



Community Covenant

Gloucestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant

Annual Report– 2012/13

Principles of the Armed Forces Community Covenant

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 a local level.

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

For Gloucestershire County Council and partner organisations, the Community Covenant presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear, through the provision of help and advice to members of the whole Armed Forces community. It also presents an opportunity to build upon existing good work.

For the Armed Forces community, the Covenant encourages the integration of Service life into civilian life as well as encouraging members of the armed forces community to help in their local community

1st Battalion The Rifles

1 Rifles and ASDA (one of the largest local employers) held a Fun Day at Beachley Barracks earlier in the year for the families/dependents of 1 Rifles. This also incorporated ASDA's regional driving competition (held on the drill square) and fundraising for C4C.

A number of smaller community projects have also been run in conjunction with local sports clubs, schools and volunteer agencies (predominately SSAFA) with more enduring outcomes.

A 'Bugles breakfast' at Beachley Barracks was arranged, to which local public sector officers were invited.

Allied Rapid Reaction Corps

Most of ARRC's community involvement is at a local level. They have hosted several events for local schools and colleges at the Barracks.

Two examples are (i) the Gifted and Talented sports event, a joint venture with Hartpury College, and (ii) a visit by pupils and staff from the Raikes Centre. On these visits, the students are given a chance to see some of what the army does, and the opportunity to try out some of the facilities on site, mainly the sports facilities.

ARRC also goes out to community based events. Recent examples are:

- Helping the local Parish Council by planting bulbs and other plants in the Churchdown Ponds area
- Painting the fences around Churchdown Park.
- Having soldiers helping with RBL collections at Kingsholm Rugby Ground.
- The Innsworth Military Choir has sung at Gloucester Rugby Club.

Regarding the Covenant itself, the Support Battalion has followed up on the grant to Alabaré by sponsoring the garden at the house in Gloucester. Through Regimental funds, the Battalion has provided several planters, bulbs and plants, to make the outside more attractive, with the soldiers forming the workforce.

As an ongoing activity, we have provided work experience for several individual children from local schools. Although we cannot accept individual work placements for children under sixteen, those who have attended have all valued the experience.

Where possible, we hire out MOD facilities to local sporting and youth groups. The scouts and brownies use the Welfare Centre; local church groups use the football pitch and the astro turf and a martial arts group uses the gymnasium.

Several parents and staff volunteer as governors at local schools; ensuring not only regimental support but also local support on an individual basis. There are members too on several local groups, such as the Kingsway Residents Association.

Future Plans:

Hosting events at the Barracks

Military Wives Choir to perform in more concerts.

Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC)

Housing

CBC applies the recent changes to the Gloucestershire Home Seeker's Allocations Scheme, which ensures that members leaving the Armed Forces (along with their families) receive greater preferences than previously under the scheme.

Planning

The strategic Land Use Team along with other districts and the County Council, have regular discussions with the Ministry of Defence to inform the Council's emerging Local Development Framework and Core Strategy. The strategic allocation for employment and housing identified at MOD Ashchurch is included within the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy. Engagement with the MOD estates team is ongoing.

Commemoration

CBC participates in and supports occasions which highlight the role of the military, including Armed Forces Day, Battle of Britain Day and Remembrance Sunday.

Human Resources

Any reservists employed by Cheltenham Borough Council are supported with paid leave, and are included in the Cheltenham Borough Council HR, 'Aspects of a Major Emergency or Business Continuity Event' document.

Employees participate in the emergency planning response for the Royal International Air Tattoo each year, and are placed on standby to assist in the event of an emergency.

Future Plans

In 2014 the war memorial will be renovated and LED lighting installed, to mark the centenary of the start of the First World War. Two plaques commemorating Cheltenham Victoria Cross recipients will also be added.

The Chairman of Cheltenham Royal British Legion branch will be invited onto Cheltenham's *Positive Participation Partnership Board*, to represent the serving and retired military personnel and their families who live in the borough.

The community engagement pages at www.cheltenham.gov.uk, which are currently under redevelopment, will include a new page containing information for members of the armed forces and their families. Businesses in the borough, which offer the defence discount service are also listed on the website.

Cotswold District Council (CDC)

The 29 Regiment Partnership Project, led by Cotswold District Council, successfully secured just under £14K of Community Covenant funding in August 2012. A partnership of 10 statutory and voluntary organisations have worked with the 29 Regiment Royal Logistics Corps at South Cerney to deliver a year's community development programme. The aim has been to provide services and activities to raise awareness of, and improve access to, information and advice; encourage and support families to integrate into local life more easily by providing "taster access" to activities, building confidence so that they feel more able and motivated to take part in mainstream activities in the wider community and reduce the isolation of families, many of whom do not have cars and who cannot get into Cirencester, which is just three miles away because there is no public transport.

Since securing the funding, the partnership has achieved the following:

- Taster day – learning, CAB, sport and leisure, health, housing, timebanking, play, youth support, voluntary groups – 120 participants
- A new regular bus service was introduced
- A programme of adult learning attracted 83 course enrolments on 8 courses
- CAB – 4 outreach sessions incl a fun quiz awareness raising event for c 70 soldiers, 2 financial capability sessions, draft booklet

- Housing – information session for 30 soldiers
- Play Rangers – Feb – Aug 13: 10 days, 60 hours, 470 play visits, 56 children, parents too!
- 4 Get Active sessions for children over the summer holidays and 2 zumba for families sessions
- Participation in army family days
- Information leaflet - designed with parents on the base

The “soft outcomes” have been very positive with anecdotal evidence about women feeling more confident, improved English language skills, improved social links on the base.

CDC gives priority to military personnel (reflected in the recently revised allocations policy) and always marks the Armistice at the CDC offices.

Future Plans:

CDC will be submitting another bid for funding to build on these achievements and ensure a lasting legacy for the base and the wider community of mutual understanding, appreciation and integration

Forest Of Dean District Council (FODDC)

- FODDC supports Remembrance Day with a minutes silence and local poppy day collections
- FODDC organises an Armed Forces Day flag raising ceremony to which 1 Rifles and the Royal British Legion are invited.
- FODDC has actively supported a member of staff to become a RN reservist
- The community engagement team at FODDC has had meetings with Maj Roger Rowley (1 Rifles) with regards to Sedbury and Barracks community integration.
- FODDC has contributed to the decision making panel for the Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant Scheme.
- A representative from the Rifles is invited to the Chairman’s Charity Dinner
- FODDC has held a pilot and a full day event with the Rifles at the GO Ape leisure location. The aim was to strengthen links between FODDC, the local community and 1 Rifles.

Future Plans:

FoDDC has delegated to Coleford Town Council and Clearwell Parish Council responsibility for installing WW1 VC commemorative stones.

Gloucester City Council

- Gloucester City Council is committed to supporting staff who are members of any of the Armed Forces Reservists or other military support service through its flexible employment arrangements, which will explicitly state the armed forces reservists policy in 2013.
- The Building Control Service provides a free advice service and does not charge for any planning applications made for extensions or alterations to a domestic property for armed forces personnel returning from service with a disability.
- On Sunday 4th November 2012 a Festival of Remembrance was held at GL1 leisure centre at 7.30pm in partnership with the Royal British Legion.

- On Sunday 11th November 2012, morning observances were held at Tredworth cemeteries from 10.10am – The Mayor and Sheriff of Gloucester, Chief Executive, Directors of Gloucester City Council got together with Royal British Legion and others to attend two observances (both sides of the cemetery). A morning service took place at The Cenotaph (Gloucester Park) at 10.50am. The City Council ensure (in partnership with Amey) that the Cenotaph is kept in pristine condition throughout the year, along with the war graves at Gloucester cemetery, to recognise the sacrifices made by service personnel. An afternoon service took place at Gloucester Cathedral at 3.00pm. The service was then followed by a parade from the Cathedral to Gloucester Guildhall at approx. 4.00pm for a tea reception.
- The Lead Officer has been involved in reviewing grant applications for the Community Covenant Grant Scheme during 2013.

Gloucestershire County Council (GCC)

Strategic Planning

Quarterly meetings take place with the Director of Communities and Infrastructure, the lead officer and regional MOD representatives. Discussions include national military overview, asset management, HR and county initiatives.

Schools

Services to deal with school place applications made by forces families are provided by the Gloucestershire Admissions and Appeals Teams.

Within the objective of the covenant:

- We now allow Armed Forces personnel to apply for a school place when overseas as long as they have a posting order.
- We use the assigned unit's main gate as the address point until they have a married quarter allocated.
- We refer to the Covenant when giving advice to families and schools regarding school applications to ensure we give the correct information.
- We have a copy of the full Armed Forces Covenant and have developed a consistent approach to school admission queries and applications with the benefit of an Ex Military (HR) Advisor who works in our team.
- The In Year Admissions Manager – Jenny Challenger - is a member of the Innsworth Station Planning Group. This group meets quarterly to discuss Education and Learning for Force Families along with CEAS and Officers from the Innsworth Barracks including a Liaison Officer and a Group Welfare Officer. This important point of contact is valuable for all parties and identifies any education concerns for forces families.
- We have developed Information booklets for the local ARRC barracks in a variety of languages which gives advice on how to apply for school places

Human Resources

GCC remains supportive of staff (a) becoming military reservists and (b) undertaking the appropriate training. We continue to offer them the facility to take additional authorised 'special paid leave' in order to attend the annual training camps.

Future Plans:

To call a group together who will champion the Military Covenant and take issues forward for development.

NHS Gloucestershire

Priority treatment of veterans

The NHS is committed to the priority treatment of veterans. All veterans are entitled to priority access to NHS hospital care for any condition as long as it's related to their service, regardless of whether or not they receive a war pension. Veterans can access this priority care by making their GP aware of the fact they are a veteran when they register with their practice.

The principles behind the NHS commitment to veterans are set out in the NHS Operating Framework 2012-13. The relevant section is provided below:

“SHAs should maintain and develop their Armed Forces Networks to ensure the principles of the Armed Forces Network Covenant are met for the armed forces, their families and veterans. The Ministry of Defence/NHS Transition Protocol for those who have been seriously injured in the course of their duty should be implemented, meeting veterans’ prosthetic needs and ensuring improvement in mental health services for veterans. NHS employers should be supportive towards those staff who volunteer for reserve duties.”

NHS priority access to veterans is explained under Choose and Book guidance (available at <http://www.chooseandbook.nhs.uk/staff/communications/fact/armedforces.pdf>). This emphasises that veterans should gain priority access to services for illnesses related to their service according to clinical urgency.

Mental Health services

Current IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) and Recovery service specifications have the following requirement:

“The service will provide priority treatment to Military Veterans for conditions that may be related to their military service (in line with DoH: Gateway reference 13406).”

These 2 services were selected for specific reference to veterans as they were judged to be the services veterans were most likely to be referred to. The IAPT service includes a Trauma service. This service targets Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in veterans and links in with the regional network of services for veterans.

In addition to this, there is a veteran’s pathway within Let’s Talk (a psychology service for stress, anxiety and depression, <http://www.talk2gether.nhs.uk/>) with outreach to local bases and liaison with the regional network.

SaBRE - Reserves Network

Both NHS Gloucestershire and Gloucestershire Care Services have HR policies in place that support staff who are military reservists. NHS Gloucestershire has signed up to SaBRE, the reservist network.

Stroud District Council (SDC)

- Our Employee Handbook allows for 10 days additional paid leave for employees to attend summer camps as volunteer members of non regular forces.
- SDC works with the Poppy Factory who help to find work for wounded, injured and sick ex-service personnel in their own community
- SDC gives concessions to ex-military and war pensioners at our Joint Use Sports Facilities.
- The authority disregards in full the following incomes for the purposes of assessing entitlements to localised Council Tax Support: War widows/widowers pension; war disablement pension; and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments

Tewkesbury Borough Council

Tewkesbury Borough Council has historically provided a range of support to the armed forces community within the borough through joint armed forces/community activities.

Examples have included:

- Supporting the transition of RAF Innsworth and subsequent relocation of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) to Imjin Barracks in Innsworth. This included supporting the integration programme through provision of information, advice & guidance on a range of issues such as housing, benefits, local services & community activities.
- Jointly organising a 'Homecoming Parade' in Tewkesbury town for ARRC/ARRC Support Battalion, which took place on 30 May 2012
- Tewkesbury Borough Council granted the 'Freedom of the Borough' to ARRC and the ARRC Support Battalion on 17 September 2012 and provides ongoing information, advice and guidance to members of the armed forces and their families across the borough which recently included a presentation by the Housing Advice Team.
- Involvement of armed force personnel in community activities such as Community Days of Action
- Tewkesbury Borough Mayor attending events at Imjin Barracks and in her role as borough councillor, championing the Military Covenant with fellow councillors
- On-going partnership project between TBC, MoD and University of Gloucestershire to develop high standard sporting facilities on the MoD Sports Field in Innsworth
- Continuing support for Armed Forces Day, Help for Heroes activity and any homecoming ceremonies.
- Periodically publishing articles to further community understanding and links through Borough News which goes to every home in the borough.
- Promoting the principles of the Community Covenant internally to all the services within the Council and where appropriate to our partners.

Future Plans:

- 'Freedom Parade' which will take place in June 2014

Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant Scheme

- There were 4 rounds of the grant scheme between April 2012 and March 2013.
- Twelve applications were received ranging from school play equipment, taster sessions at barracks by community service providers, through to museum displays and gardening projects
- Two applications were forwarded to MOD Whitehall for assessment both of which were awarded funds.
- £24,000 was brought into the county through the AFCC Grant Scheme as a result of a project involving the Regiments of Gloucestershire Museum and Cotswold District Council working with 29 Regiment.

Further information on future grant rounds can be obtained from www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/armedforcescovenant

Future Plans

The MOD Assessment Panel will be based in the South West region instead of MOD Whitehall.

LIBOR Fund

The Chancellor decided to transfer £35 million from fines levied on the banks for attempting to manipulate LIBOR, to the MOD for use in supporting the armed forces community.

The aim of the fund is to support the two principles of the armed forces covenant:

- that members of the armed forces community should not face disadvantage in comparison to other citizens
- that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved

Tranche 1 of the fund provided support to national and regional initiatives including military family federations, the National Memorial Arboretum, mental health support and many others.

Applications for this fund are dealt with directly by MOD Whitehall. <https://www.gov.uk/the-armed-forces-covenant-libor-fund>

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