



Armed Forces in Bristol Needs Assessment

July 2014

Introduction

Bristol City Council has signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant: a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local armed forces community. In order to support the local armed forces community effectively, there needs to be a clear picture of the needs, size and profile of the local armed forces community, which this needs assessment aims to support.

Definition of Bristol Local Armed Forces Community

The Local Armed Forces Community includes individuals belonging to the following groups:

- **Regular Personnel** – Individuals currently serving as members of the Naval Service (including the Royal Navy and Royal Marines), Army or Royal Air Force.
- **Reservists** – Volunteer Reservists, who form the Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Marine Reserve, Territorial Army and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, and Regular Reservists, who comprise the Royal Fleet Reserve, Army Reserve and Royal Air Force Reserve.
- **Veterans** – Those who have served for at least a day in HM Armed Forces, whether as a Regular or as a Reservist.
- **Families of Regular Personnel, Reservists and Veterans** – The immediate family of those in the categories listed above. This is defined as spouses, civil partners, and children for whom they are responsible, but can where appropriate extend to parents, unmarried partners and other family members.
- **Bereaved** – The immediate family of Service Personnel and veterans who have died, whether or not that death has any connection with Service.
- **Cadet Force** – comprising of Combined Cadet Force, Sea Cadet Corps, Army Cadet Force and Air Training Corps.

Sources used to identify the level of the needs and the members of the Local Armed Forces Community

- **Members of the Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group:** provided information on and mapped armed forces units in Bristol. This included information from Abbey Wood, the Royal Marines and the Reservists.
- **Avon and Wiltshire Partnership NHS Trust:** South West Veterans Mental Health Service: veteran referrals.
- **Bristol City Council Housing:** housing register.
- **Pupil Premium 2013-14:** national data 2013-14.
- **Ministry of Defence:** employment figures.
- **Location of Armed Forces Pension and Compensation Recipients 2011/12:** number of payments by postcode district as at 31 March 2012.
- **Wessex Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association:** relevant cadet strengths as at 31 March 2014.

Methodology

The above sources were used to identify Bristol Members of the Local Armed Forces Community by providing information gathered from their records/ by extracting information from their databases. The information from the above sources was pulled together and duplicate information identified and discarded, resulting in the data below. The methodology provides a current profile and this needs to be updated at regular intervals.

Findings

Regular personnel:

The Ministry of Defence consulted their employment records and provided the following numbers on regular personnel working in Bristol:

- Navy – 462;
- Army – 453;
- RAF – 486.

A little more than 50% of staff members live alone in Substitute Single Service Accommodation.

It was noted that the Ministry of Defence base Abbey Wood in South Gloucestershire employs many staff who do live in Bristol, and this has to be taken into account when assessing the needs of the Armed Forces Community in Bristol. Abbey Wood has got 2 bases (quarter areas) within the City of Bristol boundaries: Coombe Dingle and Belvedere Road.

20 members of the Royal Marines Reserve Bristol live in Bristol. This is only a small number because this unit is dispersed over the entire South West.

In 2013/14 there were 50 armed forces related school admissions per academic year.

Currently there are 28 armed forces personnel on the Bristol City Council Housing Register. There are no specific housing projects for the Armed Forces. The Housing Office rarely gets requests for support in case of homelessness or housing assistance from the Armed Forces Community.

Reservists:

From data provided on reserve units in the Bristol area, the number of reservists in the Bristol area is thought to be 427. In 2014 this number will increase as a result of a new unit opening. It is not possible to get the true number of mobilised reservists and retired reservists.

Veterans:

The British Legion deals with around a 1,000 welfare cases in Bristol each year, the age range being mainly between 60-80 years.

Support is requested with adaptations, mobility grants, homelessness, abuse, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, family separations, financial problems, isolation, unemployment, and the transfer of skills.

There is a strong network of agencies in place to provide support. However this is not always apparent, and needs to be pointed out through solid signposting (for example by creating a website and promoting links to this website). The British Legion will be opening a new drop-in centre in Bristol in 2014, which will help identify some of the needs within the veteran community.

The Armed Forces Pension Scheme figures show that around 1,100 Bristol residents are in receipt of an armed services pension. This includes widows and widowers.

The Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health NHS Partnership have set up the South West Veterans Mental Health Service, and to date they have had 75 referrals for 64 people from the community based Bristol LIFT Psychology service. The Veterans Service is relatively new and is still growing, so numbers are expected to go up once the service is more established.

Cadet Force:

The Army Cadet Force (ACF), Sea Cadet Corps (SCC) and Air Training Corps (ATC) all have bases in Bristol. The bases are run by adult volunteers:

- the ACF has 500 cadets and 120 adult volunteers (March 2014);
- the SCC has 99 cadets and 54 adult volunteers (30 Sept 2013);
- the ATC has 1,011 cadets and 317 adult volunteers (March 2013, combined figures for Bristol and Gloucester).

The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) works with schools in Bristol to support the development of leadership qualities within pupils. The numbers of cadets and adult volunteers for the Wessex Region (of which Bristol is part) are respectively 6,320 and 273 (1 April 2013).

Conclusion and recommendations

This document is intended to provide the underpinning data and analysis to support decision makers in developing strategies, and to inform commissioning decisions that take into account the needs of the armed forces community.

The next step is for partners to draw up an action plan to prioritise and address the needs of the community. The action plan needs to be Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely (SMART).

The action plan will be overseen by the Armed Forces Community Covenant Steering Group.

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