

# The Armed Forces Community in Manchester

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment  
(JSNA)

June 2023



# Contents

1. Introduction: What is the JSNA?
2. What is the armed forces community?
3. Health issues experienced by members of the armed forces community and their families
4. What do we know about the armed forces community in Manchester?
5. What is Manchester City Council currently doing to support the armed forces community?
6. Other organisations working to support the Armed Forces Community in Manchester
7. Potential links with other Council strategies
8. Opportunities for action

# Introduction

This 'mini' Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) provides a summary of the evidence and data regarding the health of the armed forces community. It is designed as a precursor to a more extensive JSNA that will be published later in 2023.

The JSNA describes some of the health issues that may affect members of the armed forces community and what the data from the 2021 Census tells us about UK armed forces veterans living in Manchester.

It also describes what Manchester City Council and other organisations working in the city are doing to support members of the armed forces community and their families as well as some of the opportunities for action that exist.

# Introduction: What is the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)?

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012) states that every local authority must produce a **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)** covering the population(s) within its area

Local Health and Wellbeing Boards are statutorily responsible for assessing the health and wellbeing needs of their population and for publishing a JSNA.

Local partners are responsible for agreeing the content, format and frequency of update of the JSNA. There are no national standards for this.

Local authorities, Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and NHS England must have regard to the JSNA when planning health and care services for the populations they are responsible for.

# What is the armed forces community?

The Armed Forces Community includes:

- a serving member of the armed forces or a reservist
- an armed forces veteran (defined as someone who has served in the armed forces for at least one day)
- partners and children of a serving member or veteran of the armed forces

In the 2021 Census, 1,853,112 people in England and Wales reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces (3.8% of usual residents aged 16 years and over).

# The Armed Forces Covenant

The [Armed Forces Covenant](#), published in May 2011, recognises that the whole nation has a moral obligation to members of the armed forces and their families and establishes how they should expect to be treated.

The core principles of the Covenant were enshrined in law in the Armed Forces Act 2011.

The Armed Forces Act 2021 introduced a new policy directive for some public bodies, including the NHS and local authorities, to pay due regard to the principles of the Covenant when carrying out work in the areas of housing, healthcare and education.

Under the Covenant all ex-service personnel are entitled to priority access to NHS non-emergency care for any condition as long as it is related to their service. However, some ex-service personnel have found that NHS staff are not always aware of their obligations under the covenant.

## Health issues experienced by the armed forces community and their families

Research shows that:

- 35% of previously deployed veteran reservists report general health problems (10)
- 9% of veteran regulars and reservists report PTSD (10)
- 14% of veteran regulars with a deployment history report alcohol problems (10)
- 23% of ex-service personnel report common mental health disorders (8)
- 52% of veterans report long-term illness, disability, or infirmity (11)
- Females reported higher rates of mental disorders while males reported higher rates of PTSD

Physical and mental health difficulties experienced by ex-service personnel, such as sleepless nights, irritability, anger, isolation, depression, increased alcohol use, drug misuse and self-harm, may also impact on parents, siblings, partners, spouses and children

## Health issues experienced faced by the armed forces community and their families (continued)

In addition to any health problems or disabilities that might arise during military service, ex-service personnel may also experience problems in adjusting to civilian life on leaving the Armed Forces, particularly, if they leave the services early.

Problems may include alcohol misuse and mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Finding employment and housing may also be difficult. (12)

Working age ex-Service community are more likely than the general population to report health conditions that limit their daily activity, such as hearing difficulties and musculoskeletal problems. They are also more likely to report being depressed. (12)

Working age veteran households are more than twice as likely as the UK population to be receiving sickness or disability benefits. (12) More than half of veterans (52%) report long-term illness, disability or infirmity compared with 35% of the general population. (11)

Many of the problems faced by the increasingly elderly ex-Service population are similar to those faced by the UK's elderly as a whole: isolation, physical health problems and difficulties with mobility and care. Widowed members of this community and those aged 75 or over face particular problems. (12)



## Disparity in prevalence of general health conditions between veterans and civilians

This data was collected as part of a household survey conducted by the Royal British Legion in 2014. Though now outdated, it serves to illustrate how veterans are disproportionately affected compared to their civilian peers. (12)

Condition	Veterans (%)	General population (%)
Depression	10	6
Back problems	14	7
Leg and feet problems	15	7
Problems with arms	9	5
Heart problems	12	7
Diabetes	6	3
Hearing difficulty	6	2
Sight difficulty	5	1

Source: A UK household survey of the ex-Service community, Royal British Legion, 2014

## Mental health issues faced by the Armed Forces Community

The majority of ex-service personnel are not affected by mental health issues. However, for those who are, there can often be a delay in identifying problems.

It is estimated that around 23% of ex-service personnel suffer from depression, anxiety or other common mental health disorders compared with 16% of the general population. (8)

Overall rates for PTSD are estimated at around 9% for previously deployed regular and reserve personnel. (10)

The Royal British Legion reports one of the most significant problems amongst service personnel and recent service leavers, and linked to deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan, is heavy drinking.

The Commons Select Defence Committee found that the mental health of recent service leavers was “intrinsicly linked to hazardous levels of alcohol consumption” within the armed forces. (12)

## Other areas of disadvantage experienced by the Armed Forces Community

Finance and housing are also areas of disadvantage for the ex-Service community. Working age households with dependent children, particularly divorced parents, people with a long-term illness or disability, and young singles are at greater risk of financial problems and are more likely to take on debt. (12)

The working age ex-forces community is almost twice as likely than their civilian peers to have unpaid caring responsibilities for a family member, friend or neighbour (23% v 12%).

16-34-year-olds, particularly veterans and those who live alone, report a number of issues around debt, employment and transition and a significant proportion have caring responsibilities. (12)

Working-age households report a number of distinct difficulties, particularly related to illness and disability, isolation, employment and material deprivation. Some of these issues seem to have a particular impact on ex-Service families. (12)

# Population who had previously served in the UK armed forces in England and Wales: 2021 Census

For the first time, the 2021 Census in England and Wales asked people if they had previously served in the UK armed forces. The question was added to better meet the needs for service providers and others who support veterans, in line with the Armed Forces Covenant.

People aged 16 years and over were asked whether they had previously served in the regular or reserve UK armed forces, or both. People currently serving in the UK armed forces and those who had never served were both advised to tick "no".

**32** Have you **previously** served in the UK Armed Forces?

 **Current serving members** should only tick "no"

- Yes, previously served in **Regular** Armed Forces
- Yes, previously served in **Reserve** Armed Forces
- OR** no

People who have *previously* served in the regular or reserve UK armed forces are often known as the veteran population and form part of the armed forces community (along with those who *currently* serve in the armed forces or Merchant Navy and their families).

## What do we know about UK armed forces veterans living in Manchester?

At the time of the 2021 Census, there were reported to be 7,728 armed forces veterans living in Manchester - 1.8% of people aged 16 years and over. This compares with a figure of 3.8% of usual residents aged 16 years and over in England and Wales as a whole.

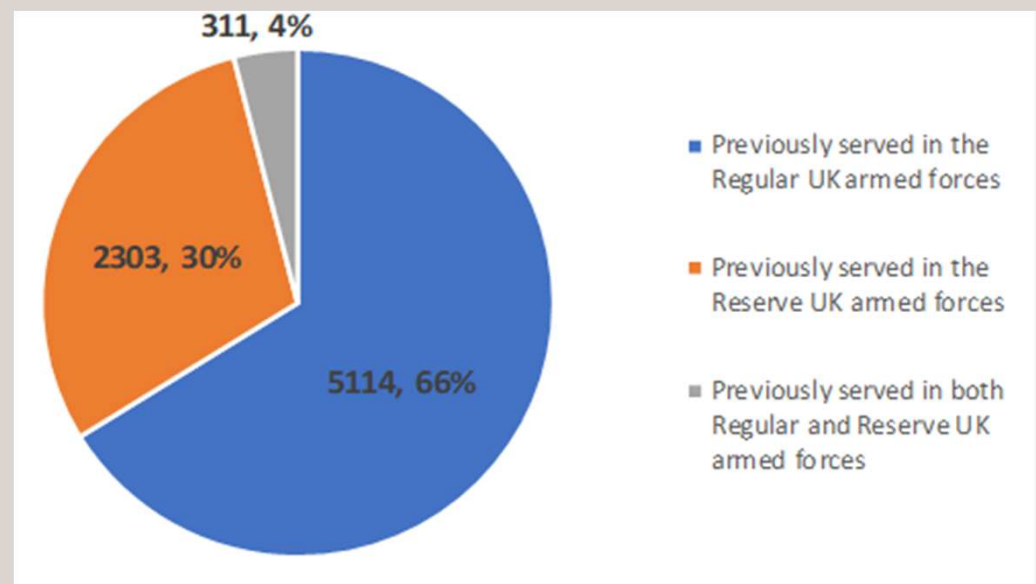
Over 1 in 10 of Manchester residents aged between 80 and 89 years reported that they were an armed forces veteran.

Just over two-thirds (66.2%) of UK armed forces veterans in Manchester, reported that they had previously served in the regular forces and 29.8% reported that they had served in the reserve forces. Around 4.0% had served in both the regular and reserve forces.

Overall, there were 7,301 households with one or more persons who had served in the UK armed forces. This is equivalent to 3.4% of all households.

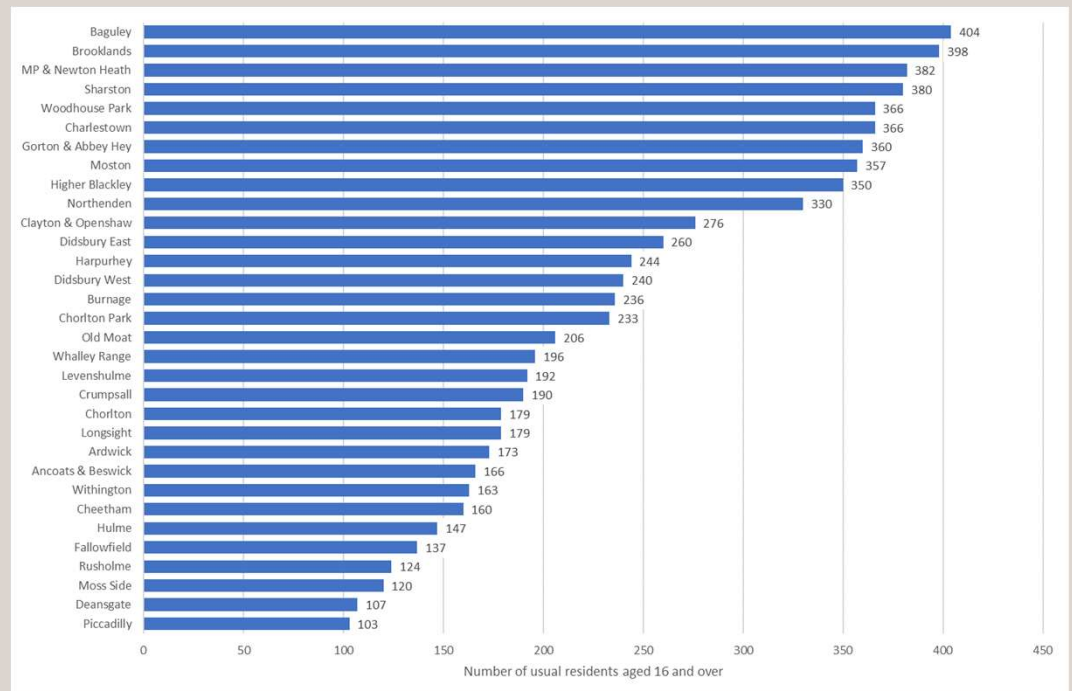
In total, 97.2% of armed forces veterans in Manchester were living in private households and 2.8% were living in a communal establishment of some types. These figures are similar to those found in England and Wales overall.

# UK armed forces veterans living in Manchester



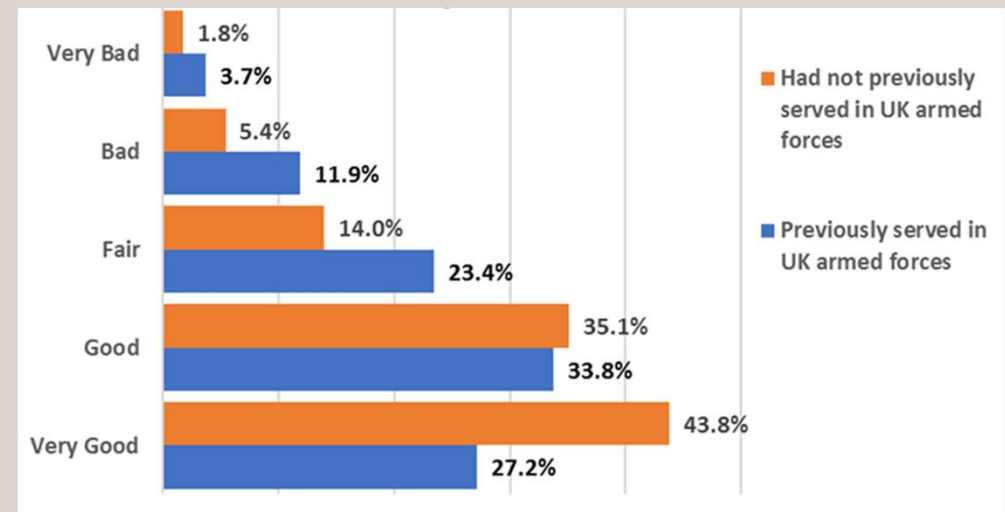
# Where in Manchester do UK armed forces veterans live?

At the time of the 2021 Census, the wards with the highest number of armed forces veterans were Baguley, Brooklands, Miles Platting and Newton Heath, and Sharston.



## Self-reported health status of UK armed forces veterans living in Manchester

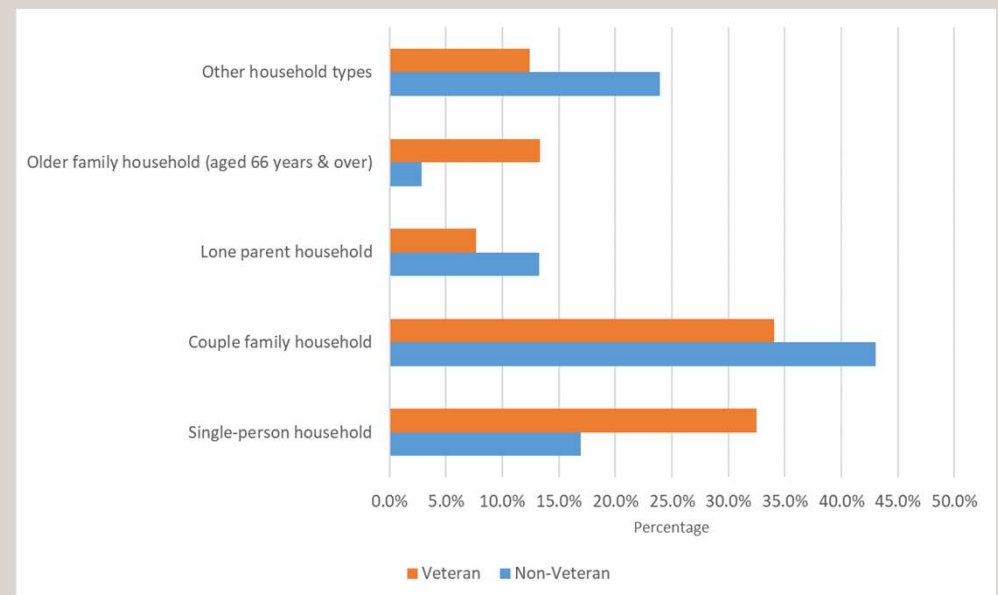
UK armed forces veterans in Manchester were **over twice as likely to report being in poor health** compared with non-veterans. In 2021, 15.6% of UK armed forces veterans in Manchester recorded their health as being “Bad” or “Very Bad” compared with 7.2% of people who had not previously served in the armed forces.





## Living arrangements, and family status of veterans in Manchester

Veterans were more likely to live in a **single-person household** than non-veterans. Veterans were also much less likely than non-veterans to have **children living with them**. Combined with higher rates of self-reported poor health, this may indicate a greater need for social care and support.



# Local Action: The Armed Forces Community Covenant

The Armed Forces Community Covenant is a local voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local armed forces community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant which outlines the moral obligation between the nation, the government and the armed forces.

The purpose of the community covenant is to encourage support for the armed forces community living and working in Manchester and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this community, including in-service and ex-service personnel, their widow(er)s and families.

The community covenant presents an opportunity for the City Council and its partner organisations to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the armed forces community. It also presents an opportunity to build upon existing good work on other initiatives such as the welfare pathway.

For the armed forces community, the community covenant encourages the integration of service life into civilian life and encourages members of the armed forces community to help their local community.

# The Armed Forces Community Covenant: Key Aims

- To ensure that the health and social care needs of armed forces and veterans (and their families) are fully reflected in the local implementation plans arising from the powers and resources relating to the Greater Manchester devolution agenda, including those powers and budgets devolved to GM.
- To work towards ensuring that members of the armed forces and their families are considered in all commissioning arrangements.
- To work towards ensuring that the needs of armed forces, veterans and their families are addressed in all customer service delivery and policy decisions.
- To ensure that in all funding applications we consider armed forces, veterans and their families as well as the aims of the covenant itself.
- To work with our armed forces charities and partners to better share information and ensure that armed forces, veterans and their families receive the best and most appropriate support available.
- To continue the work within all areas to remember the sacrifices made by armed forces, veterans and their families and to reflect on those sacrifices.
- To co-ordinate and direct the implementation of support to the armed forces across Greater Manchester.

Work So Far

What Manchester  
City Council is doing to  
support the  
Armed Forces  
Community

- Employers' recognition scheme
- Guaranteed interview
- Armed Forces Champions
- Armed Forces toolkit
- Armed Forces Staff Focus Group
- Funding to Armed Forces Community HQ
- Armed Forces Friendly Employers

# What Manchester City Council is doing to support the Armed Forces Community (continued)

## **Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group**

The Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group facilitates cross-organisational collaboration, enables network expansion, and co-ordinates objectives. The Steering Group provides a strong network of organisations and service providers that work together on both strategic and front-line tasks and is the nucleus of the armed forces' work in the city.

## **Guaranteed Interview Scheme**

The City Council guarantees an interview to veterans and reservists if they meet the minimum requirements for a role. This is made clear on each job posting, as a statement about our guaranteed interview scheme is included to encourage veterans and reservists to apply. This ensures the armed forces community will not face disadvantage when applying for roles within the Council.

## **Reservist policy**

The Council's Reservist Policy ensures that reservists are aware of the support they receive from the Council while serving. The Policy outlines all entitlements due to reservists working within the Council and also asserts the Council's full support for the mandatory annual training expected of reservists and the adjustments needed should they be mobilised by their unit.

# What Manchester City Council is doing to support the Armed Forces Community (continued)

## **Armed Forces Toolkit**

The Council has refreshed the online Armed Forces Toolkit to make it more relevant, dynamic, and informative. The toolkit provides advice and signposting for critical support areas to ensure that the armed forces community can access appropriate support with ease. The Council's intent is to ensure the toolkit does in fact have the tools to effectively help individuals and professionals alike, while remaining accessible and relevant to those in need of support.

## **Naval affiliation**

The Council has re-established its affiliation with the Royal Navy and it has been confirmed that the vessel representing Manchester will be a next-generation naval frigate. The new ship will act as a symbol of mutual support between both organisations and allow the development of a stronger relationship.

## **Armed forces-friendly employers**

The Council has developed a network of armed forces-friendly employers to engage, encourage and recognise their contribution to helping those leaving the armed forces to find employment. The network will help to cultivate a supportive environment for those leaving the forces and entering civilian employment and also encourage other employers to do the same.

# What Manchester City Council is doing to support the Armed Forces Community (continued)

## **Armed Forces Focus Group**

The Council hosts an Armed Forces Focus Group which consists of current and former members of the armed forces who are currently employed by the Council. The role of the Focus Group is to inform the armed forces work of the Council and ensure that efforts are directed to the right areas. The group meets tri-monthly, utilising a thematic structure to cover current areas of interest as dictated by the Steering Group.

## **Departmental Armed Forces Champions**

To ensure the consistent presence and awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant Principles, the Council have embedded Armed Forces Champions into a number of departments. This creates a web throughout the Council by which information can be shared, updates given, and objectives tackled as one. This will synchronise all involved departments and make certain that all progress and effort is symmetrical throughout the organisation.

# Manchester City Council Armed Forces Annual Report 2021/22

<https://democracy.manchester.gov.uk/documents/s35848/Appendix%20-%20Armed%20Forces%20Annual%20Report.pdf>



## Armed Forces Annual Report

Review of work undertaken over the past year  
and our priorities for the next year





# National NHS Support for Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing: Op COURAGE

[Op COURAGE](#) is an NHS mental health specialist service designed to help serving personnel, reservists, armed forces veterans and their families who are due to leave the military. It helps people transition from military to civilian life by providing mental health care with Defence Medical Services (DMS).

The service provides support to help people recognise and treat early signs of mental health problems, as well as more advanced mental health conditions and psychological trauma. It also provides support and treatment for substance misuse and addictions, facilitates access to other NHS mental health services (e.g. talking therapies and eating disorder services) and liaises with charities and local organisations to address wider health and wellbeing needs, such as housing, relationships, finances and employment.

The service is supported by trained professionals who are from, or have experience of working with, the Armed Forces community. It is available to anyone who has served in the UK armed forces for a full day and is registered with a GP surgery in England (or is willing and eligible to register with a GP).

# National NHS Support for Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing: Veterans and Reserves Mental Health Programme

The [Veterans and Reserves Mental Health Programme \(VRMHP\)](#) is a Ministry of Defence (MoD) specialist service that provides mental health assessments and treatment advice for veterans and reservists who feel that their time serving in the armed forces has affected their mental health

The VRMHP works closely with the NHS and Defence Medical Services (DMS) to provide appropriate treatment.

All veterans referred to the VRMHP receive a full psychiatric assessment completed by a consultant psychiatrist. Reserves whose condition is found to be operationally related and of a nature that can be treated within the resources of the DMS can access treatment in a MoD UK Department of Community Mental Health (DCMH) and will be offered out-patient treatment at a DCMH closest to where they live.

Other  
organisations working  
to support the Armed  
Forces Community in  
Manchester: Pennine Care  
Military Veterans Service

The [Pennine Care Military Veterans Service \(MVS\)](#) is a specialist psychological therapies service, for British armed forces veterans across Greater Manchester and Lancashire which provides mental health support to ex-service personnel for conditions including depression, alcohol and substance misuse, anger problems and post-traumatic stress disorder. Care is delivered against National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines and Care Quality Commission (CQC) standards.

The team is overseen by a consultant clinical psychologist and includes clinical psychologists, cognitive behavioural therapists, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) practitioners, cognitive analytic therapy therapists (CAT), psychological wellbeing practitioners, a substance misuse worker and employment placement support workers.

The team understands armed forces culture and works alongside a number of veterans who have been through the service to support continuous improvement.

Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust delivers the service across Cheshire and Merseyside.

# Other organisations working to support the Armed Forces Community in Manchester: Royal British Legion

The role of the [Royal British Legion](#) is to ensure that every member of the ex-Service community is able to live happily and independently, with a sustainable future. The Legion's Royal Charter defines the beneficiaries as all those currently serving in Her Majesty's Armed Forces, including Reservists, all those who have served, and all their dependents.

The Legion's role can range greatly but its work includes:

- Helping veterans back into work
- Giving smaller charities a helping hand
- Reviewing and improving specialist services
- Providing assistance for veterans living with dementia
- Improve access to services for people who need advice by rolling out pop-in centres and a freephone contact centre
- Securing funding for injured veterans
- Provision of specialist advice and support for beneficiaries facing financial challenges, including money, benefits and debt advice.

The Legion puts the beneficiary is at the heart of everything it does and is committed to spending the money it raises as efficiently and effectively as possible.

## Other organisations working to support the Armed Forces Community in Manchester: Walking with the Wounded

The aim of [Walking with the Wounded](#) is to support the most vulnerable veterans regain their independence through employment. The organisation works from a hub on Canada Street in Manchester and provides a support service to wounded and vulnerable veterans across the Region.

The charity takes a holistic approach and works with a broad number of partners, both charities and statutory organisations. It runs a number of programmes of work which focus on:

- People who have been homeless (Home Straight)
- People in police custody (Project Nova)
- People with a mental injury (Head Start)
- Providing access to skills and training (First Steps).

The organisation also runs a work experience programme within the NHS (Step Into Health).

These programmes work in harmony to support vulnerable, wounded, injured and sick veterans in their pathway to sustainable independence and employment.

## Links with other Council strategies: Work and Skills

- Include veterans in area specific data collection and subsequent targeted interventions, taking advantage of the new harmonised data standards.
- Understand veteran barriers to work from an employer's perspective
- Removal and mitigation of barriers to learning and employment
- Work with employers to be veteran friendly
- Improve access to funding for employers and veterans for training and qualifications

## Links with other Council strategies: Anti-Poverty

- Improve data, intelligence, and targeting precision re themes, drivers, and contributors
- Inclusion of veterans in targeted campaigns to improve inclusion and engagement
- Educate front-line staff on the unique drivers of poverty within the armed forces community
- Improve veteran access to tailored financial advice and support
- Allow veterans a voice in anti-poverty service development/delivery
- Include veterans in list of most vulnerable groups

## Links with other Council strategies: Digital Strategy

- Get more veterans benefiting from access to the internet
- Remedy veteran digital exclusion
- Create new links between libraires, learning providers, and local veteran organisations
- Target veterans in communications
- Include veterans in the wider offers
- Enable digital champions to identify, educate, and signpost veterans to online services



## Links with other Council strategies: Homelessness

- Give veterans a voice in service design and delivery
- Implement preventative measures to combat veteran exclusive drivers
- Educate and promote the Covenant to private and social landlords
- Train front line staff to understand and effectively support veterans
- Create new links with local armed forces support network

Links with other  
Council strategies:  
Age Friendly  
Manchester

- Tap into existing networks to ensure and improve engagement with older veterans
- Include Armed Forces Community in targeted campaigns
- Include Veterans in offer of meaningful retirement and later-life planning

# Opportunities for action

## **Local Armed Forces Covenant Networks**

There are numerous Armed Forces Covenant groups throughout the public and third sector that exist to help deliver the covenant, educate interested and obligated entities and share best practices. Each group has a wealth of experience and information that is valuable to all parties regardless of their status and progress.

## **Defence Employer Recognition Scheme**

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) encourages employers to support the armed forces community and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

The scheme is designed primarily to recognise private sector support, although public sector bodies such as the emergency services, local authorities, NHS trusts and executive agencies are also eligible. A set of criteria is defined and required for each award, so that organisations know where to start, what is effective and how they can make themselves an armed forces friendly employer.

# Opportunities for Action (continued)

## **Steps for local partners**

Local partners can assist by continuing to provide support, general guidance, and specialised advice on issues within the context of their service/function. This can be achieved by actively staying involved with the local network, sharing the identification of current themes and issues and continuing to play a key part in the City Council's Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group.

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