



FORCES CONNECT SOUTH EAST (FCSE)

FCSE is a partnership which exists to support the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant and promote a greater understanding and awareness of the issues affecting the Armed Forces Community within public services across the South East region. It comprises:

- **Local authorities** (Surrey (lead authority), Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex and Hampshire County Councils, Brighton & Hove, and Medway Councils),
- **Military** – Regular and Reserve (Royal Naval Command East, 11 Infantry Brigade, RAF Odiham and SERFCA)
- **Service Charities** (SSAFA, RBL)
- **Health** (Sussex and Kent NHS Armed Forces Networks)

Governance is provided through a Member Working Group and an Officer Working Group, with regular reports delivered to the MoD.

Aims of FCSE Programme

The partnership was successful in accessing £321,300 of MoD Covenant Funding to deliver a project enabling fair and consistent advice and access to public services for the Armed Forces Community across the South East and to ensure they face no disadvantage compared to any other citizen. This is being achieved through the training of frontline staff across the region to meet the needs of armed forces personnel. Other strands of the project include developing an app to make it quick and easy for members of the forces to find the right support and establishing a mentoring programme to help those making the transition from military life to civilian employment. The project was launched in June 2017 with funding in place until September 2019.

Programme deliverables: The project comprises four training packages designed to embed the Covenant message across all levels of staff and councillors, emphasising the importance of asking 'have you (or your partner) served?' Four further strands are being delivered to complement the training. All areas of work have commenced and are in various stages of delivery.

1. Elected Councillor Armed Forces Champion Training (two hour course).
2. Service Champion Training - **CPD accredited** (four hour course).
3. Customer Facing Staff Training – delivered direct and via Service Champions (45 minutes)
4. E-learning – Armed Forces Covenant for frontline staff (40 mins).
5. Armed Forces Referral Pathways - signposting key services by county area.
6. Mobile App to digitalise Pathways - accessible to local authority and public service staff as well as the armed forces community.
7. Employee Mentoring package – to promote a smooth transition to civilian employment.
8. FCSE Legacy – promoting/sharing FCSE concept/material to other local authorities and to support a national roll-out in 2019.

Summary

The project is progressing well and is on target. The Member Working Group would like to brief CDP on current progress as well as provide an overview of plans to ensure sustainability and roll out of the Forces Connect concept nationally.

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