



Response to Request for Information

Reference FOI 071575
Date 16 July 2015

The Armed Forces Covenant

Request and response in 'blue':

I would like to make a request under the Freedom of Information Act.

Please would you tell me:

1. Has the local authority signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant, as of July 16, 2015?
Yes- Information already supplied online
2. If the answer to Q1 is yes, when did this take place?
We can confirm that the department holds information that you have asked for in relation to the above. However, the information is exempt under section 21 of the FOI Act because it is reasonably accessible to you, and I am pleased to inform you that you can access it on our website via the following links:

<http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=4199&p=0>
3. If the answer to Q1 is yes, how many servicemen and women and their families have been given priority status in applying for Government-sponsored affordable housing schemes since your authority's introduction of the Armed Forces Covenant?
There are currently 15 applicants registered for housing who are members of the armed forces.
4. If the answer to Q1 is no, how many servicemen and women and their families have been rehoused by the local authority or private registered providers during the 2013/14 and 2014/15 financial years?
2014/15 the number of new tenants that were armed forces was 6.
5. Is there any other support given by the local authority in accordance with the Armed Forces Covenant? If so, please state what it is
We can confirm that the department holds information that you have asked for in relation to the above. However, the information is exempt under section 21 of the FOI Act because it is reasonably accessible to you, and I am pleased to inform you that you can access it on our website via the following links:

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<http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/article/4571/Support-for-the-Armed-Forces-community>

Section 21(1) of the Freedom of Information Act exempts disclosure of information that is reasonably accessible by other means, and the terms of the exemption mean that we do not have to consider whether or not it would be in the public interest for you to have the information.

You can find out more about Section 21 by reading the extract from the Act, available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/section/21>

For question 4, please give the figures separately for each financial year.

For questions 3 and 4, please take 'servicemen and women and their families' to mean 'a household containing at least one member of the Armed Forces, or recent Service leaver'.

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Community Covenant Action Plan

Introduction

The Armed Forces Community Covenant was signed in October 2012. Community Covenants are intended to complement, at local level, the national 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.

The joint lead signatories to the Covenant are Wolverhampton City Council and RAF Cosford.

The aims of the Armed Forces Community Covenant

The Covenant aims to encourage all citizens to support 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, whose mission is to be fully inclusive.

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

These aims are reflected in the Community Covenant Action Plan

The Community Covenant Action Plan

As part of the work on the Covenant, the city is committed to producing an action plan. This will identify things that the city is already doing in relation to the covenant and any areas for future development.

The community covenant board have identified the following headlines for the action plan:

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- i. Communication, e.g. communicating about the covenant
- ii. Housing e.g. access to housing advice and allocations policies
- iii. Employment and Skills e.g. access to school places and University and College Provision for Army Reservists and career pathways
- iv. Leisure and Community e.g. opportunities for volunteering, opportunities for creating stronger bonds between ex-service community and the wider community
- v. Health and Social Care e.g. access to specialist mental and physical support for veterans. Sick and injured personnel would also be included under this heading

The actions under each headline are outlined in the table below.

Performance Management

The action plan has been approved by the Community Covenant Board. A sub-group of the board, the Community Covenant Action Planning Sub-Group will oversee the implementation of the plan and report back to the Board on progress on an annual basis.

In addition the following overarching performance measures have been identified to enable monitoring of the plan:

Raise awareness of the Community Covenant, Social media, Advice and Guidance

- Visits to Covenant webpage (including which links users navigate to)
- Applications for funding received (number and value)
- Numbers seeking advice and guidance, using drop in service etc.

Employment and skills

- Numbers finding employment or entering training through covenant linked initiatives

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Leisure

- Participation levels in leisure activities e.g. Take up of discounted leisure facilities by members of armed forces communities

Health

- To be confirmed

The Community Covenant Action Plan

Theme	Issue	Action Point	Who?	Timescale/ Status
Communications	Raise awareness of the Community Covenant	1. Raise awareness (particularly amongst frontline staff from City Direct and The Housing Options Team within the city council) of the issues facing the military community and of the Community Covenant through the council's webpage, a written briefing and investigating applying for funding to deliver training.	S Axtell Economic Inclusion	Complete
		2. Establish a Community Covenant webpage on the council website as a single point of information. Information to include details about the grants programme and dates of grants panel meetings and a series of FAQs.	S Axtell Economic Inclusion	Complete
		3. Raise awareness of the covenant (including opportunities for funding) amongst voluntary and community sector organisations in the city.	Ian Darch. Voluntary Sector Council	On going
		4. Promote Wolverhampton's housing policy in relation to the armed forces.	Kenny Aitchison Housing Strategy	On going

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Theme	Issue	Action Point	Who?	Timescale/ Status
		<p>5. Establish a community covenant champion within partner organisations where applicable</p> <p>6. Apply for funding for a promotional resource</p> <p>7. Sign posting information and advice available in Wolverhampton City Council reception area</p>	<p>S Axtell Economic Inclusion</p> <p>S Axtell Economic Inclusion</p> <p>S Axtell Economic Inclusion</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>
	Advice and Guidance	<p>8. Map the support available from a range of agencies to the armed forces community.</p> <p>9. Provide a drop in service with the civic centre</p> <p>10. Organise meet and greet events for veterans around specific themes e.g. employment or volunteering</p>	<p>S Axtell Economic Inclusion</p> <p>Jane Britton Royal British Legion</p> <p>Different leads depending upon the theme. Coordination through S Axtell Economic</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>On going</p>

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			Inclusion	
Housing	Partnership working	11. Continue to support the ex-service personnel housing development in East Park	Kenny Aitchison WCC Housing Strategy	On going
		12. Continue regional work with other councils on housing issues related to armed forces personnel.	Kenny Aitchison WCC Housing Strategy	On going
	Housing support	13. Develop the Housing Options Team as the focus for support for armed forces communities within WCC	Kenny Aitchison Housing Strategy	On going
		14. Ensure that the local authority housing allocation policy does not disadvantage ex-service personnel due to residency criteria	Kenny Aitchison Housing Strategy	Completed
Employment and Skills	Employment			
	Secure covenant representation from Job Centre Plus	15. Contact Job Centre Plus to identify a lead for the Community Covenant.	Jean Hartshorne RAF Cosford	Completed
			Linda Bowen DWP	Completed

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		<p>16. Jobcentre Plus has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appointed Rose Dymond, Head of the JSA and IS Portfolio in Service Design and Management, Operational Excellence Directorate, as Armed Forces Advocate (to support the DWP Armed Forces Advocate Pete Searle, Director of Benefit Strategy); and • deployed an Armed Forces Champion in each District. <p>The main role for the Armed Forces' Champion is to be the key link between Jobcentre Plus and the Armed Forces community in the district, helping to raise the profile of Jobcentre Plus support where necessary.</p>		
	<p>Integration of the covenant into existing initiatives</p>	<p>17. Link the covenant to current programmes and opportunities regarding employment and skills.</p> <p>18. Integrate the covenant with the city approach to the enterprise, employment and skills offer including job fairs</p>	<p>Angela Hoyle WCC Skill Development</p> <p>Angela Hoyle WCC Skill Development</p>	<p>On going</p> <p>On going</p>

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		19. Make the link between the Growth Pledge and the covenant when talking to employers	Angela Hoyle WCC Skill Development	On going
		20. Investigate the potential for reservists and other priority groups to be catered for as part of the council's new recruitment agency.	4 Mercian and Angela Hoyle WCC Skill Development	On going
		21. Understand the skills required in Wolverhampton and match them to the skills available from service leavers	Angela Hoyle WCC Skill Development and Linda Bowen DWP.	Commence Summer 2015
		22. Understand what skills military spouses and other family members have and how we can help them to find employment in Wolverhampton	Angela Hoyle WCC Skill Development Linda Bowen DWP	Commence Summer 2015

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		<p>23. There are currently 57 DWP reservists nationally. To support the Ministry of Defence (MoD), DWP have committed to a 1% challenge equating to approximately 900 reservists by 2018.</p> <p>24. The Economic Inclusion Team within the council is running a project in partnership with heart & Soul Community & the Army based at Park Lane in Fallings Park.</p> <p>The Employability project is called 'Get Up & Go' and will run for four weeks beginning on the 13th April 2015. It is aimed at anybody who is 18+ and unemployed. It is essentially about confidence building and finding about employment and volunteering opportunities (reserves) in the army.</p> <p>The clients will go on a two day residential and this will be an opportunity to find out about army life as well as develop a range of skills i.e. team work etc.. They will also undergo mock interviews and assessments to get a feel for what is involved in the recruitment process should they wish to join up.</p> <p>We will also be providing one to one coaching and mentoring to support clients to overcome barriers to finding work, providing work related courses and help with developing CVs and provide job search.</p>	Linda Bowen DWP	On going

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	Work with employers	<p>25. Encourage employment of service leavers and reservists by local business</p> <p>26. DWP is locally supporting the national recruitment of 3000 individuals to train as LGV Drivers in the Army Reserve. Opportunities are available in every Army Reserve Centre across the breadth of the United Kingdom. LGV drivers are a skill shortage area across the UK with part time service as an army reserve driver providing a gateway into full time civilian employment in the logistics industry.</p> <p>27. Develop a more collaborative approach to skills matching e.g. Jaguar Land Rover skills academy for clients in target groups. Explore CTP process as a way of doing this.</p>	<p>Linda Bowen Job Centre Plus</p> <p>Linda Bowen Job Centre Plus</p> <p>Linda Bowen Job Centre Plus and Angela Hoyle WCC Skill Development</p>	<p>On going</p> <p>On going</p> <p>On going</p>
	Careers advice and support	28. Promote the Armed Forces as a career for the residents of Wolverhampton.	Linda Bowen Job Centre Plus	On going
	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review schools admissions policy to ensure that the additional requirements of children of armed forces personnel are catered for. Children of UK Armed Forces personnel are included in the Local Authority's Fair Access 	Bill Hague WCC School Admissions	Review scheduled. Awaiting timetable

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		<p>Protocol as per The School Admissions Code 2014. The protocol is currently under review but as there is a legal requirement for the protocol to include children of UK armed Forces personnel, this will be unaffected. Fair access allows the Local Authority to place children in schools that have already reached or exceeded their published admission limit.</p> <p>29. Review data and subsequently make recommendations on how schools are using the Service Pupil Premium.</p> <p>30. The University of Wolverhampton Reserve Platoon has recently been formed to offer students and staff the opportunity to join the Army Reserve. Investigate if this could be extended to the College to assist with employability</p>	<p>Jim McElliot – People Directorate</p> <p>City of Wolverhampton College</p>	<p>Meeting scheduled between James McElliot (WCC) and Sheila Stephenson (11 Signal WM Brigade)</p> <p>On going</p>

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		<p>for students.</p> <p>31. Investigate the possibility of the armed forces community to get more involved in schools supporting the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>32. Promote the free 10 month Armed Forces Dependant's Business start-up programme run by the University of Wolverhampton</p>	<p>Schools, WCC Education and Enterprise, 4 Mercian, RAF Cosford, Army Cadet Force, British Legion.</p> <p>University of Wolverhampton</p>	<p>Start date TBC</p> <p>On going</p>
	Work with Young People	<p>33. The Princes Trust are currently looking a new campaign encouraging young people, aged 18-30, who leave or who are due to leave the armed forces to think about self employment (Prince's Trust Enterprise programme). They are due to promote this through the Army Resettlement Career and Transition Partnership</p> <p>34. For those who are medically discharged, the Princes Trust have a Help the Heroes project where a young person could be seconded on to a 12 week Team programme for up to 12</p>	Marlena Green. The Princes Trust	On going

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		<p>weeks, this is a paid position.</p> <p>35. If young people are in the 16-25 age group they could join the team programmes themselves</p> <p>36. Locally (West Midlands) the Princes Trust have a project called Military Ethos which is based around Team Building/Challenges/Army outreach teams/Adventurous Activities- These are delivered through the xl programme (xl is an alternative curriculum programme for 13-19 year olds at risk of exclusion and not engaged with mainstream education)</p> <p>Opportunities</p> <p>37. The Princes Trust are exploring providing ex armed forces personnel the opportunity to attain a Youth Work Lev 3 qualification in which they could undertake the work placement at the Trust.</p>		
Leisure and Communities	Leisure	<p>38. Investigate the possibility of offering discounted use of leisure facilities for armed forces communities</p> <p>39. Establish if there is an interest in military vs. civilian competitions (for both adults and young people), utilising the city's leisure facilities.</p>	<p>WCC Leisure Services</p> <p>WCC Leisure Services, 4 Mercian, RAF</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>On going</p>

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		<p>40. Identify and utilise reservists as volunteers in the city's leisure facilities e.g. sports centres and parks. Subject to qualifications they could lead on activities such as sports coaching, tree clearance or a whole reservist unit could run an activity.</p> <p>41. Promote the use of leisure facilities and community spaces through social media and the HIVES.</p> <p>42. Establish links between Bantock House and the armed forces community by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sending a letter to the Armed Forces community signposting them to the Bantock Website as the primary source of information b. Distributing a leaflet with details about hiring Bantock House as a venue to be distributed c. Inviting the Community Covenant Board to a familiarisation visit of the site <p>43. Wolverhampton City Council to speak to RAF Cosford about</p>	<p>Cosford, Army Cadet Force.</p> <p>WCC Leisure Services and 4 Mercian.</p> <p>WCC Leisure Services and Jean Hartshorne RAF Cosford.</p> <p>WCC Visitor Economy</p> <p>WCC Visitor</p>	<p>TBC</p> <p>On going</p> <p>On going</p>

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		general events and how we can work more closely together.	Economy	TBC
	Communities	44. Involve armed forces community in city events to aid integration	WCC Visitor Economy	TBC
Health and Well Being	Health and social care	45. Convene a sub-group to identify actions to be added to the action plan	Major Bob Officer. 11 Signal and West Midlands Brigade	TBC
		46. The local authority already disregards Military compensation payments including War Disablement Pensions, War Widow's Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments in full with regards to Housing Benefit and Council Tax assessments.	Lamour Gayle – People Directorate	Completed
		47. War Disablement Pensions or War Widow's Pensions under the pre-2005 War Pensions Scheme and Guaranteed Income Payments or Survivor's Guaranteed Income Payments under the April 2005 Armed Forces Compensation Scheme are, <i>as a matter of Wolverhampton policy, payments which are already disregarded completely in the means-test for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction.</i> Where full financial assessments are undertaken for non-residential care and support, the Wolverhampton policy for HB/CTR is followed. However, the simple financial assessment 'banded contribution' scheme that	Helen Winfield – People Directorate	Completed

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		<p>Wolverhampton operates means that unless a service user requests a full financial assessment we would not know that a relevant War/Armed Forces payment was being made. <i>We have however, sought to address this by introducing a change (from April 2015) to the simple financial assessment form (FAF1) completed by Social Workers which will provide a tick box to identify those people receiving these payments.</i></p> <p>Currently, charging for residential care and support is legally bound by a national charging scheme which only disregards £10.00 per week of these War/Armed Forces payments. This is the same rule that applies to the national Department for Work and Pensions rules for means-tested social security benefits (Income Support; Income-related Employment and Support Allowance; Income-based Job-seekers Allowance) although it will not apply to Universal Credit. From April 2015, under the Care Act 2014, the same local authority discretion applied to non-residential charging can be applied to residential charging</p>		