

Cabinet

18th April 2012

Armed Forces Community Covenant



**Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive
Councillor Simon Henig, Leader of Council**

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report recommends that the Council enters into a Community Covenant with the Armed Forces to support the active Armed Forces community in County Durham as well as ex service personnel and their families.

Background

- 2 The National Armed Forces Covenant was launched in May 2011 to enshrine the obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces. The core principles of the National Covenant are that members of the Armed Forces community should not suffer disadvantage as a result of their service and that where appropriate they may receive special treatment (especially those who have been injured or bereaved). The National Covenant is supported by 'The Armed Forces Covenant: Today and Tomorrow', which sets out the actions currently being taken by central government to support the Armed Forces community as well as future measures.
- 3 To support the National Covenant, the Government and Armed Forces are encouraging the development of Community Covenants, which are voluntary statements of mutual support between a civil community and its local Armed Forces community.
- 4 The aims of the Armed Forces Community Covenants 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;
 - 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.

- 5 The Secretary of State for Defence has allocated £30 million funding over the next four years to support Community Covenants. The aim of the Community Covenant Grant Scheme is to provide financial support to 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. The Grant Scheme will consider applications for projects (£100 to £250,000) that deliver tangible results and meet the overall aims of the Community Covenant Scheme. An Armed Forces Community Covenant and a Community Covenant Partnership must be in place before the funding can be accessed.
- 6 A draft covenant for County Durham is presented in Appendix 2. It is proposed that this is adopted by the authority at full council alongside colleagues in health witnessed by members of the Armed Forces and affiliated organisations including Armed Forces charities.

Other areas that have Armed Forces Community Covenants

- 7 There are a number of local authorities which have adopted Community Covenants.

Authority	Activity
Gateshead MBC	Committed to delivering recommendations in Joint Overview and Scrutiny report (see below).
South Tyneside MBC	Develop Armed Forces Forum which will publish annual statement of activity and future action plan.
Hampshire County Council	Developed a welfare pathway pilot to support Armed forces and their families.
Stockton Borough Council	Includes commitment from the Armed Forces to supporting authority
Vale of Glamorgan Council	Developed Armed Forces Service Library.
North Yorkshire County Council	Partnership in place to support Covenant. Regularly reviewing action.
Oxfordshire County Council	Establishment of dedicated web page for Armed Forces.

Needs of Armed Forces Community

- 8 The Royal British Legion's Welfare Needs Research Programme reported in 2006 that:
- the ex-service community in the UK was made up of about 10.5 million people. Just under half or 4.8 million people in the ex-Service community are veterans and 5.37 million are dependants. The size of the ex-Service community is expected to reduce over the next 15 years to an estimated 7.55 million people in 2020.
 - the average age of the ex-service community was 63 years, compared with 47 years for the adult population. The number of people in the community aged over 85 was expected to triple over the period to 2020, with a small increase in the number of 16-24 year olds, and a fall in the numbers of those in-between;
 - over half (52%) of the ex-Service community report having a long-term illness or disability, compared with 35% in the general population;
 - in the 16-44 age group: the number of mental health disorders among members of the ex-service community was three times that of the UK population of the same age; there was a higher prevalence of musculo-skeletal complaints;
 - in the 45-64 age group: members of the ex-service community were more prone to cardio-vascular or respiratory conditions than their peers; both men and women who are economically inactive reported significantly higher levels of ill-health in the ex-service community than in the general population;
 - members of the ex-service community aged 65-75 report less ill health than their peers in the general population, while those aged over 75 reported similar health to everyone else of that age.
- 9 There are difficulties in getting accurate statistics in relation to the Armed Forces community in the North East, due to differences in data collection, and geographical definitions.
- 10 The Royal British Legion survey of 2006 found that ex-service personnel were spread roughly evenly around the country, implying an ex-service community in North East England of around 500,000. Estimates of recruitment into the armed forces suggest that around 10% come from North East England, while 10-15% of war pension recipients live here. By comparison, the North East only contains 4% of the general population of the UK. This would seem to imply an ex-service community of 1 million or more. According to figures from the Directorate of Resettlement, in the last two years 5,620 service leavers indicated a preference to settle in the North East area (covering Humber to the Borders). These comprised 3,700 Army, 1,100 RAF, and 820 Navy personnel.

Activity in the North East and County Durham

- 11 The particular needs of Armed Forces personnel in the North East have been highlighted by recent work undertaken by a regional overview and scrutiny review into the health and social care needs of ex-service people and their families. The scrutiny report found 47 areas for improvement for local authorities and NHS bodies across the region in supporting Armed Forces personnel. These recommendations are being progressed via the North East NHS Armed Forces Forum, and the Association of North East Councils' (ANEC) Chief Executives Network with the Regional Health Scrutiny Joint Committee monitoring progress. At the moment, plans are in place for ANEC to develop a regional Armed Forces Community

Covenant. The adoption of a covenant by Durham County Council will help this ambition become one step closer.

- 12 Durham County Council has already undertaken a number of actions to help support the ex- armed forces community:
 - The Cabinet portfolio holder for health has been appointed as executive lead for ex-service communities; this has been supported by the appointment of an officer lead in the Director of Public Health. .
 - Durham Key Options (choice based letting scheme) includes ex-service communities as a priority group.
 - Ex-service communities have been identified as a particular community of need in the Joint Strategic Health Needs Assessment.
- 13 Durham County Council also recognises and shows gratitude to members of the Armed Forces through a range of civic events and ceremonies. For example:
 - The authority has acknowledged the bravery of the crew of our affiliated ship HMS Bulwark by granting them the freedom of the city in Durham.
 - Similarly, the Durham Rifles have been granted the freedom of the city following their bravery and courage.
 - The authority undertakes a range of activities organised in partnership with all sectors of the armed forces to mark Armed Forces Day.
 - Remembrance Day is celebrated across the county in a range of events, parades and services with Councillors and officers showing their respect for the role undertaken by the Armed Forces in all conflicts.
- 14 These initiatives are complemented by work undertaken by the NHS in County Durham:
 - Continuation of veteran's progression pathway using funding from Royal British Legion and Combat Stress (initially a pilot by NHS).
 - Extension of Salus Worklessness Service to include veterans and ex-service personnel.
 - North East Primary Care Support Agency has undertaken an awareness campaign with GP practices in relation to access to health services and priority treatment.
- 15 Plans are underway to develop a time limited working group between the NHS and the Council to develop an action plan against the regional Overview and Scrutiny report recommendations. The action plan will be shared with the Cabinet portfolio holder, Corporate Management Team and respective service groupings as well as the shadow health and wellbeing board.
- 16 This report will also be considered by the County Durham Partnership Forum in June for their support and endorsement.

Recommendations

- 17 Members are asked to recommend that full Council endorses the signing of the Armed Forces Community Covenant on 16th May.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance -

Through the adoption of a covenant the authority will be able to apply for MOD funding to facilitate important projects to improve outcomes for the Armed Forces Community.

Staffing -

There are no immediate staffing implications for the authority in signing the covenant. Commitment has already been made by services to support the development of an action plan to address the issues raised in the recent regional scrutiny report on the health of the ex-armed forces community.

Risk -

A specific risk assessment has not been undertaken.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty -

It has been recognised that those individuals who have served within the Armed Forces face a range of challenges and difficulties once they leave service. Through the adoption of the covenant we are committing the authority to acknowledge and recognise the importance of the contributions that these individuals have made and develop a range of actions to help support an improvement in outcomes for this group and their families.

A specific EIA will be undertaken on the action plan which will support the covenant.

Accommodation -

There are no implications for accommodation.

Crime and Disorder -

Not applicable

Human Rights -

Though the adoption of the covenant we are specifically acknowledging the human rights of those individuals who have been in the Armed services.

Consultation -

Discussions have taken place with colleagues in the NHS as well as with a military representative from 5th Battalion, the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

Procurement -

There are no implications for procurement.

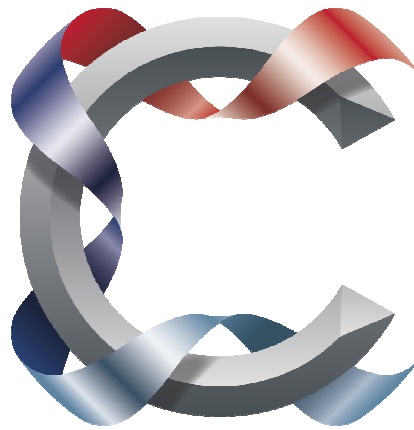
Disability Issues -

It has been recognised that those individuals who have served within the Armed Forces face a range of challenges and difficulties once they leave the services. Through the adoption of the covenant we are committing the authority to acknowledge and recognise the importance of the contributions that these individuals have made and develop a range of actions to help support an improvement in outcomes for this group and their families.

A specific EIA will be undertaken on the action plan which will support the covenant.

Legal Implications -

There are no significant legal implications.



Community Covenant

AN ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

BETWEEN

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHARITABLE
AND VOLUNTARY SECTORS,
THE CIVILIAN COMMUNITY OF COUNTY DURHAM

AND

THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY IN COUNTY DURHAM

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

Signatories

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

Signed on behalf of the Armed Forces

Date:

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

Signed on behalf of Durham County Council

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

Signed on behalf of Armed Forces Charities

Date:

Signed:

Name:

Position Held:

Signed on behalf of the Primary Care Trust/NHS Body

Date:

SECTION 1: PARTICIPANTS

1.1 This Armed Forces Community Covenant is made between:

The serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families working and residing in County Durham

And

Durham County Council

SECTION 2: PRINCIPLES OF THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

2.1 The Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at the local level.

2.2 The purpose of this Community Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in County Durham and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel their families and widow(er)s in County Durham.

2.3 For Durham County Council and partner organisations, the Community Covenant presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the Armed Forces Community. It also presents an opportunity to build upon existing good work on other initiatives such as the Welfare Pathway.

2.4 For the Armed Forces community, the Community Covenant encourages the integration of Service life into civilian life and encourages members of the Armed Forces community to help their local community.

SECTION 3: OBJECTIVES AND GENERAL INTENTIONS

Aims of the Community Covenant

3.1 The Armed Forces Community Covenant complements the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant which defines the enduring, general principles that should govern the relationship between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces community.

3.2 It aims to encourage all parties within a community to offer support to the local Armed Forces community and make it easier for Service personnel, families and veterans to access the help and support available from the MOD, from statutory providers and from the Charitable and Voluntary Sector. These organisations already work together in partnership at local level.

3.3 The scheme is intended to be a two-way arrangement and the Armed Forces community are encouraged to do as much as they can to support their community and promote activity which integrates the Service community into civilian life.

SECTION 4: Measures

4.1 During 2010-11 a major project was carried out involving all 12 councils in the North East reviewing the health inequalities suffered by ex- service people and their families. This report resulted in recommendations for improvement across 47 areas of work, many of which were directed towards councils in the region.

4.2 Durham County Council has agreed to work with a wide range of partners / stakeholders to implement the Joint Committee recommendations directed towards local authorities at a local level.

4.3 An action plan is being developed in line with recommendations of the recent scrutiny report by the Director of Public Health.

4.4 Durham County Council will report progress against the recommendations to the North East Regional Health Scrutiny Joint Committee on a six monthly basis.

4.5 Durham County Council will also work with other local authorities across the North East region and other relevant stakeholders to implement those recommendations requiring a regional focus and will act as lead authority progressing specific recommendations where this is agreed by the 12 authorities.

4.6 In relation to serving personnel and their families we pledge to:

- recognise, respect and show gratitude of military service;
- honour the commitment and sacrifice of the armed forces community;
- take positive measures to prevent any disadvantage as a result of military service.

4.7 We will review, as part of the work led by the Joint Director of Public Health our progress against our action plan.

CONTACT PERSONNEL AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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In-Service representative(s)

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Title:
Telephone:
Address:

Durham County Council

Contact Name:
Title:
Telephone:
Fax:
Address:

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 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.