

Community Covenant Pillar with 'traffic-light' self-assessment	Middlesbrough Council Stock Take for 2019/20 – Progress / Evidence
Individuals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An elected member Champion • An officer point of contact within the council 	<p>Cllrs Ron Arundale and Barrie Cooper appointed in July 2019</p> <p>Julie Lewis appointed as Civic Support & Town Twinning Officer in June 18 to liaise re Armed Forces Covenant and any Armed Forces matters</p>
Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A web page or platform with key information and links for members of the Armed Forces Community • A clear public statement of what members of the Armed Forces Community can expect from the council • A route through which concerns can be raised • Training of frontline staff • The production of an annual report highlighting the key actions taken that year 	<p>The authorities dedicated pages on the website which contain information and links to support members of the Armed Forces Community and their families need to be further enhanced and updated accordingly:- https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/mayor-council-and-councillors/civic-and-ceremonial/support-armed-forces</p> <p>The web pages should promote awareness of the help/support available to the AF community and are to be regularly updated with relevant information. The information provided on our armed forces web pages also support a number of the other covenant 'pillars'. The annual parades of remembrance, past military events and forthcoming events also have a dedicated page. The Veterans' Gateway is promoted as the key first point of contact for veterans and local support organisations are regularly encouraged to register with VG for referrals.</p> <p>There is a clear public statement on the web page which reflects the Council's commitment to the Armed Forces.</p> <p>The first point of contact is the Council's Customer Contact Centre and there is a platform on which any concerns can be raised via the Council Complaints procedure:- https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/open-data-foi-and-have-your-say/have-your-say/feedback-and-complaints-about-council-service</p> <p>Middlesbrough Council have been permitted to upload the e-learning module developed by Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire councils onto the staff training portal and this is expected to go live in April 2020. Initially, the training is being undertaken by front line staff and the remaining staff will be asked to undertake the training as part of their induction process. It is hoped that that all staff and elected members will access this as part of their continued development. Work is ongoing to identify Armed Forces Champions in relevant Service Areas and a script introduced for call centre staff which could identify anyone from the Armed Forces immediately.</p> <p>To review the Covenant annually with a view to meeting any highlighted needs. Report to go to Elected members at appropriate full council meeting from the Armed Forces Champions.</p>
Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An outward-facing forum which meets regularly and includes the following: military reps.; military charities; public sector representatives; effective council members (senior elected members on cabinet); and the officer champion. 	<p>Middlesbrough Council are members of the Tees Valley Armed Forces Forum. The forum consists of elected members and officers from the Tees Valley region, military representatives and local army reserve units. The TVAFF has not met since January 2018 as meetings were regularly postponed but there is a meeting scheduled for 20 September 2019. Officers from Middlesbrough, Stockton, Hartlepool, Darlington and Redcar & Cleveland have regularly communicated by email and telephone.</p> <p>The North East Armed Forces Forum (NEAFF) usually meets twice a year. As well as military representatives, the 12 local authorities are represented by their elected Member AF Champions and contact officers. It also has updates/presentations to share information, ideas and best practice, encourages partnerships and more 'joined-up' working across the region. Information and updates are regularly shared outside of the meetings via email.</p> <p>Middlesbrough Council is an active member of these groups and sends representatives to attend meetings/events wherever possible. The Council is fully committed to pursuing best practice in delivering our Covenant pledges with the resources we have available. We work with a range of internal and external partners in supporting the armed forces community in Middlesbrough including Hardwick House.</p>
Vision & Commitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An action plan which leads to action and is monitored and reviewed • Policy reviews • Enthusiasm and commitment 	<p>An action plan for Middlesbrough arising from this stocktake will be implemented by Julie Lewis and the AFCs. Progress against the plan will be monitored and reviewed on a six monthly basis and all policies relating to or those which affect the armed forces will be reviewed on an annual basis after being approved by the AF Working Group.</p> <p>The Armed Forces Covenant has not been refreshed for a number of years and with the changes in Middlesbrough following elections in May and the election of a new Mayor, the Covenant will be relaunched later in the year.</p> <p>Middlesbrough Council has a HR Reservist supportive Policy in place which is contained within the staff handbook and actively operates a policy of additional paid leave for reservists.</p> <p>A short staff survey will be rolled out from September 2019 to establish how many Reservists are employed within the Council and which of the forces they served in.</p> <p>Middlesbrough's Armed Forces Forum was established in 2016 and met on a quarterly basis to discuss options and how best to share information etc but due to non-attendance and varying workloads of its members, a Working Group, which consists of fewer members was formed in March 2019. The working group will meet on a quarterly basis. The larger Armed Forces Forum will meet on an annual basis so that progress/information can be shared. Members of the larger forum can attend meetings of the working group as and when required at any time. Members of both groups include Council staff, Police, Army, Probation, Health, Housing, Recovery Services, Prison Service and other partners.</p>

The Working Group will use their knowledge and experience to ensure that actions arising from meetings will be progressed and monitored, gather information/statistics/evidence for the annual stocktake and liaise with others inside/outside the Council who have been identified to help deliver the action plan or provide information.

Healthcare - The Armed Forces Community should receive the same standard of, and access to, healthcare as that received by any other citizen in the area they live

Over 200 TEWV staff have been specially trained in military culture and mental health awareness so they can better understand and treat the mental health illnesses of people who have served in the Armed Forces. These can include depression and other mood problems, anxiety, alcohol and drug misuse, post-traumatic stress disorder and adjustment difficulties. The Community Veterans Mental Health Service is supported by the Department of Health and the Ministry of Defence.

Veterans should receive priority treatment where it relates to a condition resulting from service, subject to clinical need. Middlesbrough Council have signed the Community Covenant and ensure these responsibilities are being met and will also build on existing good work, such as the North East Scrutiny review of the health needs of Ex-Service Personnel. Details of the numbers of ex-forces personnel who have been accessed by the Mental Health Services in TEWV, from across the Tees Valley is ?? – **information requested from TEWV still awaiting response.**

Below also shows the number of 'Ex-services' referrals from Middlesbrough and Stockton MIND - Date range 01.01.2017 to 30.07.2019

	Age 18-64	Age 75-89
Male	134	14
Female	25	0

All facilities are equally accessible to local residents and those who require assistance.

The current benefit take up campaign "It's Your Right to Claim" also provides information on health services in Middlesbrough.

All GP Practices in Middlesbrough have been advised of the NHS initiative to become Veteran Friendly practices and are being actively encouraged to sign up to this. To date, 4 local practices have signed up and public health will be contacting surgeries to participate.

There is a dedicated section in the 'Joint Strategic Needs Assessment' for the health and well-being needs of the ex-service community which can be found on the JSNA website. The 'Veterans' Health' theme has not been updated for several years and this is being raised with the Public Health Department with the aim of reviewing and updating the section.

NHS England has a 'Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service' hub to support veterans across the north east. This is promoted on the Council's AF web page along with health services offered by Combat Stress PTSD UK, Finchale, Help for Heroes and several others.

A Veterans Health survey has been devised by Emma McInnes (Public Health) and it is envisaged that the Survey will be launched later in 2019 to collect data from a sample size of residents to help Middlesbrough Council understand some of the characteristics of the veteran population and their specific needs. The survey will be made available online and promoted through the CCG and Public Health.

The Council has commissioned drug/alcohol treatment services for the residents which includes the Armed Forces Community. They are currently being delivered by CGL - 'Change, Grow, Live' (CGL).

If a person is identified as ex-forces when they have been referred to the Occupational Therapy Team and they have a contribution to pay for physical adaptations as part of the Disabled Facilities Grant, the Council will approach SSAFA to see if they will pay this element, if it is a passport there is no need to do this.

Education - Children of members of the Armed Forces should have the same standard of, and access to, education as any other UK citizen in the area in which they live. Service Personnel should expect to receive appropriate training and education for both personal and professional development, including the opportunity to gain nationally recognised civilian qualifications.

Middlesbrough Council recognises that children from service families can face specific disadvantages which can affect their emotional health and well-being, as well as their educational attainment.

Pupil Premium

Children from serving families are supported by the pupil premium. The DfE release a file at the start of every academic year which details pupil premium funding breakdowns, one of which is Service Child premium. This indicated that at the start of 2015-16 there were 98 pupils in Middlesbrough who received service child premiums. This figure does not just include those children whose parent (s) are currently serving. Children can also receive this if their parents have served in the last 5 years or those whose parents are in receipt of war pension. The figure for 18/19 is that 127 pupils were in receipt of the pupil premium.

	<p>School admissions</p> <p>If children of service personnel move into Middlesbrough and are wanting a mid-year transfer, in the main, the Council are able to meet parental preferences. If a place is available in school it should be offered to any child, if the school is full, we can still apply the following;</p> <p>“Children of UK service personnel and other Crown Servants” are a category in the Local Authority’s Fair Access Protocol, which is a protocol to help to place children. The protocol allows schools to accept children in specified categories and admit over their admission number (unless the ‘extra’ child would take the school 10% over their admission number in that year group).</p> <p>Also, in particular for primary schools, as specified in the Admissions Code, “children of UK service personnel admitted outside the normal admissions round” are classed as an exception to Infant Class Size legislation, which means that classes in reception, Y1 and Y2 normally limited to 30 children per teacher are legally allowed to accept over 30 in such cases.</p> <p>Those young people post 16 who would like a career in the armed forces are followed by Stronger Families whilst in education, employment or training.</p> <p>Middlesbrough Council offer training and educational opportunities via the Middlesbrough Community Learning Scheme. Middlesbrough Community Learning provides high quality learning opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. They are a focal point for the local community and provide a wealth of learning opportunities and courses for adults and young people. People accessing the service can apply for apprenticeships and training, participate in community learning programmes, access volunteering programmes be offered routes into employment. https://www.mcls.ac.uk/</p> <p>Emailed Andrea Williams 7/8/19 – awaiting response for further information for MBC.</p>
<p>Housing - Where Serving personnel are entitled to publicly provided accommodation, it should be of good quality, affordable, and suitably located. The MOD should also promote homeownership and offer support where this is desired. They should have priority status in applying for Government sponsored affordable housing schemes, and Service leavers should retain this status for a period after discharge.</p>	<p>All supported accommodation (homeless hostels, etc) can provide accommodation to service personnel. Hardwick House, managed by Riverside Care and Support is a supported housing project located in Middlesbrough on Grange Road, comprising 20 single self-contained flats housing single ex-Service veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming rough sleepers. It provides accommodation on a short term basis (up to 18 months) and facilitates residents move on into permanent housing in their area of choice. In addition, armed forces personnel get the highest priority on the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme.</p> <p>In November 2018 the Ministry of Defence and Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government signed up to a statutory duty for commanding officers to refer vulnerable individuals to councils for housing. It is hoped the move will protect veterans from homelessness. We will monitor if this happens in our area.</p> <p>Middlesbrough Council is signed up to the Compass Housing Scheme along with the other local authorities. The Compass Allocations Policy was amended in 2013 to include a provision to ensure that all ex-service personnel in housing need, would be given additional preference on the scheme to ensure they were given the best opportunity of securing housing suitable for their needs in a timely manner.</p> <p>Thirteen group provide the majority of social housing for Middlesbrough and award veterans Band 1 with additional priority. In the period from April 2016 to March 2019 Thirteen have housed 156 people in this priority band. Of the Regulars they have housed, 40 left the forces within the last 5 years and 92 responded that they left longer than 5 years ago. 16 people responded that they had been seriously injured or ill as a direct result of their time in the forces. Current figures in relation to Armed Forces Families housed in Middlesbrough have not been provided</p> <p>Thirteen group have advised that they will be launching the ‘My Thirteen’ digital lettings platform which will allow existing Thirteen customers more access to the services they deliver such as rents, repairs and tenancy management. They will advertise their vacant properties using this platform alongside a new Lettings Policy and the ‘Tees Valley Home Finder’.</p> <p>Homeless Accommodation is accessible to all those who present themselves and adaptations are also available through a Disabled Facilities Grant for those who meet the qualifying criteria.</p> <p>Everyone who seeks the help of the ‘Homelessness & Housing Solutions’ Team should be asked if they are a member of the armed forces, or ever have been. This ensures that they will receive relevant advice according to their circumstances. To ensure that the Homelessness provider asks this question as a matter of course.</p> <p>Representatives from local housing associations and organisations who provide housing advice are included on the Armed Forces Forum and regularly attend meetings.</p>
<p>Benefits & Tax - Members of the Armed Forces Community should have the same access to benefits as any UK citizen, except where tailored alternative schemes are in place</p>	<p>Middlesbrough Council continues to operate an enhancement to the housing, council tax benefit and the recent local council tax support schemes. This means there is a 100% disregard of military compensation payments, which includes war widows and war disablement pensions in the assessment process. Current claimants in receipt of the disregard can be found below (figures were obtained in August 2019)</p> <p>Claimants on War Disablement pension Housing benefit Only = 0</p>

Housing benefit and Council Tax reduction = 22
Council Tax Reduction Only = 33
Claimants on War Widows Pension
Housing Benefit only = 0
Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction = 4
Council Tax Reduction only = 3

The Council's Revenues and Benefits advisors are available to give advice and help on a number of issues including housing and council tax benefits. Advisors are based in hubs across the town including the town centre, Berwick Hills and Thorntree. Middlesbrough Council's website also has a dedicated page which contains information on council tax, free school meals, benefit advice, universal credit and other benefits. <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/benefits-and-council-tax>

The Council's Welfare Rights Unit provides specialised, independent and confidential advice, as well as representation on benefits and tax credits, and encourages the take-up of benefits. Appointments can be made to see any of the advisers.

The It's Your Right To Claim campaign helps people to understand which benefits they might be entitled to and haven't claimed, which can help those who are struggling to make ends meet. All sessions relating to the It's Your Right To Claim campaign are advertised on the website and in the community hubs. These sessions are run in conjunction with the Financial Inclusion Group and local advice partnerships.

Advice is also given by Middlesbrough Citizens Advice based on Linthorpe Road and is accessible to all residents. Middlesbrough CAB do not record the number of clients with links to the Armed Forces.

Amanda Ellwood is the Armed Forces Champion at Middlesbrough Job Centre Plus. The role of the DWP Armed Forces Champion is to:

- develop and maintain joint working arrangements between Jobcentre Plus and the armed forces community in the Tees Valley;
- provide information to Jobcentre Plus staff about specific armed forces initiatives;
- provide an understanding of the issues the forces community face that can be a barrier to employment;
- be the first point of contact for Jobcentre Plus staff and services welfare and families staff to advise on queries regarding individual armed forces cases – including serving personnel, their families and veterans;
- focus specifically on the Jobcentre Plus support available to service leavers, those within their resettlement period and spouses and civil partners of currently serving and ex-service personnel – where necessary and appropriate, the champions will work to put support in place.

The Council has contact with local support organisations such as the VWS, SSAFA, RBL, and Finchale to ensure that they can refer clients on if the need arises.

Family Life - Family members should have the same access to childcare, training and employment opportunities as any other citizen. Support should be available to minimise the impact of mobility.

The Council has formed links with various organisations supporting the armed forces community such as SSAFA and Finchale,

There is a variety of support in Middlesbrough to help families find work including the Council's Routes to Work and 50 Futures programmes which offer routes into employment via an apprenticeship scheme. In addition, many local companies have training schemes such as Network Rail. Job Centre Plus also have schemes that help ex-service personnel and their families into work.

Information about community events and activities relevant to any family is featured on the Council's website and through the various social media platforms - <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/leisure-events-libraries-and-hubs>

Love Middlesbrough Magazine - The magazine is delivered to every household in Middlesbrough and acts as an important source of information for local people, ranging from advice on health and welfare to a what's-on guide highlighting the best in arts and culture. Love Middlesbrough is produced on a quarterly basis and is also available online - <https://issuu.com/lovemiddlesbrough/docs/love-middlesbrough-magazine-autumn-2019>

Armed forces specific events and activities are placed on the armed forces section of the website - <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/mayor-council-and-councillors/civic-and-ceremonial/civic-events-calendar>

The Council also has an online information portal known as the Family Service Directory which gives information, advice and guidance on services and activities in the local area for children, young people, and families. The FSD contains information on childcare, health, employment and training, leisure, money advice and much more - <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/children-families-and-safeguarding/family-service-directory>

<p>Transition - Support should be available for all Service personnel in order to assist their transition from Service to civilian life.</p>	<p>Amanda Ellwood is the Armed Forces Champion for Middlesbrough Job Centre Plus. The main elements of her role are outlined in the Benefits and Tax section but she also ensures that those leaving the armed forces are able to access any benefit they are entitled to. Amanda is also responsible for identifying work opportunities and supporting service leavers and their families.</p> <p>Job Centre Plus continue to make referrals to the Finchale Group who provide support, welfare and debt advice and skills training. All 'Work Coaches' within Durham and the Tees Valley can refer AF clients directly to the Finchale Group. Mark Steed, the Veterans' Services Manager at the Finchale Group regularly attends the working group meetings to liaise with the council and other stakeholders.</p> <p>On 20 June 2018 Middlesbrough council passed a motion at full Council, that as part of their commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, they would offer every armed forces service leaver a job interview within 3 years of leaving service provided they have the right credentials.</p> <p>The AFC's together with the relevant council officer have arranged to visit the Career Transition Partnership which is based in Catterick in September 2019 to better understand the work they undertake with service leavers and see whether they can be linked up with any local companies in Middlesbrough.</p> <p>The Council's armed forces web pages provide information to help those transitioning to civilian life.</p>
<p>Recognition - The Armed Forces Community is entitled to appropriate recognition for the unique Service which it has given, and continues to give, to the Nation.</p>	<p>Events / activities held to recognise and honour the Armed Forces in 2019/20:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flag raising – Armed Forces week June 19, Merchant Navy Day 3/9/19; RAF Ensign 9/9-16/9/19; • Supported 'Poppy Day' collections in the lead up to Remembrance Sunday on 10/11/19 in Middlesbrough town centre and various other venues. Middlesbrough Council are the lead authority for the Poppy Appeal and publish a letter in the local press from all Tees Valley authorities launching the annual Poppy Appeal on behalf of the RBL. • Annual poppy display in Nunthorpe commemorating the end of both wars from October 2019 organised by the ward Councillors and local residents • RAF Cadets Battle of Britain Parade and Service 15/9/19 • TS Erimus Sea Cadets Trafalgar Day Parade and Service 27/10/19 • Laying of the First Poppy and Turning of the Page in the Book of Remembrance Services 7/11/19 – 35 schools were in attendance to lay poppy crosses • Remembrance Day Service and Parade including a Wreath-laying ceremony with a special appearance by the Yorkshire Regiment Band 10/11/19 • Armistice Day service 11/11/19. <p>All armed forces events past and present feature on a newly created dedicated page on the Council's website and feature on the social media platforms. Every event is also featured in the Love Middlesbrough magazine and has resulted in improved attendance by the public. https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/mayor-council-and-councillors/civic-and-ceremonial/support-armed-forces/recognising-our-local-heroes-past-and-present</p> <p>The Armed Forces Champions also supported a number of events organised by the armed forces and veterans' organisations throughout the year including inspecting the Sea Cadets.</p> <p>Supporting recruitment – The Yorkshire Regiment and Army and Navy Careers Offices had recruitment stands in the town centre at various times of the year.</p>
<p>Participation as Citizens - The Armed Forces Community should be able to participate as citizens to the same extent as any UK citizen, subject to necessary constraints on the activities of public servants. This includes taking full part in the electoral process.</p>	<p>Cllrs Ronald Arundale and Barrie Cooper, our Armed Forces Champions, are advocates of the armed forces community and regularly attend meetings, events and forums to build links and partnerships to increase support. Cllr Arundale was a former member of the Parachute Regiment and is actively involved with SSAFA, RBL and the Paras.</p> <p>Middlesbrough Council actively promote citizenship and participation in the democratic process throughout the year through a variety of events and activities. An annual canvass of every residential property in the borough takes place from July to October to ensure that everyone entitled to vote is on the electoral register. There are currently 47 electors registered as 'service voters.'</p> <p>We provide our local armed forces contacts with details of all the major public events coming up in the borough over the year so that they can pass the information on to raise awareness and attendance amongst serving personnel, reservists, veterans and their families.</p> <p>The Council gives support for employees who are reservists by providing up to two weeks paid leave for training and unpaid leave should they be required to undertake military service overseas.</p> <p>See above information about activities, events and support for families that is provided on the main Council website.</p>

Recourse - Members of the Armed Forces Community should have means of recourse open to them, if they believe that they are not being treated in a fair and appropriate way.

The Council's Customer Services team has a 'Comments, Compliments, Commendations and Complaints' system for all members of the public to give feedback or raise issues of concern or complaint. It is available to any member or family member of the armed forces community. Those accessing the service are not currently asked if they are from the armed forces community. Several armed forces related queries have been directed through the Customer Contact Centres and Complaints section to Julie Lewis, the Covenant contact officer in Democratic Services. These were regarding various issues including the poppy appeal, parades and services and support for the armed forces.

A Freedom of Information and an internal request about the Council's Armed Forces Covenant was received and how we are fulfilling our commitments to it. Julie Lewis sent a response outlining all the support and initiatives which Middlesbrough Council are involved in.

In the coming year our main focus will be to:

1. Continue to update the dedicated pages to the armed forces on the website
2. Promote the e-learning module to all Council staff as part of the induction process
3. Identify Armed Forces Champions in all service areas of the Council
4. Refresh the Armed Forces Covenant
5. Undertake the staff survey to identify numbers of ex forces and reservists at Middlesbrough Council
6. Roll out the Veterans Health Survey in conjunction with the CCG
7. Ensure that anyone seeking help from the Homelessness & Housing Solutions team is immediately identified as armed forces
8. improve the detail and quality of information about the size, location and needs of our local armed forces community; and
9. continue to work with internal / external partners and the other members of the Tees Valley Armed Forces Forum to increase our combined impact in meeting the needs of the armed forces community.