Health** including service improvement and effectiveness; patient choice; reducing health inequalities; and identification of and health provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

5.2 The legislation and Duty guidance does not mandate specific outcomes but will operate in a similar way to the Equalities duty public bodies have, in that the organisations must be able to demonstrate how it has considered any potential implications of decisions on the Armed Forces Community. This includes individual service user, operational, and strategic decisions. A previous overview of the legislation and implications was tabbed at the Health & Wellbeing Board in January 2022 (Report 16/2022).

5.3 Measures of success though not specifically articulated, have been suggested by the MOD Armed Forces Covenant Team as determined by receiving no or few complaints or referrals to ombudsman quoting that the aims of the Covenant were not being met, along with demonstrating support through visible initiatives – in Rutland this includes the 2023 survey, the information marketplace held at Kendrew, and other initiatives noted in the Action Plan at Appendix A.

5.4 Within Rutland County Council all staff receive mandatory basic training in the Covenant and often engage with the Armed Forces Officer to help them with a specific case or to help them better understand someone's situation.

5.5 LLR Armed Forces Due Regard Task and Finish Group

5.5.1 The LLR Armed Forces Due Regard Task & Finish Group was formed to review compliance with the Covenant Duty and also to implement a specific NHS England initiative 'Op Community.' The Group includes representatives from the ICB, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT), on behalf of the Primary Care Networks, and the 3 local authorities.

- 5.5.2 The NHS England National Transformation Programme has provided fixed term funding for Op Community - an Armed Forces Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to resolve health related requests and referrals in order to reduce health inequalities and improve health related outcomes of the Armed Forces community in, or moving to, LLR. Op Community has been live since July 2023 and currently has funding until September 2024. The SPOC is located with LPT.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 The various actions and requirements could be taken forward separately but given the overlap this would not make best use of resources and may risk duplication of work and differing approaches to resolving identified issues.
- 6.2 Only take forward those more recent actions identified in the 2023 Public Health Needs Assessment: this would risk losing additional actions from previous work and which may still be relevant and need addressing in order to maximise support to our Armed Forces population locally.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no specific financial implications against the delivery of the action plan overall. There may be some financial implications against individual actions and these will be considered as they arise and are dependent on any funding being available at that time.
- 7.2 Responsibility for oversight and assurance against the Armed Forces Covenant Duty sits with RCC's Armed Forces Officer, a part-time post funded by the council's main budget.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Armed Forces Covenant Duty is a statutory duty with which public bodies must comply. The delivery of the action plan and previous areas identified by the 2019 survey and earlier Needs Assessments support the delivery of the Covenant Duty by the local authority and health partners.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has not been completed for the following reasons because there are no risks/issues to the rights and freedoms of natural persons.

10 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has not been completed for the following reasons: the project does not relate to a new or change in service provision; additionally one aim of the work is specifically to understand and reduce any inequity experienced by the Armed Forces Community.

11 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no specific community safety implications.

12 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The action plan and subsequent activities will support the health and wellbeing of the Armed Forces Community in Rutland and deliver actions which improve support for them. The ongoing Covenant Duty work, including Op Community, will further support this.

13 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 The various pieces of work undertaken to better understand the needs and identify issues for the Armed Forces Community in Rutland have many commonalities in their findings and recommendations.
- 13.2 All of the work from the various surveys and needs assessments supports the delivery of the Covenant Duty through the understanding of the community's needs and consequently how decisions taken might impact on them.
- 13.3 Bringing all of the recommendations together would ensure a complete picture and ensure that those issues identified by earlier work and recommendations made are not lost and can still – where they remain relevant – be addressed.

14 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 14.1 Report No. 93/2023 - Armed Forces: Personnel and Families' Survey, Health & Wellbeing Board June 2023
- 14.2 Armed Forces Covenant Duty (www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-covenant-duty-statutory-guidance)
- 14.3 Report No. 16/2023 - New Armed Forces Legislation, Health & Wellbeing Board January 2022

15 APPENDICES

- 15.1 Appendix A – Combined Armed Forces Action Plan
- 15.2 Appendix B - Combined recommendations to improve support for the Armed Forces Community in Rutland.

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.

Appendix A: ARMED FORCES HEALTH AND WELLBEING ACTION PLAN 2023/24

Following the completion of the Rutland Armed Forces Community Health and Wellbeing Survey, recommendations to address the issues were agreed by the Staying Healthy Partnership.

Action	Activity	Lead	Timeline	Progress
Cyprus arrivals				
1. Service promotion and awareness for the new battalion arriving in 2023 to Kendrew Barracks.	Utilising a planned engagement day on 27 th September to promote the accessibility of health and wellbeing support, provided by partners, to incoming soldiers and their families who are arriving from Cyprus.	RCC Armed Forces Officer, supported by partners	Autumn 2023	Complete - The Kendrew Barracks Family's Information Marketplace took place on 27 th Sep with 20+ stands present including local authority, healthcare, wellbeing, military charities, sport and recreation, and other local organisations. It was largely successful, but we would have liked to have seen a few more families.
Health behaviours				
2. Promotion of health behaviour services shown as priority in the survey.	Active promotion of the commissioned Rutland digital weight management, smoking cessation and physical activity programmes at Kendrew Barracks and St George's Barracks, including the HIVE and family support networks.	Public Health	End of 2023	Public Health services were present at the above Marketplace. Public Health will continue to promote services at events, particularly those highlighted in the survey report.
3. Link in and attend regular Barracks events for health, wellbeing and care opportunities.	Work with the Welfare Teams and leadership at the Barracks in Rutland to ensure there is the relevant attendance at events to promote health, wellbeing and care services,	RCC Armed Forces Officer supported by partners	Ongoing	Armed Forces Officer attended the Army Welfare Service Collaborative Welfare Study Day (12 Sep) which focused on the wellbeing of soldiers and their families.

	particularly in areas identified in the survey report.			Regular engagement with regimental welfare teams continues and they recently expressed their gratitude for the excellent support they had received locally in 2023; specifically, the unit returning from Cyprus.
4. Engagement with the armed forces community on physical activity opportunities, barriers and gaps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilising the Forces Family Forum (for those supporting families and welfare teams), extant coffee mornings and bespoke events to engage further with families and veterans to ensure they are aware of physical activity opportunities on site and in the wider community. Identify whether there is a gap in provision, or a lack of awareness of what is available. From the findings, this should mainly cover leisure services, fitness classes and walking groups. 	Armed Forces Officer, Public Health and Active Rutland	March 2024	This is a key focus of the Rutland Forces Family Forum in February 2024, hopefully with Active Rutland presenting. First step has been the donation of a selection of refurbished bicycles from Active Rutland to the Welfare staff at Kendrew for use by local Service families.
Ministry of Defence				
5. Discuss survey findings with the Barracks' staff for opportunities	Discuss findings with the Army Welfare Service at Kendrew Barracks and determine what MOD funded	Armed Forces Officer and Public Health	Autumn 2023	Meeting postponed from Nov 23 due to availability of key participants. Planned for inclusion in Rutland Forces

to take forward actions.	activities and support already exists 'inside the wire,' particularly to support children and families, and what could be done to promote it better.			Family Forum in Feb 2024. Contact made with staff from the Welfare/Community Centre, WRVS, Primary School etc to participate.
Mental Health and loneliness				
6. Family engagement on integrating with the wider Rutland community.	Further engagement with family members/spouses to understand how they can become more actively involved in the wider Rutland community and support tackling loneliness.	Armed Forces Officer and Public Health	March 2024	Linked to action 5. Further conversations need to take place with partners in the Armed Forces to discuss the opportunities prior to speaking to families.
7. Support the community on accessing mental health and wellbeing support and self-care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Rutland Mental Health Group to provide awareness on how the armed forces community can support family and friends on their mental wellbeing by raising awareness of the Joy platform for self-help information and advice. Support the community and referral professionals to understand how they can access mental health support via the Joy app utilising Ministry of Defence networks across the Rutland Barracks. Share the Mental Health pathway 	Rutland Mental Health group/RISE	March 2024	Rutland Community Care services, including mental health had a presence at the marketplace. This is a positive step for talking to the community, but further conversations need to be had with professionals to review pathway and referral opportunities.

	via armed forces comms for awareness by professionals.			
Transition to civilian life				
8. Review processes of transition to civilian life from Rutland Barracks.	Review processes of transition to civilian life, particularly for early leavers from the armed forces. Ensure personnel and families have the awareness and opportunity to engage with existing services required within the wider community.	Public Health supported by all	March 2024	Engagement needs to happen to see if there is a need. Need to get barracks on board with ensuring those leaving have a conversation about what they need to do (GP registration). Need to have a conversation with the unit first – by Christmas.
Children and Young People				
9. Increase awareness of local opportunities for children and young people of all ages to the Barracks.	Engage with local children's and youth groups (early years clubs, sports teams and clubs, scouting organisations, Army, RAF and Navy cadet units etc) to help them promote their activities to the families on both Barracks in Rutland.	RCC Children's supported by partners	March 2024	Initial presence at the marketplace event raising awareness of support across partners. Additional work needed for families who could not attend.

APPENDIX B – COMBINED RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE SUPPORT FOR THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY IN RUTLAND

The Armed Forces Health & Wellbeing Action Plan specifically includes recommendations from that survey. Additionally, there were a number of recommendations from the Armed Forces Covenant Survey undertaken in 2019 (AFCS 2019), the Health Needs Assessment of Army Personnel and their Families completed in January 2019 (HNA 2019), and actions identified to support the Armed Forces Covenant Duty compliance (AFCD). The below summarises the recommendations, indicating where they were identified by more than one report. It should be noted that progress against some is underway, either as part of the Staying Healthy Action Plan or under separate initiatives such as Op Community.

Recommendation	Report identified in
The Defence Medical Service, NHS England primary care and Rutland County Council support improvements in the health literacy of the incoming dependants.	HNA 2019; CHWS 2023
Support health promotion and health improvement services for personnel. Work between local health partners including the Army to share health promotion materials and consider joint health promotion activities such as smoking cessation activities or encouraging cervical screening, particularly sharing any wider community health campaigns.	HNA 2019; CHWS 2023
Further raise awareness of the significant amount of health and wellbeing support available to improve access to NHS and charity sector support that is tailored to Armed Forces community's needs.	AFCS 2019; CHWS 2023
Further support with transition to civilian life, including more awareness of the Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison (TIL) Service. and other support may be needed. Understanding and support of the mental health needs of serving personnel the culture and support structure for serving personnel could be improved.	AFCS 2019
Improve opportunities for children and young people to access leisure and social activities. Work with children and young people to identify ways to better support them.	AFCS 2019; HNA 2019; CHWS 2023
Increase awareness of the Armed Forces community amongst GPs and healthcare professionals and actively work to provide for the distinct needs of the AF community.	AFCS 2019; HNA 2019
Community service commissioners or providers, personnel or their dependants should be consulted on and engaged in the design	AFCD; AFCS 2019

process of services. Pro-active consultation with serving personnel and their dependants to ensure accessibility e.g. through equalities impact assessments.	
Tackling isolation and loneliness of spouses to ensure there is adequate support of spouses and families. Address social isolation in dependants by reducing geographical barriers.	AFCS 2019; HNA 2019; CHWS 2023
Investigation of dispersed families in the area to find out more about the families to ensure they are supported.	AFCS 2019
Assess the viability and scope of a veteran and reservists needs assessment for Rutland County Council.	HNA 2019