

Somerset Armed Forces Covenant – Partnership Plan

‘The Covenant is a promise from the nation to those who serve or have served. It says we will do all we can to ensure they are treated fairly and not disadvantaged in their day-to-day lives. This includes offering injured servicemen and women and bereaved families extra support where appropriate.’

Introduction

As part of its services for adults, families, children and communities, Somerset County Council (SCC) signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012. The Leader of SCC has appointed a SCC Councillor to chair and facilitate the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant (SAFC) Partnership.

The purpose of the SAFC Partnership is to deliver what the Armed Forces Covenant promises, in Somerset. The Partnership is an association of organisations with differing interests and capability who share a commitment to help deliver the Covenant. Since 2012, the Partnership has become well established. The Covenant has attracted widespread support across the political, government, public, private and third sectors.

However, as support and activity to deliver the Covenant has increased, including administering grants, clear understanding of what the Covenant is for and how it will be delivered has reduced. The political environment in Somerset is now stable enough to allow a simple, high level plan to be established that will govern how the Covenant will be delivered in Somerset over this Quadrennium (2017-2021).

Aim

The aim of this Plan is to establish how Somerset will deliver the Armed Forces Covenant until 2021.

Execution

The Covenant will be delivered through a partnership of organisations able to ensure that those who serve, or have served, are not disadvantaged or treated unfairly in their day-to-day lives.

Authority. SCC will be the authority that will lead the Partnership, overseeing communications across it.

Objectives. The Partnership has three objectives. They are to:

- avoid systemic procedure or criteria producing disadvantage or unfair treatment for beneficiaries, and to discover and remedy this when it occurs in practice;
- identify injured servicemen and women and bereaved families and deliver extra support to them where appropriate;
- reduce dependence and increase the resilience and capability of beneficiaries, for example by:
 - intervening early to prevent, or ‘break the chain’ of, a downward spiral of misfortune;
 - turning the lives of the most needy round, restoring their health, solvency and independence.

Principles. The principles by which Somerset will deliver the Covenant are as follows.

- Action will be aimed at the Covenant's beneficiaries – those who serve, or have served, in the RN, RM, Army, RAF, RFA and Merchant Navy including Reserves, and their families. Cadet units¹ (cadets and instructor staff) are part of the Service community but are not Covenant beneficiaries.
- The main areas of action will be: healthcare (including mental health); housing; employment; education; finance and insurance; and the justice system, including rehabilitation of prisoners.
- The Partnership's 'main effort' will be through:
 - Service units/establishments² - for serving Regulars and Reservists;
 - Wessex Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association (RFCA) - for Reservists;
 - SCC and the five District Councils³ - for those who have served.
- SCC will chair and facilitate the Partnership with a 'light touch'.
- The Partnership will recognise the varied capability of its member organisations and will seek to make the 'fit' of partner organisations in the Partnership as valuable as possible.
- The Partnership will look beyond Somerset to learn best practice and apply it.
- Somerset's success in delivering the Covenant will be measured, managed and communicated.

Task Matrix. A task matrix connecting partner organisations with the main areas of action is at Annex A. This shows the main specialisations of partner organisations.

Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan. The framework of an outline Plan is at Annex B.

Governance

Accountability for Somerset's delivery of the Covenant lies with the Leader of SCC. His authority is derived from the democratic process and is exercised through SCC's Cabinet and Full Council.

SCC's Leader has delegated authority to chair the Partnership to Councillor Rod Williams. Councillor Williams will exercise his authority through the Partnership's Executive Group. The Executive Group will meet twice a year, usually March and September, to measure, manage and communicate Somerset's success in delivering the Covenant. Part of the Group's role will be to review, and when necessary adjust, this Partnership Plan. The authority for the Executive Group's terms of reference is SCC. The Executive Group intends to hold one annual Partnership Conference as the forum for a gathering of wider stakeholders in Somerset's delivery of the Covenant.

Annexes:

- A. Task matrix.
- B. Outline Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan.

¹ The Sea Cadet Corps, the Army Cadet Force, the Air Training Corps, the Combined Cadet Forces, the Army's South-West Cadet Training Team and the Somerset Joint Services Cadet Committee.

² **Regular units/establishments:** RNAS Yeovilton, including 1 Regt AAC; UKHO; 40 Cdo RM. **Reserve units:** RNR Air Branch; 675 (RIFLES) Sqn, 6 Regt AAC; 130 Fd Coy REME.

³ Currently, Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset, Taunton Deane and West Somerset District Councils. Taunton Deane and West Somerset Districts are due to merge into a new District, making four District Councils in Somerset.

Annex A to SAFC Partnership Plan – Task Matrix

Partner Organisation	Area of Partnership Action						
	Coordination	Healthcare	Housing	Employment	Education	Finance and Insurance	Criminal Justice
Tier 1 Partners							
Somerset County Council	X	X		X	X		
Service Units/Establishments		X	X	X	X	X	X
RNRM Welfare		X	X	X	X	X	
Wessex RFCA				X		X	
Somerset District Councils	X		X			X	
Somerset CCG and Provider NHS trusts		X					
Somerset and Avon Constabulary							X
Tier 2 Partners							
Naval, Army and RAF Families Federations	X	X	X	X	X		
Royal British Legion	X	X	X	X	X	X	
SSAFA	X					X	
Help For Heroes		X	X				
ABF The Soldiers' Charity			X	X		X	
Combat Stress		X					
Veterans Change Partnership							X
Tier 3 Partners							
The Royal Marines Association	X						
The Rifles Office and The Light Infantry Association	X						
Somerset Chamber of Commerce				X			
Somerset Branch of IoD South West				X			
National Offender Management Service, including HM Prison Service, National Probation Service and Rehabilitation							X
Defence Medical Welfare Service		X					
Arc (Taunton Association for the Homeless)			X				
Other Housing Associations			X				
Somerset & Avon Rape & Sexual Abuse Support		X					
Go Commando					X		
Citizens Advice Somerset			X	X		X	

Annex B to SAFC Partnership Plan – Framework of Outline Communications Plan

Introduction

The context of the SAFC Partnership Plan. This is a stakeholder engagement and communications plan.

Why the need for a stakeholder engagement and communications plan, and why now.

Approach

Stakeholder engagement as the end (the 'why') and the communications plan as the means (the 'how')

Stakeholder engagement as the process that produces sustained stakeholder support to deliver the Covenant in Somerset

The Communications Plan as coherent arrangements for delivering the communication part of the stakeholder engagement process

The 6 stage stakeholder engagement process

- identify the stakeholders of the Partnership ('Who?')
- analyse their profiles ('What?')
- decide the stakeholder engagement plan ('How?')
- plan each communications product/contact in a series/cycle of engagements ('When?')
- deliver each product/conduct each contact ('Do')
- measure the effectiveness of the stakeholder engagement ('Results').

The criteria for successful stakeholder engagement

Main Body

Stakeholder Engagement

Definition of a stakeholder and a stakeholder group – the criteria for:

- grouping stakeholders
- assessing their importance (influence and disposition/relationship) for the Partnership to achieve its objectives and to deliver the Covenant in Somerset

How assessment of stakeholders will be maintained

How sensitivity of areas of action will be assessed, reviewed and updated in the light of experience gained

The responsibilities for stakeholder engagement and communications – possibly a mini RACI⁴ table

How the Partnership will engage stakeholder groups, including capturing and responding to feedback

How the effectiveness of the Partnership's stakeholder engagement will be measured/assessed – the impact/benefits arising from stakeholder engagement

⁴ RACI – Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed.

Communications Plan

The stakeholder analysis/profile – current disposition and support

The objectives of the Communications Plan – how much impact on stakeholder support, by when, over the 2017-2021 period

The contextual constraints and freedoms for Partnership communications

The key messages from the Partnership and about the Covenant

The channels, contacts and occasions to be used, for ‘sending’ messages and for ‘receiving’ feedback

The process for handling feedback, including recommended improvements to our communications

Who carries what responsibilities for delivering key messages

The schedule/timetable of communications activities

- 2017-18 in detail
- 2018-19 in outline

Resources

The resources (capacity and competences) available for stakeholder engagement and communications

- in partner organisations – definite and possible
- in stakeholders outside the Partnership

Risk Management

How

- threats to the success of the stakeholder engagement and communication plan will be managed
- opportunities to do it quicker, better and more easily will be taken

How risk management of the stakeholder engagement and communication plan will be linked to risk management of the Partnership’s delivery of the Covenant

Further Work

Further stakeholder and communication-related work to be done as part of SAFC Partnership action

Reporting to Partnership’s Executive Group

Possible Stakeholder Engagement Working Group of the Executive Group, to meet more frequently than the twice yearly Executive Group; the untapped potential in the quarterly SAFC Partnership Update

Review

The mechanism for evaluating, reviewing and adjusting this stakeholder engagement and communications plan within the context of the Partnership Plan for the Quadrennium.