

CABINET RESPONSE TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE REVIEW OF THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT

09 March 2023



	Select Committee Recommendations	Cabinet Response
1.	To recommend to the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee to include Armed Forces Friendly GPs and Dental Surgeries to their work programme, specifically with regards to the number of surgeries that have signed up to the initiative, the impact of long waiting list timescales upon serving personnel and their families when frequently moving to a new area, and the importance of prioritising those affected by the armed forces covenant so as not to be disadvantaged;	Cabinet lead for Armed Forces and Plymouth's Armed Forces Champion welcomes any scrutiny which seeks to improve and enhance services to the Armed Forces Community and their families. Over the last 18 months the team, together with Plymouth's Armed Forces Partnership, have focused on working with both GP's and Dental Surgeries. And we've already seen progress in this areas with 9 more than a year ago. I'm happy to support the recommendation for the H&ASC scrutiny committee to incorporate this into their work plan.
2.	To write to NHS England highlighting issues identified in Plymouth with regards to access to healthcare provision (including dental access) in the city for armed forces personnel and their families, and highlighting NHS England's duty, as supporters of the covenant, to provide appropriate services for the armed forces;	Locally we know that the NHS has been proactive in a number of these areas, and relationships with local stakeholders are developing. However, there are areas which we know needs further work. A letter will be written to NHS England highlighting these issues, with an option to write jointly with the chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee if it is agreeable?
3.	To recommend to Cabinet that the wording of the current Armed Forces Covenant is reviewed to stress the importance of a trauma informed approach across all areas of the covenant in line with city policy, and specifically that due regard is given by the Council to the mental health of children and young people of service families, is appropriately considered in line with the Council's covenant duties;	<p>Plymouth is already a Trauma Informed City, and the City Council takes a trauma informed approach in everything it does. This is especially prevalent across Children's services, and particularly in relation to mental health. The City Councils approach has a number of overarching objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review and reflect upon the emerging evidence regarding trauma informed approaches & Adverse Childhood Experiences, and continue to define an approach that envisions Plymouth as a Trauma Informed city. • To promote the Trauma Informed Plymouth approach (Envisioning Plymouth as a Trauma Informed City), within city communities, agencies and partnership systems. • To promote the Plymouth Trauma Lens as a consistent, universal and transformational narrative for a trauma informed city, that aspires to be courageously prevention focused. • To work alongside & support communities, agencies, and partnership systems in becoming trauma aware and trauma responsive. • To promote a system level response to the Trauma Informed approach and to support system change as a critical friend. • To target three key service areas across the partnerships, namely school exclusions, criminal justice and mental health diagnosis. <p>The Armed Forces Covenant, as a Plymouth City Council specific agreement sets out how the City Council will "Champion the needs of service and veterans' children and their families in Plymouth" and all that this encompasses and as set out in the Council approach to being a Trauma informed Council. The Armed Forces Champion will seek reassurances from the Partnerships Children's theme group that this approach is being embedded.</p>

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4.	To recommend to the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee to add the Armed Forces Covenant to their work programme, specifically with regards to the Council's legal requirement under the covenant to provide education to service children, and that information on the pupil premium affecting service children, and how many service children were also young carers was also to be provided so that support could be managed;	As Cabinet lead for Armed Forces and Plymouth's Armed Forces Champion, I welcome any scrutiny which seeks to improve and enhance services to the Armed Forces Community and their families. Over the last 18 months the team, together with Plymouth's Armed Forces Partnership have focused on working with schools and specialised partners. We've already seen much progress in this areas. Information regarding school's use of Service Pupil Premium appears within the wider Pupil Premium statement for individual schools and is displayed within their individual websites. (This information does not have to be shared with the Local Authority). We have recently given CPD sessions to the Young carers and Service Family Leads Hub, regarding how Service Pupil Premium should be utilised and also the benefits of working collectively across Multi-Academy Trusts to utilise this funding most effectively. This activity forms part of the AFC CYP&F Theme Group Action Plan. I'm happy to support the recommendation for the E&CSC scrutiny to incorporate this into their work plan.
5.	To recommend to the Cabinet Member responsible for the Armed Forces Covenant, and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People that the feasibility of amending Plymouth's School Admission Code is considered so that service children applying for a school place in the city were given priority status;	Service Children are already given priority when applying for school places, however, we know that for 'in year' moves/admissions, there is some confusion in relation to the Department for Educations admission code and prioritisation of service children. The removal of this prioritisation classification from the national code means a local agreement will need to be considered. Further work will be done with the Strategic Director for Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.
6.	That Councillor Penberthy, as Chair of the Select Review Committee, would write to the Royal British Legion (RBL) highlighting the panel's extreme disappointment that the RBL written submission made no reference to MKC Heroes resulting in the voice of children and young people in the covenant being absent, and that work surrounding MKC Heroes should be appropriately led by RBL as was their responsibility;	RBL are a significant partner in Plymouth's Armed Forces Partnership and relationships are good and cover a large and varied range of activities. Most recently in this particular area, the Children and Families Theme group lead has met with the RBL and other interested parties, regarding the voice of young people and a Choir, where a plan is being developed. The voice of children in young people in Plymouth is a fundamental element of the dedicated Children and Families Theme group of the Partnership, as it is with other key city partners on the group.
7.	To recommend to the Cabinet Member responsible for the Armed Forces Covenant and the Cabinet Member responsible for housing that:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an Armed Forces Champion is created in the housing team as a single point of contact and support for armed forces queries; 	An identified Senior Community Connections Officer (CW) is the identified Armed Forces champion for the service.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a greater understanding of the veterans cohort in the complex needs assessment in terms of the impact of drug and alcohol rehabilitation upon homelessness is sought so that appropriate support is provided; 	The latest available census data has been used in the preparation of an assessment of the Armed Forces Community across the city. However, much of the census 2021 data is still being published nationally but when it is, will be reported back to the Plymouth Armed Forces Partnership. The latest Homelessness data indicates that there are currently 12 homeless veterans in the City. However, they are all being supported through the homelessness pathway. They aren't street homeless and will be in temporary accommodation awaiting move to permanent.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> social landlords are encouraged to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant and work in partnership with the Council in housing veterans and ex-services personnel; 	The Plymouth Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Business Theme Group works closely with Wessex Reserve Forces' & Cadets' Association, with the aim to encourage as many organisations to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant as possible. They have been successful in this area over the years but more can be done. This is one of the reasons why the Skills and Employment task and finish group was created to

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		tap into the additional contacts and knowledge in this area. This recommendation will be put to the Business theme group for action.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the links between the Council and Alabare are strengthened in terms of support provided to ex-services personnel in their transition out of supported accommodation; 	The link and relationships between the Plymouth Armed Forces Covenant Partnership and Alabare is strong. Indeed Alabare are members of the Covenant in Plymouth. November 2022 saw the completion of the first houses which form phase one of the Stirling House project in Plymouth, where the first veteran self-builder and his family moved into their new home, along with two local families who were in housing need. The Stirling Project, based on the site of a former residential care home on Honicknowle Green, has seen nine previously homeless veterans involved in the construction of 25 self-contained affordable homes to rent.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an approach is made to the Ministry of Defence regarding their surplus housing stock in Plymouth in order to explore the feasibility of using it specifically to support veterans and ex-forces personnel; 	Plymouth City Council, in late 2022 made an approach to the Ministry of Defence regarding surplus housing stock and were informed that the current stock were already being repurposed. However, the Cabinet Member will write to the relevant MOD department to ascertain whether there is any other surplus stock and its potential future use.
8.	To recommend to the Cabinet Member responsible for the Armed Forces Covenant and the Cabinet Member responsible for HR to:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> promote the Armed Forces Community Covenant to employers in the city; 	This is part of the Business Theme groups terms of reference, but also the task and finish group led by EPS in relation to skills and workforce.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> request that a data mapping exercise of the Council's staff is undertaken to establish the numbers of veterans, reservists, cadets and families of serving military personnel so appropriate support is given; 	This is currently being undertaken as part of wider employee data mapping exercise.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish a network within the Council to specifically advise on issues affecting the Armed Forces Community and inform the work of the covenant within the Council; 	This network is in place. First meeting set up for the 10 th March
9.	To recommend to the Cabinet Member responsible for the Armed Forces Covenant and the Cabinet Member responsible for employment, skills and training:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> that work is undertaken by the Council specifically with regards to the skills of ex services personnel and how they could be interpreted and translated into employable skills in the city, and that performance coaching is developed and encouraged; 	A Plymouth Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Skills and Employment Task and Finish group is in place to address this. For example, Military Tuesday is a successful project in this area.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to ensure that appropriate support is provided by the Council to spouses and partners of serving personnel in accessing training and finding employment on arrival to the city; 	A Plymouth Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Skills and Employment Task and Finish group is in place to address this. For example, Military Tuesday is a successful project in this area.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> that the Council feeds into the Ministry of Defence transition service in order to develop an offers and needs assessment and criteria with the intention of helping personnel move out of the forces and into employment within the city; 	This is part of the work of the Skills and Employment Task and Finish Group.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> that partnership working is further considered and strengthened to the benefit of the covenant; 	The Plymouth Armed Forces Covenant will further consider this recommendation.

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10.	To recommend to the Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Panel to explore further opportunities to support employment and development for veterans, ex-personnel and service families in the city; for scrutiny to consider if improvements could be made as to how the armed forces covenant is communicated in the city; and that the structures of the city's covenant are reviewed in light of legislative changes.	Cabinet lead for Armed Forces and Plymouth's Armed Forces Champion, I welcome any scrutiny which seeks to improve and enhance services to the Armed Forces Community and their families. I'm happy to support the recommendation for the Performance, Finance and Customer scrutiny committee to incorporate this into their work plan.