



BROMLEY COUNCIL - COMMITMENT TO ARMED FORCES COVENANT

INTRODUCTION

The Armed Forces Covenant was published in 2011 by the Government as part of its approach to ensure that the Armed Forces including veterans are valued and supported, and its core principles were enshrined in law for the first time in the Armed Forces Act 2021. The Covenant which was originally implemented in 2013 has now been renewed and focuses on helping members of the Armed Forces community have the same access to Government and Commercial Services and products as any other citizen.

In line with good practice and following the recommendations of the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust bespoke project 'Renewing the Covenant in the Capital' the Council has refreshed its pledges which are set out below - these seven commitments are the focus of our new action plan which will be reviewed annually.

- Demonstrating we are an Armed Forces-friendly organisation.
- Strengthening our links with the Armed Forces Community
- Seeking to support the employment of veterans and service leavers.
- Striving to support the families of the Armed Forces Community
- Seeking to support out employees who choose to be members of the Reserve Forces or Cadet Force Adult Volunteers
- Ensuring support is given to members of the Armed Forces Community with urgent housing needs.
- Recognising and remembering the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces Community

A report is provided for discussion at the annual meeting of the Council's new Armed Forces Partnership, who will meet formally on an annual basis to review activity from the previous year, any arising issues, and plans for the following year which will inform the next year's action plan. Quarterly reporting will take place through the Portfolio Plan cycle.

MARCH 2024		LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY ARMED FORCES COVENANT ACTION PLAN 2023-2024			
1. DEMONSTRATING THAT WE ARE AN ARMED FORCES FRIENDLY ORGANISATION					
	OUR COMMITMENT	LEAD OFFICER / TEAM	ACTION	ONGOING/FUTURE ACTIONS	STATUS
1.1	Publicising our Armed Forces Covenant and displaying the Armed Forces Covenant logo and ERS status on our corporate website.	Culture PublicAffairs	<p>News release about the re-signing of the AFC was shared on a range of communication channels on 22nd June 2023: Bromley forges forward with Armed Forces Covenant – London Borough of Bromley</p> <p>The Armed Forces Covenant with full logos to be displayed on LBB Corporate website.</p> <p>To receive logos, employers must sign up for Bronze status through ERS: Defence Employer Recognition Scheme - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p>	<p>a) Self-nominate for Bronze Award (ERC) to receive logos to display on Council webpages. Complete</p> <p>Ongoing: Identify steps needed to progress to silver and gold award.</p>	<p>Logos and Bronze Award displayed on the Council’s AFC webpage 23Feb24.</p> <p>Bromley’s Bronze Award to be publicised through council channels, including a news release and featuring in the council magazine.</p>
1.2	Promoting a greater understanding and awareness of the needs and contributions of the Armed Forces Community within the borough using a wide range of	PublicAffairs		<p>a) Lead PublicAffairs Officer to attend Armed Forces Covenant working group to identify and coordinate opportunities for armed forces communications through the council’s channels, including social media, website and the ‘Our Bromley’ magazine.</p>	<p>Ongoing action for Lead Officer.</p>

	communication channels.			<p>b) Signpost new activities and initiatives in the borough e.g., Bromley Football Club, Veterans breakfast. Ongoing</p>	<p>Activities are included on the armed forces page on the council website and will be updated as new information becomes available- Lead teams to work together to progress this further.</p> <p>Events like the Bromley FC veterans breakfast club are also shared with residents through council and mayoral channels, including the council's events calendar on the website homepage.</p> <p>The Mayor of Bromley regularly visits veterans events such as the breakfast club and supports their development, including by helping to connect partners and organisations involved.</p>
				<p>c) Key messages are regularly shared internally with staff through the Transforming Bromley Newsletter.</p>	<p>Ongoing action for Lead Officer.</p>
				<p>d) Planned external communications include: Armed Forces Day (June 2024). Remembrance Day (November 2024)</p>	<p>Ongoing - Culture Team to discuss plans for Armed Forces Day with Public Affairs.</p> <p>Remembrance Day is commemorated every year in Bromley, with council representatives, including the Mayor of Bromley, attending services across the borough, which are shared with residents through the council and Mayoral channels.</p>

				<p>e) Opportunities to share the perspectives of members of Bromley’s armed forces community to be sought, to improve understanding and encourage reflection from residents.</p>	<p>An in-depth interview between 102-year old RAF veteran Peter Lemon and the Armed Forces Champion/Mayor of Bromley was filmed and released through council channels ahead of Remembrance Day. This ‘Story from Bromley’ gave a unique perspective of Peter’s incredible experiences and was shared widely, including featuring in local press and with a full-page article in the Our Bromley magazine. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SSiGub3l1w and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-e5YdqAAK4&t=0s</p>
		Culture		<p>f) Link in with the Council’s Loneliness Champion, Helayna Jenkins, for new opportunities and initiatives across the borough for the Armed Forces Community. Complete</p>	<p>Meeting diarised between CR & HJ to discuss 2024 collaborative work.</p>
		Organisational Development		<p>g) Organisational Development to commission external training (and consider offering this to Partners too)</p>	<p>In progress - Culture/OD Lead Officers to investigate available and relevant training.</p>
1.3	Encouraging our local businesses, community, and local strategic partnership organisations to sign up to the Covenant.	<p>LBB – Senior Leadership Team</p> <p>Public Affairs</p> <p>Economic Development</p>	<p>Opportunities have been identified for encouraging sign up of the covenant which will be monitored.</p>	<p>a) Commissioning and Procurement to consider where terms in contracts can further strengthen support to the Armed Forces Community.</p> <p>b) Public Health Team to consider terms of contracts for the 0-19 Programme, Sexual Health and</p>	<p>In Progress - Culture Team to facilitate these conversations with Lead Officers.</p>

		Culture		NHS Health Checks to support the Armed Forces Community.	
1.4	Engaging with a range of partners to identify opportunities to fulfil the objectives of the Covenant.	Economic Development Culture	Engagement opportunities have been identified and will be developed to further fulfil the Covenant objectives in the private, public, and voluntary sectors	a) To raise awareness of the Armed Forces, Covenant at a future meeting of Bromley Economic Partnership Meetings	Ongoing - Culture Team to liaise with Economic Development Team to facilitate.
1.5	Raising public awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant through our website	Public Affairs	A dedicated webpage has been set up to provide detail about Bromley's armed forces community and act as a growing information hub, outlining support and opportunities that are available across the borough for members of the armed forces community. www.bromley.gov.uk/ArmedForces or www.bromley.gov.uk/Veterans	Continue to develop the content of the AFC webpages for use by the Armed Forces community. Ongoing	Ongoing - Lead team to continue to develop this

2. STRENGTHENING OUR LINKS WITH THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY

REF.	OUR COMMITMENT	LEAD OFFICER/TEAM	ACTION	ONGOING/FUTURE ACTIONS	STATUS
2.1	Appointing an Armed Forces Member Champion and Senior Officer point of contact within the Council to ensure our commitments are implemented and maintained.	Cllr Mike Botting - AFC Champion Sara Bowrey – AFC Champion	Sara Bowrey- Director of Housing, Planning, Property and Regeneration has been confirmed as The Council’s Armed Forces Champion. The Armed Forces Member Champion is Cllr Mike Botting who as part his Mayoral year is looking to raise awareness and funds for charities working to support the armed forces community in Bromley.	a) Explore options around having Corporate and Departmental Champions. <i>Initial discussions took place as part of the Armed Forces covenant renewal with representative from Public Health & Adult Social Care agreed.</i>	In progress - Culture team recruiting departmental reps to encourage active participation in upholding the AFC.
2.2	Ensuring staff and elected Members are made aware of the Armed Forces Covenant for Bromley	Culture Public Affairs HR	The Council’s new Armed Forces Partnership will meet formally on an annual basis to review activity from the previous year as set out in the action plan, address any arising issues, and confirm plans for the following year. The Action Plan to be discussed at the Managers briefing and cascaded to all staff.	a) Armed Forces Partnership (<i>date tbc</i>). Managers’ Briefing (<i>date tbc</i>).	Dates to be agreed.
2.3	Offering support to our local cadet units	Culture	The Culture Team organised a uniformed groups parade as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations in 2022 and will continue to support our local cadet units.	To engage cadet groups with LFA and Bowie Bandstand launch 2024.	In progress – Lead Officer to engage with groups.
2.4	Working closely with the Southeast London Clinical Commissioning Group (SEL CCG) and attend Covenant Stakeholder meeting.	Public Health	We are committed to working with the SEL CGC and to attending and participating in the Covenant Stakeholder meetings.	a) Attend SEL CGC meeting on (<i>date</i>).	Date to be confirmed

2.5	Ensuring that Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) by Council/ Public Health and Wellbeing Departments take consideration of the Armed Forces community.	Public Health HR	<p>Several key partnership policies, including the Bromley Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Learning Disability Strategy and the borough's Suicide Prevention Plan are being refreshed, and will include the Armed Forces community as a unique group.</p> <p>A report to the Health and Wellbeing Board will be shared Summer 2023, a focused chapter on the Armed Forces will be included in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) in March 2024.</p>	a) Physical Activity', 'Mental Health and Wellbeing', 'Learning Disability' strategies and 'Suicide Plan' will be refreshed this year will include the Armed Forces Community as a group with specific needs.	Complete
				b) Engage with ICB Colleagues to signpost and develop Services e.g., 'NHS Talking Therapies'.	Engage with ICB colleagues.
				c) As part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), Colleagues in Public Health with GPs will identify the offer available to the Armed Forces Community.	Data to be collated on GP surgeries that have already signed up to the 'Veteran Friendly Scheme' in the borough
				d) As part of the Liquid Logic referral process into Adult's Social Care, explore the opportunity to include questions to identify those in the Armed Forces Community.	Use data to signpost users to additional Services available to the Community.
2.6	Making information about support available to the Armed Forces community easily accessible to all.	All LBB Service Managers			

2.7	Considering the needs of the Armed Forces Community as part of the wider Bromley community in future service and infrastructure planning.	Senior Leadership Team	<i>Ongoing - Work with Lead Teams/Officers continues to develop strategies with Partners, including the Armed Forces Community as an identified group with specific needs.</i>		
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3. SUPPORTING THE FAMILIES OF THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY

REF.	OUR COMMITMENT	LEAD OFFICER / TEAM	ACTION UPDATE	ONGOING/ FUTURE ACTIONS	CURRENT STATUS
3.1	Ensuring the Armed Forces Community has fair access to our services and is not put at a disadvantage by their service.	Public Affairs Public Health Benefits	The Council has a dedicated page for 'Ex-Service Organisations' which features links to other Voluntary and Community Sector Enterprise organisations such as Blind Veterans UK for dedicated advice and support	a) Explore options around the application of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to support the Armed Forces Community.	In Progress
				b) Explore the option of waiving Blue Badges fees for the Armed Forces Community.	In Progress
				c) Consider the option of 'fast tracking' those in the Armed Forces Community as part of the Benefits process.	In Progress
3.2	Ensuring information and signposting to appropriate support services for the Armed Forces Community is freely available and easy to access.	Public Affairs	<p>A new dedicated 'Armed Forces Covenant' webpage on the Council's website is currently live.</p> <p><i>The webpage is a growing information hub, outlining support and opportunities available across the borough for members and former members of the AFC and their families, bringing together the important work of many charities and community organisations.</i></p>	<p>Lead Officer/Teams are continuing to develop the webpage and signpost to information and support.</p> <p>To consider leaflets, magazines, posters in libraries too.</p>	In progress – Lead Officer to investigate further options.
3.3	Connecting with GP practices to encourage staff to ask patients about service background.	Public Health	As part of raising awareness of the Armed Forces community with General Practitioners (GPs), colleagues in Public Health have carried out a piece of work to identify the offer from GPs in the borough to the Armed Forces community and if practices are signed up the Veteran Friendly Scheme which will progress further.	a) Explore with GPs the opportunity to record where someone is a member of the Armed Forces Community through Clinical Codes, and Public Health Surveillance to use this data to carry out targeted work.	Requires investigation from Lead Officer.

3.4	Ensuring school admission policies recognise the needs of children of the Armed Forces community	Education Admissions	<p>Serving Armed Forces personnel who are not living in the area but have a confirmed local posting, are allocated a place in advance of arriving in the borough. The admission authority holds a school offer open until they move to the area.</p> <p>The School Admissions Code allows service children to be considered as an exemption to the Infant Class Size Limit, where the service child is first on the waiting list for a school place.</p>	The Bromley school's admission guidance includes guidance for children of armed forces personnel.	On Track
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4. SUPPORTING THE EMPLOYMENT OF VETERANS AND SERVICE LEAVERS

REF.	OUR COMMITMENT	LEAD OFFICER/TEAM	ACTION UPDATE	ONGOING/ FUTURE ACTIONS	CURRENT STATUS
4.1	When recruiting for vacancies, recognising the value that the Armed Forces community bring including transferable skills developed through their military careers.	Organisational Development HR	The Career Transition Partnership (CTP) is a partnering agreement between the Ministry of Defence and Right Management Ltd which provides resettlement support services for those leaving the Armed Forces, as they transition from their military career into employment, further education or retirement and for up to two years after leaving in the form of employment support.	a) Explore the opportunity to introduce work experience/ apprenticeship and training opportunities for our Armed Forces Community.	Lead Officer/Teams are progressing the actions identified to deliver the commitments identified
4.2	Ensuring that our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible.	Chief Executive	The Jobs and Employment section of the Armed Forces Covenant pages on the website signpost the Armed Forces Community to employment advice and support.	b) A decision to guarantee an interview for the Armed Forces Community will be made by the Chief Executive.	Awaiting decision from the Chief Executive
4.3	Anticipating and providing reasonable adjustments as required.			c) The 'Special Leave' policy will be updated to clearly reflect the support available to reserves.	In Progress
4.4	Promoting employment opportunities to members of the Armed Forces Community.			d) Use the annual recruitment fair as an opportunity to support the Armed Forces Community into employment.	In Progress
4.5	Register in Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.			Registration with Employer Recognition Scheme complete with Bronze awarded.	Complete
				Following the renewal of the Armed Forces Covenant apply for the Defence Employer Recognition scheme - Bronze with commitment to Gold standard.	

5. SUPPORTING STAFF WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE RESERVE FORCE OR CADET FORCE ADULT VOLUNTEERS

REF.	OUR COMMITMENT	LEAD OFFICER/TEAM	ACTION UPDATE	ONGOING/ FUTURE ACTIONS	CURRENT STATUS
5.1	Providing the necessary support for our employees within the Armed Forces Community, including additional paid leave as appropriate and flexible working opportunities.	HR	<p>The Council positively supports staff who are reservists. Our offer to reservist employees includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 days additional paid leave each year to carry out operational training. • A flexible working policy to assist with military commitments. • Management support in preparation for, during and after mobilisation. • Access to Occupational Health Service. • Eligibility for sickness absence pay in line with terms and conditions. • Eligibility for maternity, paternity and adoption leave in line with terms and conditions. 	The Council continues to positively supports staff who are reservists and ensure that the support available is widely promoted	On Track
5.2	Wherever possible, accommodate the mobilisation of our reservists if they are required to deploy.				On Track
5.3	Encourage any reservists in our organisation to participate in Reserves Day		The new HR Payroll System that went live in April 2023 will enable us to monitor the number of reservists employed at Bromley.	Use internal communications to all staff to promote how to become a Reservist.	Lead Officer to progress.
5.4	Ensuring employees can easily disclose whether they are members of the Armed Forces Community.		A survey went out to all staff last year to capture data that identifies members of staff that are also part of the Armed Forces Community.	Use the next staff survey as an opportunity to identify and capture data around veterans and reservists in the workforce.	Lead Officer to progress.

6. SUPPORTING MEMBERS OF THE AFC WITH URGENT HOUSING NEEDS

REF.	OUR COMMITMENT	LEAD OFFICER/TEAM	ACTION UPDATE	ONGOING/ FUTURE ACTIONS	CURRENT STATUS
6.1	Ensuring our Housing Allocation Scheme recognises the needs of the Armed Forces Community, providing additional preference for the Armed Forces as part the Housing Act 1996.	Housing	<p>Bromley’s Housing Allocations Scheme incorporates The Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, giving additional preference priority for housing to members of the Armed Forces and their family.</p> <p>Additional preference is also given to the following persons if they fall within one or more of the statutory reasonable preference categories and are in urgent housing need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving members of the regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service. • Former members of the regular forces. • Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The bereaved spouse of civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse of civil partner and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service. • existing or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service. • Returning members of the Armed Forces who have a housing need in accordance with either the Local or Reasonable Preference categories may be subject to further consideration or exemption from the local connection rule. 	<p>The Housing Allocations Scheme has been refreshed this year (2024) and confirms commitment to the Armed Forces Community.</p> <p>Ongoing communication of this to raise awareness amongst the Armed Forces Community.</p>	The lead officer/teams are progressing the identified ongoing/ future actions.

7. RECOGNISING AND REMEMBERING THE SACRIFICES MADE BY THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY

REF.	OUR COMMITMENT	LEAD OFFICER/TEAM	ACTION UPDATE	ONGOING/ FUTURE ACTIONS	CURRENT STATUS
7.1	Supporting and promoting other Armed Forces events in the local community.	Mayor's Office Culture Loneliness Champion	Each November Bromley holds Remembrance Day Services throughout the borough that are attended by Elected Members and the Mayor of the Council.	a) The Culture Team, Mayor's Office and Loneliness Champion will continue to maximise new opportunities to support and promote Armed Forces events in our communities.	The lead officer/teams are progressing the identified ongoing/ future actions
7.2	Mindfully recognising and remembering the contribution and sacrifices made by British and Commonwealth military and civilian service men and women who have been affected by armed conflict by supporting Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day.		Since the creation of Armed Forces Day, Members of the Council and representatives of the Armed Forces including the Sea Cadets, RAF Flying Cadets, Royal Naval Association, Armed Forces Standard List and the Royal British Legion have marked the occasion by flag raising ceremonies at a location in Bromley.	b) Explore working with schools and Libraries to host events and activities at key occasions including Remembrance Sunday, this to include art exhibitions of children's artwork.	