



Milton Keynes City Council

We, the undersigned, commit to honour the Armed Forces Covenant and support the Armed Forces Community. We recognise the value Serving Personnel, both Regular and Reservists, Veterans and military families contribute to our business and our country.

~~Milton Keynes City Council~~

Cllr Paul Trendall
Armed Forces Champion
14 October 2022

The Ministry of Defence

Maj Gen. Marc Overton TD DL VR
Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (RF&C)
14 October 2022

 **Milton Keynes**
City Council



Ministry
of Defence

The Armed Forces Covenant

An Enduring Covenant Between

**The People of the United Kingdom
His 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.

Section 1: Principles of The Armed Forces Covenant

1.1 We, **Milton Keynes City Council** will endeavour in our business dealings to uphold the key principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, which are:

- *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 especially for the injured or bereaved.*

Section 2: Demonstrating our Commitment

2.1 We recognise the contribution that Service personnel, reservists, veterans, the cadet movement and military families make to our organisation, our community and to the country. We will seek to uphold the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant by:

Promoting the Armed Forces:

- We ensure our staff are aware of the Armed Forces Covenant to better identify and serve members of the Armed Forces Community
- We promote that we are a forces-friendly organisation
- We publish information about the Armed Forces Covenant and local resources and support services

Employment support to members of the Armed Forces Community:

- We support Reservists and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers by offering them 10 days special paid leave in order to carry out their duties.
- We offer guaranteed interview schemes to veterans who meet essential criteria and are within 12 months of leaving or within 5 years post service
- Offer work placements and insight days to service leavers
- We offer a 'buddy-buddy' mentoring scheme to new colleagues who are part of the Armed Forces community
- We support the employment of Service spouses, partners and dependants, through Forces Families Jobs, offering short-notice leave and flexible working to those whose partners are sent on deployment; and working with the tri-Service Families Federations.
- Offer insight days to older Cadets looking for apprenticeships and further education opportunities.
- We engage with the Career Transition Partnership and The Forces Employment Charity and advertise relevant employment opportunities with them.
- We work with relevant charities and the Career Transition Partnership to offer work opportunities to the Wounded, Injured and Sick.
- We consider ways in which remote-working solutions might benefit the mobile Armed Forces Community, especially partners and spouses.

Communications, engagement and outreach:

- We have a strong and well attended Armed Forces Liaison Group (CMPB) where we engage with a diverse range of statutory, third sector, military and commissioned organisations.
- We provide bespoke training to services and department within the council and promote national training, such as the e-learning packages for colleagues.
- We promote the Armed Forces Covenant, the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme and our support for the Armed Forces Community to colleagues, service users, supply chains and the wider public.
- We support and promote Armed Forces events, such as Armed Forces Day/Week, Reserves Day, the Poppy Appeal and Remembrance activities.
- We use the Covenant and Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award logo in our communications and marketing.
- We maintain our dedicated Armed Forces page on our internal and external web pages.
- We continue to promote our internal 'Forces Family Focus Group' staff network to enable staff members with an Armed Forces connection to meet and support one another and signpost to veterans charities and services as required.
- We continue to appoint and work closely with an Armed Forces Champion who works closely with our dedicated covenant officer.
- We identify and train service champions within various departments and services.
- We engage with and support local Armed Forces charities and continue to invite them to our civic events.
- We signpost service users who are members of the Armed Forces Community to available support, in the third sector, other statutory organisations and healthcare services.
- We facilitate and promote support networks for veterans and other members of the Armed Forces Community, e.g. local veterans breakfast clubs.
- We continue to maintain our excellent relationship with local Armed Forces presence such as local task force command, Regional Brigade, SERFCA, Navy, Army and RAF regular and Reserve units
- We develop relationships and work collaboratively with other organisations supporting the Covenant and the Armed Forces Community in Milton Keynes, such as NHS foundation trust, MK Dons and our local ICB

Commercial:

- Ensure the Armed Forces Community has fair access to our services and are not put at a disadvantage by their service, for example as a result of their high mobility.
- Continue to work with Defence Relationship Management and SERFCA REED to maintain engagement with other local organisations who have signed the covenant and hold networking events

- Keep other local employers informed about local events, discounts, breakfast clubs and other support networks
- Advocate for Defence and encourage our partners, contractors and suppliers to do the same.

Health

- We offer discounts at our leisure facilities to members of the Armed Forces community
- We will continue to build on the work already undertaken to promote veteran-friendly accreditation for GP practices and the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance.
- We will continue to work in partnership with Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and promote and signpost to NHS's Veterans Mental Health service, Op COURAGE service.
- Raise awareness in Adult Social Care about the additional support that is available to the former members of the Armed Forces, e.g. the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Housing:

- We raise awareness within all housing services, internally and externally, that covenant legislation requires the local connection requirement be waived for social housing for ex-Service personnel who have left within 5 years.
- We provide for additional preference in your social housing allocation scheme for certain members of the Armed Forces Community.
- We promote awareness of housing and homelessness services among the Armed Forces Community.
- We ensure housing associations and charities are kept aware of the range of additional support available to veterans
- Ensure a member of the housing team attends our CMPB meetings.

Education:

- Note, promote and/or make use of the provisions for Armed Forces families in the School Admissions Code, for example by allocating school places in advance of a family arriving in a local area
- Promote resources such as the Service Children Progression Alliance's Thriving Lives Toolkit.
- Develop a clear strategy for the effective use of any dedicated funding (for example the Service Pupil Premium in) in support of Service pupils.
- Support and promote the wellbeing of Service children, recognising the particular experiences and challenges they may face and offer schools access to information about local veterans networks for families who have recently left the forces.
- Promote training and further/higher education opportunities for Service leavers, ex-Service personnel and their families.

Civic responsibilities:

- Continue to ensure veterans, reserve and cadet units, family members and service charities are invited to our Flag Raising ceremony, Armed Forces week events, civic remembrance ceremonies, Royal celebration and anniversaries.
- Continue to have a civic presence at local Armed Forces designated sporting events, e.g. MK Dons Armistice day match.

2.2 We will publicise these commitments through our literature and on our website, setting out how we will seek to honour them.