

Appendix 1

BRIEF ON ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

A Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement, at local level, the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces. The aim of the Community Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the Service community in their area and promote understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces Community.

Many people have become involved in supporting the Service community through Service charities, or more recently by participating in Armed Forces Day. They have shown their support through fundraising, military celebrations and open days, attending homecoming parades and repatriation ceremonies and offering commercial discounts. Even simple demonstrations of support, such as displaying the Armed Forces Day window sticker in cars and businesses, have had a positive effect and boosted the morale of our Armed Forces community. The Community Covenant scheme aims to build on this local level of support.

The aims of the Armed Forces Community Covenant are to:

- encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their areas
- nurture public understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community
- recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces Community
- encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces Community into local life
- to encourage the Armed Forces Community to help and support the wider community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement

Local Authorities and the Armed Forces Community are encouraged to work together to establish a Community Covenant in their area.

Community Covenants may look quite different from one location to another. This is a scheme where one size does not fit all, and the nature of the support offered will be determined by both need and capacity. It is expected that most Community Covenants will be led at Local Authority level. However Unitary Authorities and individual towns may also wish to have a Community Covenant and this is equally welcome.

Guidance on the Community Covenant scheme is available to download on the internet as is the Community Covenant Pledge template.

This pledge sets out what a Community Covenant seeks to achieve in a particular area and, where possible, will be signed by representatives from all parts of the Community. In most cases the lead signatories will be a senior representative from the Local Authority and one from the Services who will sign on behalf of the Armed Forces Community (although the pledge may also be signed by those representing veterans' or families groups, especially in areas without a large Serving presence).

It is supported by the **Community Covenant Grant Scheme** which has been established to financially support projects, at the local level, which strengthen the ties or the mutual understanding between members of the Armed Forces Community and the wider community in which they live. See the related link for further information.

There has been a Military Covenant in existence since the reign of Henry VIII, albeit not formally enshrined in law. However in 2007 the previous government set out to rebalance the relationship between the Nation, its Government and its Armed Force. The Armed Forces Covenant that was published in May 2011 was the outcome.

The underlying principle of the Covenant is:

“An individual should not be disadvantaged as a result of their service. In exceptional circumstances they should receive special treatment; those circumstances being physical or mental injury and bereavement.”

The main areas the Covenant covers are Healthcare, Housing, Education, Benefits and Tax.

The target group for the Covenant are the Armed Forces Community: serving personnel, ex service personnel and their families. The Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community and is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Government have allocated £30M over 4 years - we are now in year 2 (£5M, £5M, £10M, £10m) towards local practical projects that deliver rapid results in support of the Armed Forces Community.

Although by no means mandatory, a suggested pathway to a Community Covenant is:

- a. A motion is put before Council proposing the adoption of a Community Covenant.
- b. A Council Officer is appointed as an Armed Forces Champion who will be the lead on the development of the covenant, with the ability to coordinate between departments and outside partners and agencies.
- c. Council Officers conduct an assessment of what the Council already does to support the local Armed Forces Community.
- d. Sharing of best practice with neighbouring Local Authorities to maximise commonality of approach.

- e. Once the existing situation is established decide what areas, if any the Council wishes to improve its service to Armed Forces Community, thus creating an action plan.
- f. Supported by the action plan sign the Community Covenant.
- g. The Armed Forces Champion then implements the action plan and the progress is reviewed annually to match the need.