



An Armed Forces Covenant

Between

Buckinghamshire Council

and

The Armed Forces Community

(Serving personnel, both regular and reservist, veterans and military families)

**We, the undersigned, agree to work and act together to honour the
Armed Forces Covenant.**

Date

The Armed Forces Covenant

An Enduring Covenant Between

The People of the United Kingdom

Her Majesty's Government

– and –

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown and their
Families

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces.

In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Royal Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most, such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.

SECTION 1: PARTICIPANTS

1.1 This Armed Forces Covenant commitment is made between:

Buckinghamshire Council

and

The Armed Forces Community in Buckinghamshire (Serving personnel, regulars & reserves, veterans and their families and members of the military sponsored cadet organisations).

SECTION 2: PRINCIPLES OF THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT

- 2.1 Life in the Armed Forces is different from the rest of society; Armed Forces personnel make sacrifices on behalf of the nation. They go where they are sent, when they are sent. So families will have to move, sometimes with little notice, to unfamiliar areas; or they may have to live apart for extended periods of time and they will face the stresses and challenges that arise when a loved one is deployed on operational duties.
- 2.2 This means that they can find themselves at a disadvantage in comparison with their civilian neighbours in accessing the goods and services that as citizens we should all expect. The Armed Forces Covenant aims to ensure that those who serve or have served, and their families are treated fairly and are not disadvantaged because of their Service.
- 2.3 The Armed Forces Covenant is based upon two key principles:
- no member of the Armed Forces community should face disadvantage in the provision of public and commercial services compared to any other citizen;
 - in some circumstances, special treatment may be appropriate for the injured or bereaved.
- 2.4 These principles should be taken into account when writing and implementing policies that impact upon the local populations and should be integrated into all the services, support, engagement and work within **Buckinghamshire Council**.
- 2.5 For the purposes of this Covenant, the Armed Forces community includes Armed Forces personnel and members of the military sponsored cadet organisations. Armed Forces personnel include serving personnel (regulars and reserves), veterans and their families. Children of Armed Forces personnel, no matter the marital status of their parents, should be considered part of this community while still dependent.
- 2.6 The Covenant presents an opportunity for Local Authorities to bring knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the Armed Forces community.
- 2.7 For the Armed Forces community, the Covenant encourages the integration of Service personnel, Veterans and their families into civilian life and to engage with their local community.

SECTION 3: OBJECTIVES AND GENERAL INTENTIONS

- 3.1 This Armed Forces Covenant defines the enduring, general principles that should govern the relationship between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces community.
- 3.2 The signatories to this Covenant will offer support and guidance to the local Armed Forces community and make it easier for serving personnel (regular and reserve), veterans and their families to access help and support from statutory providers.
- 3.3 The Covenant is intended to be a two-way arrangement; members of the Armed Forces community are encouraged to do as much as they can to support all aspects of their local community and promote activity which integrates serving personnel, veterans and their families into local community life.

SECTION 4: CORE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR COVENANT DELIVERY

- 4.1 The MoD publication *Armed Forces Covenant A Guide for Local Authorities* provides guidance on the core infrastructure for Covenant delivery, including the following recommendations.
 - a. **Armed Forces Champions & Lead Officers.** Each Local Authority will appoint an Armed Forces Champion (an elected member) and a Lead Officer, empowered to effect change across the Local Authority.
 - b. **Action Plans.** Each Local Authority will produce and publish an Action Plan to underpin the Covenant commitment; this will help to set out the overall direction and to ensure that the authority keeps on track.
- 4.2 **NHS Trusts.** Local Authorities must be aware of the role of the NHS in the county with reference to the NHS online guide *How to support the Armed Forces in the NHS* that provides resources and information on the Armed Forces agenda within the NHS, including how to advocate and demonstrate support to the Armed Forces community. The key elements of NHS activity are:
 - a. **Armed Forces Network.** The NHS Employers' Armed Forces Network is an opportunity for NHS staff leading on the Armed Forces agenda to share and learn from each other;
 - b. **Step into Health.** The Step into Health programme connects employers in the NHS to people from the Armed Forces community, by offering an access route into employment and career development opportunities;
 - c. **Reserve Forces Champions.** The NHS Reserve Forces Champions Scheme aims to increase the awareness of reservists within the NHS and to highlight the benefits of employing reservists.
- 4.3 **Regular Stakeholder Engagement.** Representatives from each Local Authority will meet regularly through the **Buckinghamshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board**. These meetings will act as a forum where emerging challenges can be discussed and action taken to resolve them; also providing ideal opportunities to share good practice and to network.
- 4.4 **Communications.** The commitments made in this Covenant will be publicised so that local communities are aware of what is being done to deliver them. This will be achieved through dedicated web-pages or newsletters. Local Authority staff who deal with members of the public will be trained so that they are aware of how specific commitments impact upon local services and delivery.

SECTION 5: ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES

- 5.1 **Buckinghamshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board.** Each Local Authority will be represented on the Buckinghamshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board.
- 5.2 **Armed Forces Covenant Fund.** The best possible use will be made of the Covenant Fund, an enduring government grant awarded to projects that will benefit the Armed Forces community.
- 5.3 **Healthcare**
- a. Strive for equity of access to primary and secondary health care services for Service personnel and their dependents; Service family members should maintain their relative position on any NHS waiting list, if moved around the UK due to the Service person being posted.
 - b. Veterans should receive priority treatment (subject to the clinical needs of others) in respect of NHS hospital treatment relating to a condition resulting from their service in the Armed Forces.
 - c. Veterans should be able to access mental health professionals who have an understanding of Armed Forces culture.
 - d. Ensure the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are aware of the potential difficulties faced by members of the Armed Forces community and identify ways in which the CCGs can be involved in Covenant delivery.
 - e. Provide appropriate information to local GPs to ensure that they are aware of the provisions offered to ex-Service personnel under the Covenant.
- 5.4 **Education**
- a. Work with the Children's Services Department to determine the numbers and location of the children of serving personnel (regular and reservist), as well as dependent young people, to include Early Years and Children's Centres.
 - b. Ensure that schools are aware of the Service Pupil Premium and are claiming all that they are entitled to. Determine ways in which Pupil Premium is spent and identify and share areas of good practice.
 - c. Work with schools and local providers to identify where Service personnel's children might require additional support to help them deal with a parent being away from home for long periods of time, often in conflict situations. Children in some Service families may be considered more vulnerable than the general population because of the pressures they face, including PTSD.
 - d. Ensure that policies enable a smooth transition for children from Forces families, alleviating any issues that may be experienced finding a school place mid-term, when a serving parent has been transferred to a new area of the UK; assist when issues arise at any other time relating to finding a school place for a dependent child.

5.5 **Mobility and Deployment**

- a. Identify and share best practice regarding house purchase/rental, enabling service personnel to settle in local communities, working alongside mortgage providers etc. particularly those who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant for businesses.
- b. Ensure the Armed Forces community works closely with council and private housing teams in support of their role of providing advice and support to households leaving the Armed Forces or being re-located within the UK.

5.6 **Housing**

- a. Maintain strong relationships between Local Authorities and the Armed Forces community to ensure timely and accurate information is given and received regarding movement of Service personnel and their housing needs and aspirations.
- b. Ensure that Local Authorities are mindful and remain aware of the particular issues faced by Service personnel and their families. This includes identifying best practice in solving the most challenging of circumstances where a service family or household is settling in our region from another part of the UK or where the housing need is the result of separation or divorce within a Service family.
- c. Raise awareness of housing issues and develop solutions and support systems required to solve or prevent such issues; such as homelessness by Veterans.

5.7 **Social Isolation and sense of community**

- a. Promote best practice engagement in communities across Buckinghamshire, including support to those experiencing social isolation.
- b. Support the development of projects as identified by local communities, making use of the Covenant Fund as appropriate.

5.8 **Transition**

- a. Raise awareness of the issues experienced by the Armed Forces community, including the challenge of career change, and offer support and information on issues arising during transition into civilian life.
- b. Raise awareness, during transition, and offer support, signposting and information to get involved in volunteering and community action as a pathway to health and wellbeing, developing personal interests, helping others and increasing employability
- c. Ensure that injured Service persons transitioning to the civilian world are able to access supported housing or support to enable their existing home to be modified to meet their needs and that they are quickly and compassionately assessed on their level of care requirements.

5.9 Employment and Employers

- a. Promote mutually beneficial relationships between employers and Defence, by advocating the transferable skills and attributes that Armed Forces personnel bring to the civilian workplace as an economic asset.
- b. Promote the Armed Forces Covenant for business, encouraging employers to sign the Covenant in order to pledge commitments to support Defence personnel by:
 - **Promoting the Armed Forces:** promoting the fact that we are an Armed Forces-friendly organisation, to our staff, customers, suppliers, contractors and wider public;
 - **Veterans:** supporting the employment of veterans, recognising military skills and qualifications in our recruitment and selection process. Working with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) in order to establish a tailored employment pathway for Service leavers;
 - **Service Spouses & Partners:** supporting the employment of Service spouses and partners; working with and advertising vacancies with the military Families Federations and other agencies. Providing flexibility in granting leave for Service spouses and partners before, during and after a partner's deployment;
 - **Reserves:** supporting our employees who are members of the Reserve Forces: recognising the need to be flexible with regard to leave for annual Reserve Forces training; supporting any mobilisations and deployment. Actively encouraging members of staff to become Reservists;
 - **Cadet Organisations:** supporting our employees who are volunteer leaders in military cadet organisations, recognising the need to be flexible with regard to leave for annual training camps and courses. Actively encouraging members of staff to become volunteer leaders in cadet organisations. Supporting local military cadet units;
 - **Armed Forces Charities:** supporting Armed Forces charities with fundraising and supporting staff who volunteer to assist.

5.10 **Remembrance and Recognition.** Promote participation in and support for events and functions to celebrate and remember the sacrifices of our Armed Forces Personnel, both past and present. This will include: the Poppy Appeal; Remembrance Sunday; Armistice Day; Armed Forces Day; Reserves Day.

5.11 Information sharing

- a. Raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant throughout Buckinghamshire and particularly to the Public Sector through development of resources and discussion.
- b. Identify good practice within communities which promote greater visibility of the Armed Forces, their contribution and needs.
- c. Promote the Armed Forces Covenant Fund to community groups and Forces personnel.

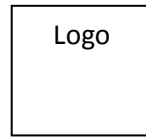
Section 6: Signatories

Buckinghamshire Council

Signed:

Name:

Position:



THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Royal Navy

Signed:

Name:

Position:



Army

Signed:

Name:

Position:



Royal Air Force

Signed:

Name:

Position:

