

**READING ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT
ACTION PLAN SEPT 15**

The Armed Forces Community Covenant's key objectives:

Recognise, Remember, Integrate and Support

Armed Forces community comprises serving personnel (regular and reserves) and their dependants; and veterans and their dependants.

HQ 11 Infantry Brigade Workstrands:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Economy and Skills
- Education, Children and Young People
- Environment and Infrastructure
- Safer & Stronger Communities

Ref	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Progress/ key actions
HEALTH AND WELLBEING - <i>To ensure that the wellbeing of the Armed Forces community is not undermined by the nature of service life</i>				
Recognise: <i>Map and identify veterans status and represent special requirements of Armed Forces community in order to allow NHS to meet needs</i>				
1	Feedback and input to Health and Wellbeing Board	ROSO 7 Rifles	ongoing	7 Rifles (Regimental Operations Support Officer) to attend next meeting on 9 th Oct; Regimental Medical Officer may attend in future
3	Devise protocol for GPs to register Veteran status	Clinical Commissioning Groups	ongoing	GPs currently being encouraged to record status; lead officer in Berkshire West for CCG responsibilities for armed forces commissioning is currently progressing with Reading practices
4	Raise awareness of and signpost to Veteran's mental health service for the South Central region	Covenant partnership/ Armed Forces	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JCP, SSAFA, RBL promote the service • SSAFA and RBL working with South Central Veterans mental Health Service within current casework

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		charities/other partners		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterans Mental Health Service to attend next 7 Rifles 'health fair'
5	Development of a leaflet on accessing health services to be translated into Nepalese	Clinical Commissioning Groups/SSAFA/RBC	Spring 2014	ACHIEVED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSAFA running classes using leaflet
6	Develop and promote a discount scheme for serving personnel (both full time and reservists) for arts and leisure facilities in Reading	RBC/ ROSO 7 Rifles	Promotion ongoing	ACHIEVED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme developed and in place for leisure facilities • Delivery of scheme via the Defence Discount Scheme being considered for both arts and leisure facilities
7	Consolidation of appropriate contact/ support lists in order to provide better signposting	ROSO 7 Rifles/ RBC	2014	ACHIEVED Reading Borough Council website includes key support contacts at http://beta.reading.gov.uk/communitycovenant
ECONOMY AND SKILLS - Enhance the economic prosperity of Service personnel (including reservists), their families, and Veterans whilst benefitting the local economy wherever possible				
<i>Integrate: Ensure Armed Forces benefit from ongoing economic development in county</i>				
<i>Support: Facilitate a sustainable pathway for Service leavers into civilian employment</i>				
8	Keep local authorities and business updated on re-structuring of Defence so that they understand the context of Service redundancies	ROSO 7 Rifles	ongoing half yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing provided at July 15 working group meeting; 7 Rifles actively recruiting • Employers to be briefed via MOD employer engagement strategy e.g. Sandhurst event in Feb 2015
9	Work with local businesses to encourage employment of Service leavers and reservists	Reading UK CIC/ Jobcentre Plus/	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tesco Distribution and Veolia Environmental Services are keen to employ ex-forces personnel • JCP promoting Veterans Interview Programme to employers; promoting relevant employer events; circulating requests from employers for Service leavers

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading UK CIC collaborating with other local authorities on business lunch at Sandhurst in Feb 2015 • MOD employer engagement strategy to promote to employers the value of employing Reservists • 7 Rifles work with Gravity Personnel to promote the benefits of recruiting Reservists • Plans for UK CIC and Business Improvement District newsletters to promote benefits of employing Reservists
10	Encourage Jobcentre Plus to register Veterans	Jobcentre Plus	ongoing	<p>ACHIEVED</p> <p>Jobcentre Plus systems have been changed and advisors now ask about and record Armed Forces status at the first interview; statistics are now available from the system (JSA claimants only) and initial figures discussed by the working group</p>
11	Promote the Armed Forces (Regular and Reserve) as a career for the residents of Reading, particularly young people Not in Education, Training or Employment	Reading UK CIC/ 7 Rifles/ Jobcentre Plus	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost daily recruiting activities in Oxon, Bucks and Berks in support of Operation Fortify recruiting initiative • JCP advisors kept up to date with Armed Forces vacancies, and promote Army Reserve generally • MOD employer engagement strategy • Armed Forces exhibited at successful job fair in Broad St Mall in June 2015 • Next Reading jobs fair in Oct in Hexagon
12	Support Service leavers, former Armed Forces personnel and reservists to access careers guidance, CV support and interview preparation courses	Jobcentre Plus / New Directions/ other partners	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading University involved in Troops to Teachers programme to train ex-forces personnel as teachers once they leave the Services • SERFCA have set up jobs4reservists website • New Directions offer employability course in partnership with JCP, covering employability and essential IT skills -for Universal Jobmatch/ CV creation • Royal British Legion's CivvyStreet (online resettlement, learning and work service at https://www.civvystreet.org)
13	Defence discount service/ card	Reading UK CIC	2014/15	Article to go in next Business Improvement District newsletter to encourage support from businesses and speaker to be

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				invited to next BID committee.
14	Promotion of relevant events to businesses/ employers	Reading UK CIC/ROSO 7 Rifles/Jobcentre Plus	ongoing	JCP and Reading UK CIC general promotion of relevant events e.g. Sandhurst business lunch in Feb 2015
15a	Development of Reading Borough Council protocol for employment of Reserve Forces personnel	RBC	March 2014	ACHIEVED Agreed at Personnel Committee March 2014
15b	Promotion of Corporate Covenant scheme	RBC/ Reading UK CIC/ Covenant partnership	ongoing	Article in Feb 2015 edition of Reading UK CIC e-News
<p>EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE - <i>Develop a comprehensive understanding of the needs of Service children; remove and negate disadvantage which results from the mobility of Service life. Develop youth opportunities across the community, supporting the Cadet Forces.</i></p>				
<p>Integrate: <i>Promote an understanding of the needs of Service children so that they are not disadvantaged in the state education system</i></p>				
<p>Support: <i>Enable optimal educational opportunity for Service children within the context of the state education system</i></p>				
16	Survey schools to determine numbers of Service family pupils and ensure schools maximise the value of the Service Pupil Premium by encouraging registration and promoting best practice in utilisation of funding	RBC/ Schools in Reading Borough area/ 7 Rifles	annual survey (next due Jan 15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latest figures (Jan 15) - 9 service children in Reading schools • Reminder to encourage parents to inform school of Armed Forces status to be sent to schools in first term of academic year 15-16
17	Being sensitive and supportive to the possible emotional and psychological needs of some Service children	RBC/ Schools in Reading Borough area/ 7 Rifles	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminder to encourage parents to inform school of Armed Forces status to be sent to schools in first term of academic year 15-16

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<p>ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE - <i>Ensure that the wider Armed Forces' infrastructure requirements (inc Housing) are met in synchronisation with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and cognisant of the requirements of the local community. Where possible, create efficiencies with the local community</i></p>				
<p>Support: <i>Develop a common understanding of infrastructure needs of the Armed Forces community, in order to inform Local Authority planners to optimise provision. This incorporates a common, equitable housing protocol for Veterans within the local area.</i></p>				
18	Develop and implement a plan for the identification of Veterans locating to the Reading area in order to ensure that they are informed and included in relevant initiatives	ROSO 7 Rifles / RBC/ charities	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Veterans claiming JSA can now be identified and support offered • Support, initiatives and opportunities disseminated via charities' existing mechanisms (SSAFA, RBL, Reading Ex-British Gurkha Association, Forgotten British Gurkhas)
19	Ensure Veterans receive equitable treatment in allocation of social housing	RBC	ongoing	<p>ACHIEVED Incorporated into Reading Borough Council's Housing Allocations Scheme</p>
20	Explore options for facility sharing in line with local needs and Defense Infrastructure Organisation plans	PSAO HQ Coy 7 Rifles/ RBC	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater use of Brock Barracks for community purposes agreed and promoted via alternativevenues.org • Promoted to community groups via Reading Voluntary Action newsletter and Reading Borough Council website
<p>SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES - <i>Develop a stable and robust Armed Forces community which integrates into the wider society, whilst retaining a sense of itself</i></p>				
<p>Integrate: <i>Promote common understanding and closer integration between military and civil communities</i></p>				
21	Ensure that appropriate links are in place between the Local Authority and Armed Forces in order to allow the effective activation of Military Aid to the Civil Community (MACC) in the	RBC/ TM or TM(V) 7 Rifles	ongoing	Civil emergency liaison in place; Armed Forces assistance during flooding events in 2014

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	event of a civil emergency (e.g. severe weather event) and/ or community projects where manpower is required			
Support: Support civil agencies in their dealings with members of the Armed Forces community, in order to optimise outcomes and use resource more efficiently				
22	Establish and implement domestic violence protocol between Service and Civil Police, agencies and charities to recognise military needs and ensure equitable service	ROSO 7 Rifles	ROSO to advise	ACHIEVED Protocol in place
23	Identify key areas for application of Community Covenant grant funding which will benefit both the civil and Armed Forces communities	RBC/Covenant partnership/ ROSO 7 Rifles	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant fund promoted on RBC website and via Reading Voluntary Action • Successful bid for £21,730 for 'health weeks' project aimed at raising awareness of health and social care services amongst the ex-Gurkha community, December 2012 • Successful bid for £10,000 for museum centenary project, December 2013 • Meeting with ex-Gurkha groups and organisations working with the Nepali community to discuss issues and needs in Feb 15 • New Covenant grant fund launched Aug 2015, first deadline 17th Sept
24	Encourage organisations and communities to sign up to the Armed Forces Community Covenant	RBC/ Covenant partnership/ ROSO 7 Rifles	Ongoing	Latest signatories include Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, Reading College and University of Reading

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RECOGNISE AND REMEMBER - <i>Encourage recognition and remembrance of the unique sacrifices made by Armed Forces personnel in defence of society</i>				
Recognise: <i>Support civil events that allow the community to recognise the Armed Forces</i>				
25	Support the annual Armed Forces Day	PSOA HQ Coy 7 Rifles/RBC	Annual (June)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armed Forces Day took place 27th June 2015 in Broad St and Forbury Gardens • Reserves Day (wear your uniform to work) took place 25th June
26	Armed forces participation in public events as appropriate	RBC/ PSAO HQ Coy 7 Rifles (PSOA HQ Coy)	ongoing	<p>Numerous recruiting and other community events throughout the year including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7th June Reading fun run/walk • 4th July Oxford Road fun day • 31st Aug Tilehurst Festival • 30th Sept part time job fair at Reading Uni • 12-16th Oct University of Reading – recruiting stand all week on campus
Remember: <i>Commemorate those members of the Armed Forces who have made the ultimate sacrifice</i>				
27	Plan and conduct remembrance event at Brock Barracks as focal point for annual armistice event in Reading	PSAO HQ Coy 7 Rifles	ongoing	Event held Nov 9 th 2014 in Forbury Gardens.
28	Plan and conduct appropriate event(s) in support of the centenary anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War	RBC/ Adj 7 Rifles/ communities	Aug 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful bid submitted to Community Covenant Grant Fund by Museum service for funding to support their forthcoming exhibition, 'Reading at War', to mark the centenary of the beginning of the First World War • As part of this work, a poet was commissioned to work with 7 Rifles • Royal British Legion commemoration services on 6th July and 4th Aug 2014 at Reading Minster

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation Reflect activities including 7 Rifles visits to 5 primary schools • Commemorative paving slabs for home towns of Victoria Cross winners, due to be placed with Trooper Potts VC Memorial • Trooper Potts VC Memorial due to be unveiled on 4th October 2015 outside the Crown Courts in Reading

List of abbreviations

SSAFA – Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen Families Association
 SERFCA – South East Reserve Forces and Cadets Association
 ROSO – Regimental Operations Support Officer
 RBC – Reading borough Council
 NHS – National Health Service
 GPs – General practitioners
 JCP – Jobcentre Plus
 CCGs – Clinical Commissioning Groups
 MOD – Ministry of Defence
 JSA – Job Seekers Allowance
 TBC – to be confirmed
 AF – Armed Forces
 BID – Business Improvement District
 PSAO HQ Coy – Permanent Staff Admin Office HQ Company
 TM or TM(V) – Training Major
 CCRF- Civil Contingency Reaction Force
 CIMIC – Civil Military Corporation
 Adjt - Adjutant