

Cabinet

11 April 2018



Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Veterans

Report of Corporate Management Team

John Hewitt, Corporate Director of Resources and Lorraine O'Donnell, Director Transformation and Partnerships

Councillor Lucy Hovvels, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adults and Health Services (Veterans Champion)

Councillor Jane Brown, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Social Inclusion

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To set out the aims and the qualifying criteria of a guaranteed interview scheme for veterans as a means of assisting veterans overcome barriers to accessing recruitment opportunities and potentially finding civilian employment; and
- 2 To ask Cabinet to consider the introduction of a guaranteed interview scheme for veterans together with a review of the current advertising arrangements for external vacancies to promote better access for veterans.

Background

- 3 In June 2012 the Council and the County Durham Partnership signed the Armed Forces Covenant. The covenant is a national responsibility involving government, businesses, local authorities, charities and the public. It is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the armed forces and their families, are treated fairly.
- 4 The Council has set up an Armed Forces Forum to encourage all partners within County Durham to work together to take positive measures to prevent any disadvantage to individuals as a result of military service, or their return from it.
- 5 In November 2015 the Council achieved the MOD Employer Recognition Scheme Silver award in acknowledgment of its support for the covenant and in particular the adoption of a Reserve Forces Policy. We are now working towards achieving the Gold award.
- 6 In August 2016 the Local Government Association and the Forces in Mind Trust published a report 'Our Community Our Covenant – improving the delivery of local covenant pledges'. This report recommends that a core infrastructure is adopted by councils seeking to successfully implement the covenant.

- 7 The report further outlines action being taken by some councils in relation to key locally delivered public services to support the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant and the MoD recommend that Corporate Covenant pledges can be fulfilled by offering guaranteed interviews to Veterans where agreed criteria are met.
- 8 The Council has carried out a self-assessment, as recommended by the LGA report, and developed an action plan to improve the delivery of local covenant pledges. The Council has in place the core infrastructure and is working on following good practice adopted by some other councils in relation to locally delivered public services.
- 9 The Council was approached in November 2017 by Councillor Andrew Newman (North Tyneside Council) re a scheme in development at North Tyneside to guarantee an interview to veterans who meet the minimum criteria for an advertised post.
- 10 The Armed Forces Covenant is a nationally recognised initiative and the introduction of a guaranteed interview scheme for veterans would further demonstrate the Council's commitment to the Covenant.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme for Veterans

- 11 Those leaving the armed forces, whether voluntarily through redundancy or medically discharged face a number of challenges within the jobs market. Often employers find it difficult to understand an individual's military experience in order to identify transferable skills and talent.
- 12 The veterans guaranteed interview scheme is a pledge by businesses to invite those who have served in the armed forces to an interview where they meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy. It affords veterans the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage where appropriate.
- 13 A number of Councils e.g. Cumbria County Council have introduced schemes which, in the main, follow a similar format with a guaranteed interview being offered to veterans who declare their status and provided certain criteria which are set by the employing organisation are met. For example Cumbria have set the following criteria:
 - (a) They are currently serving in the regular armed forces and are within 12 weeks of their discharge date;
 - (b) They meet the essential criteria for an advertised post; **or alternatively**
 - (c) The regular armed forces was the veteran's last long-term employer;
 - (d) No more than 3 years elapsed since the veteran left the regular armed forces;
 - (e) The veteran meets the essential criteria for an advertised post.

Proposal

- 14 The introduction of a guaranteed interview scheme for veterans would further improve the delivery of local covenant pledges and contribute to Durham becoming a more veteran friendly employer.
- 15 The scheme would apply criteria as detailed in para 13 above which would create a longer shortlist of candidates than might otherwise arise. No candidate would therefore be displaced from a shortlist by the application of the scheme.
- 16 The scheme would not represent a guaranteed job for veterans and in all other respects they would be subject to the Council's Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure. The application of the policy would still ensure that the best candidate for the job was appointed based on objective criteria.
- 17 The scheme would have no bearing on redeployment, redundancy selection or internal restructures.
- 18 However the introduction of the scheme would demonstrate that as a large employer with a broad range of types of employment there is a critical role for the Council to play in addressing veterans' employment difficulties.
- 19 There are a number of benefits for both the veteran and the employer with regards to the scheme. Veterans can bring valuable transferable skills and qualities into the organisation such as:
 - (a) Communication skills;
 - (b) Organisational skills and commitment;
 - (c) Problem solving and adaptability;
 - (d) Leadership and management skills;
 - (e) Health and safety/security awareness;
 - (f) Team working skills.
- 20 Should the Council agree to introduce the scheme it is recommended that it is subject to annual review to measure the ongoing impact and effectiveness of the arrangement.
- 21 To further support the Council's commitment to becoming a veteran friendly employer consideration also needs to be given to extending the platform currently used for advertising our external vacancies to include the MoD's Career Transition Partnership Right Job Website and the Council's Armed Forces Outreach Service.

Recommendations and reasons

22 Cabinet is asked to agree:

- (a) The introduction of a guaranteed interview scheme for veterans in order to demonstrate commitment to becoming a more veteran friendly employer and to support veterans' transition to civilian life;
- (b) To a review of the Council's existing advertising practices with the aim of increasing the accessibility for veterans to the Council's external job adverts.

Contact: Suzanne Weston Tel: 03000 265 448
Ian Hunter Smart Tel: 03000 263 595

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – No additional finance required

Staffing – No additional staffing required

Risk – In terms of making such a decision there was not believed to be a ‘risk’ per se as the Council as an employer has the discretion to set our own recruitment processes as long as they comply with legislation.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – In applying a policy which gives preferential treatment to a group wider than those with a protected characteristic, the Council must ensure that it continues to meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. A full equality impact assessment is attached at Appendix 2.

Accommodation – N/A

Crime and Disorder – N/A

Human Rights – N/A

Consultation – TU Joint Consultative Forum.

Procurement – N/A

Disability Issues – See Equality and Diversity

Legal Implications – Discrimination in the recruitment process is prohibited under the Equality Act 2010 in terms of deciding to whom employment is offered and the terms under which offers are made and/or if employment is not offered. The Scheme’s aims have been designed to reflect the pledges made in the Armed Forces Community Covenant, setting out a legitimate aim to redress the balance of the difficulties faced by the Veteran community in finding civilian employment. The scheme also has the legitimate aim of contributing to the Council’s priorities for County Durham. These legitimate aims represent a proportionate justification of any potential discrimination.

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

NB: The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires Durham County Council to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different groups. Assessing impact on equality and recording this is one of the key ways in which we can show due regard.

Section One: Description and Screening

Service/Team or Section	HR Resources
Lead Officer	Suzanne Weston / Ian Hunter Smart
Title	Veteran Guaranteed Interview Scheme
MTFP Reference (if relevant)	NA
Cabinet Date (if relevant)	11.04.18
Start Date	22.02.18
Review Date	May 2019

Subject of the Impact Assessment

Please give a brief description of the policy, proposal or practice as appropriate (a copy of the subject can be attached or insert a web-link):

In June 2012 the Council and the County Durham Partnership signed the Armed Forces Covenant. The covenant is a national responsibility involving government, businesses, local authorities, charities and the public. It is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly.

This impact assessment examines the proposal to introduce a guaranteed interview scheme for veterans where they meet the essential criteria and to agree a review of existing job vacancy advertising with the aim of increasing accessibility for veterans. This will support our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant to become a more veteran friendly employer and to support veterans' transition to civilian life. The proposed criteria for applicants is that:

- They are currently serving in the regular armed forces and are within 12 weeks of their discharge date;
- They meet the essential criteria for an advertised post; **or alternatively**
- The regular armed forces was the veteran's last long-term employer;
- No more than 3 years elapsed since the veteran left the regular armed forces;
- The veteran meets the essential criteria for an advertised post.

Who are the main stakeholders? (e.g. general public, staff, members, specific clients/service users) - potential employees, staff

Screening

Is there any actual or potential negative or positive impact on the following protected characteristics?		
Protected Characteristic	Negative Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure	Positive Impact Indicate: Y = Yes, N = No, ? = unsure
Age	N	Y
Disability	N	Y
Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)	N	N
Pregnancy and maternity	N	N
Race (ethnicity)	N	N
Religion or Belief	N	N
Sex (gender)	?	Y
Sexual orientation	N	N
Transgender	N	N

Please provide **brief** details of any potential to cause adverse impact. Record full details and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

There is a potential for indirect discrimination on women as MoD data indicates working age veterans are more likely to be male. In mitigation, qualifying veterans will be added to the shortlist rather than replacing others who may otherwise have been shortlisted. The scheme is **not** a guarantee of a job and the application of the recruitment and selection policy will ensure that the best candidate for the job is appointed based on objective criteria.

How will this policy/proposal/practice promote our commitment to our legal responsibilities under the public sector equality duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good relations between people from different groups?

The scheme aims to reduce the barriers experienced by veterans in accessing recruitment opportunities and potentially securing civilian employment. Barriers include employers often finding it difficult to understand an individual's military experience to identify transferable skills and talents. The scheme should:

- Attract quality applicants with transferable and useful skills into the workforce;
- Strengthen the council's position as a supporter of veterans;
- Provide opportunities for the council to publicise its commitment to veterans;

This could potentially be of greater benefit to men who make up the largest proportion of working age veterans. Disabled veterans who meet the essential criteria, however, are eligible to a guaranteed interview under the 'Disability Confident' scheme.

Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

Please **outline** your data sets and/or proposed evidence sources, highlight any gaps and say whether or not you propose to carry out consultation. Record greater detail and analysis in the following section of this assessment.

In August 2016 the Local Government Association and the Forces in Mind Trust published a report 'Our Community Our Covenant – improving the delivery of local covenant pledges'. The report outlined action being taken by some councils to support the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant and the MoD recommend that Corporate Covenant pledges can be fulfilled by offering guaranteed interviews to Veterans where agreed criteria are met (page 34):

<https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/communities/armed-forces-covenant>

Annual population survey of UK armed forces veterans residing in Great Britain:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-population-survey-uk-armed-forces-veterans-residing-in-great-britain>

The scheme has been introduced by a number of local authorities including Cumbria County Council:

<http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/eLibrary/Content/Internet/536/5901/6849/4254194921.pdf>

and West Sussex County Council:

http://www2.westsussex.gov.uk/ds/edd/cr/cr02_15-16.pdf

Screening Summary

On the basis of this screening is there:	Confirm which refers (Y/N)
Evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics which will proceed to full assessment?	Y
No evidence of actual or potential impact on some/all of the protected characteristics?	N

Sign Off

Lead officer sign off: Suzanne Weston, HR Business Lead	Date: 23.02.18
Ian Hunter Smart, Voluntary and Community Sector Officer	
Service equality representative sign off: Mary Gallagher, E&D Officer	Date: 23.02.18

If carrying out a full assessment please proceed to section two.

If not proceeding to full assessment please return completed screenings to your service equality representative and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk

If you are unsure of potential impact please contact the corporate research and equalities team for further advice at equalities@durham.gov.uk

Section Two: Data analysis and assessment of impact

Please provide details on impacts for people with different protected characteristics relevant to your screening findings. You need to decide if there is or likely to be a differential impact for some. Highlight the positives e.g. benefits for certain groups, advancing equality, as well as the negatives e.g. barriers for and/or exclusion of particular groups. Record the evidence you have used to support or explain your conclusions. Devise and record mitigating actions where necessary.

Protected Characteristic: Age		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Record of evidence to support or explain your conclusions on impact.	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Scheme will benefit working age veterans.</p> <p>Qualifying veterans will be added to the shortlist rather than replacing others who may otherwise have been shortlisted.</p> <p>Managers would need to potentially interview larger numbers of candidates to accommodate anyone applying under this scheme.</p> <p>Application of the recruitment and selection policy will ensure that the best candidate for the job is appointed based on objective criteria.</p>	<p>7% of working age UK veterans reside in the North East region. This represents around 61,000 people which is 3.5% of the overall regional working population. (Source: Annual Population Survey for UK Armed Forces Veterans residing in Great Britain, 2016)</p> <p>Accurate county wide data (Durham) is unavailable.</p>	<p>Carry out annual analysis of equality data to ascertain impact.</p>

Protected Characteristic: Disability		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>Disabled veterans who meet the essential job vacancy criteria are eligible to a guaranteed interview under the 'Disability Confident' scheme. Disabled veterans will therefore not be restricted to the qualifying criteria of the proposed veteran's scheme, such as, currently serving or having left the armed forces within the last three years for example.</p>	<p>DCC are a 'Disability Confident Employer' which means that all disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria in the job specification are guaranteed and interview.</p>	<p>Ensure review of job vacancy advertising includes awareness raising of the disability confident scheme with veterans.</p> <p>Ensure reasonable adjustments are made for disabled applicants where required.</p>

Protected Characteristic: Marriage and civil partnership (workplace only)		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: Pregnancy and maternity		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: Race (ethnicity)		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: Religion or belief		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: Sex (gender)		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?
<p>There is a potential for indirect discrimination on women as MoD data indicates working age veterans are more likely to be male.</p> <p>Qualifying veterans will be added to the shortlist rather than replacing others who may otherwise have been shortlisted. The scheme is not a guarantee of a job and the application of the recruitment and selection</p>	<p>90% of all UK veterans are male. (Source: Annual Population Survey for UK Armed Forces Veterans residing in Great Britain, 2016)</p> <p>The above % includes veterans aged over 65 years, working age (16-64 years) veterans are likely to include proportionately more women.</p> <p>Durham County Council's workforce (non-schools based)</p>	<p>Carry out annual analysis of equality data to ascertain impact.</p>

<p>policy will ensure that the best candidate for the job is appointed based on objective criteria.</p> <p>Managers would need to potentially interview larger numbers of candidates to accommodate anyone applying under this scheme.</p> <p>The scheme may attract more male applicants to positions where there are currently high proportions of women which would advance equality of opportunity.</p>	<p>is currently 60.6% female.</p>	
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Protected Characteristic: Sexual orientation		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?

Protected Characteristic: Transgender		
What is the actual or potential impact on stakeholders?	Explain your conclusion considering relevant evidence and consultation	What further action or mitigation is required?

Section Three: Conclusion and Review Summary

<p>Please provide a brief summary of your findings stating the main impacts, both positive and negative, across the protected characteristics.</p>
<p>The proposed guaranteed interview scheme for veterans (subject to specified criteria) will have positive impacts in terms of working age and for men. Disabled applicants are already covered under the council's 'Disability Confident' scheme for a guaranteed interview where the essential criteria in the job specification is met.</p> <p>There is a potential for indirect discrimination on women as MoD data indicates working age veterans are more likely to be male. In mitigation, qualifying veterans will be added to the shortlist rather than replacing others who may otherwise have been shortlisted. The scheme is not a guarantee of a job and the application of the recruitment and selection policy will ensure that the best candidate for the job is appointed based on objective criteria.</p>

The scheme may attract more male applicants to positions where there are currently high proportions of women which would advance equality of opportunity.

Annual analysis of equality data will help to ascertain impact going forward.

Will this promote positive relationships between different communities? If so how?

The guaranteed interview scheme will help support veterans' transition into civilian life by giving them opportunities to use their transferable skills in a civilian setting. The council will also benefit from their skills. This will help integrate members of the regular armed forces community with the local community.

Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescales for implementation	In which plan will the action appear?
Monitor uptake and impact of the scheme. Carry out annual analysis of equality data to ascertain impact.	HR and the Equalities and Diversity Team	Annual	Implementation
Ensure review of job vacancy advertising includes awareness raising of the disability confident scheme with veterans.	HR and the Veterans Outreach Service	Ongoing	Implementation
Ensure reasonable adjustments are made for disabled applicants where required.	HR and Service Managers	Ongoing	Recruitment and Selection Policy

Review

Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken? (Y/N)	N
When will this assessment be reviewed? Please also insert this date at the front of the template	Annual Review

Sign Off

Lead officer sign off:	Date: 20.03.18
Service equality representative sign off:	Date: 20.03.18

Please return the completed form to your service equality representative and forward a copy to equalities@durham.gov.uk