

READING HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

DATE OF MEETING:	13 th July 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	17
REPORT TITLE:	READING'S ARMED FORCES COVENANT AND ACTION PLAN - MONITORING REPORT		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Armed Forces Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local armed forces community.
- 1.2 This report presents an annual update on progress against the actions outlined in the action plan, in particular the health related actions, and on the general development of the Reading Armed Forces Covenant.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 To note the progress against the actions set out in the Reading Armed Forces Covenant action plan (appendix A), in particular the section on Health and Wellbeing.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 In 2011, the Government published the Armed Forces Covenant, as a tri-Service document which expresses the enduring, general principles that should govern the relationship between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces community.
- 3.2 The 'Covenant for Communities' complements the Armed Forces Covenant but enables service providers to go beyond the national commitments. It allows for measures to be put in place at a local level to support the Armed Forces and encourages local communities to develop a relationship with the Service community in their area.

4. THE PROPOSAL

Background

- 4.1 A local Armed Forces Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local armed forces community. It is intended to complement the national Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the nation, the government and the armed forces, at the local level.
- 4.2 The aims of the Armed Forces 'Covenant in the Community' are to:
 - encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their areas

- nurture public understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community
- recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces community
- encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces community into local life
- to encourage the Armed Forces community to help and support the wider community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement

4.3 The Reading Armed Forces Community Covenant was launched at the Afghanistan Homecoming Parade at Brock Barracks on 7th July 2012.

4.4 In addition to the Council, the covenant has been signed by 7 Rifles on behalf of the Armed Forces, and a range of other key partners.

4.5 Reading doesn't have a large military 'footprint', with no regular forces stationed in the town. However, Brock Barracks is the headquarters for the Territorial Army unit 7th Battalion The Rifles, and Reading is home to a large ex-Gurkha community. Reading's Armed Forces Covenant therefore focuses on Veterans and Reservists and aims to be proportionate in its scope to the size of the Armed Forces community in Reading.

Further development of the Armed Forces Covenant and action plan

4.6 The Reading Armed Forces Covenant working group with key stakeholders meets on a six monthly basis, the most recent held in March 2018. Partners continue to report that the meeting is valuable.

4.7 Progress to date against the actions in the action plan is shown in Appendix A. A number of the actions have now been completed. Successes to date include:

- Reading was awarded £21,730 from the Covenant grant scheme for an integration project for Veterans, aimed at raising awareness of health and social care services amongst the ex-Gurkha community in particular.
- The Museum service was awarded £10,000 from the Covenant grant scheme to support their exhibition, 'Reading at War', to mark the centenary of the beginning of the First World War in 2014.
- Reading Ex-British Gurkha Association was awarded £14,500 under the new Covenant Fund for two Nepalese community development workers.
- Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen Families Association (SSAFA) was awarded £1,000 to further update their leaflet on accessing health services, which has been translated into Nepalese and is being used by SSAFA to run classes; leaflet now updated and printed.
- Armed Forces personnel can now be given extra priority when applying for social housing on the Housing Register, as part of the Council's Housing Allocations Scheme.
- A domestic violence protocol is in place between the Service and the Police, to recognise military needs and ensure equitable service.
- Reading Borough Council now has a protocol in place for employment of Reserve Forces personnel.
- 'Operation Reflect' activities to mark the centenary of the beginning of the First World War included 7 Rifles visits to 5 primary schools.

- Job Centre Plus staff now receive regular briefings from 7 Rifles.

Health related actions

- 4.8 The action plan includes a section on health and wellbeing with the following actions:
- Feedback and input to the Health and Wellbeing Board
 - Devise protocol for GPs to register Veteran status
 - Raise awareness of and signpost to Veteran's Mental Health Service for the South Central region
 - Development of a leaflet on accessing health services to be translated into Nepalese
 - Develop and promote a discount scheme for serving personnel for arts and leisure facilities in Reading
 - Consolidation of appropriate contact/ support lists in order to provide better signposting
- 4.9 Progress on each of these is summarised in the attached action plan. In particular, regarding GPs recording Veteran status, a number of measures have been put in place by CCGs:
- 'READ' codes provided to practices from Spring 2016.
 - CCGs have developed guidance for practices on registering patients from the armed forces community
 - Information on CCG web sites and social media (from June 2016).
 - A number of practices in Reading piloted the recording of veteran status for patients attending flu clinics in the Autumn of 2017.
 - This resulted in the numbers registered as Veterans up to 114 (which represents an increase of 11%). This represents 30% of Reading Borough residents in receipt of armed forces pension (a proxy measure for veteran numbers).
 - Practices within the two Reading CCG localities are considering various ways to build upon the pilots, including possible local targets to increase the number of known veterans.

Covenant Grant Fund Trust

- 4.10 The national Covenant grant fund was launched in 2015 by the Ministry for Defence, with £10 million available every year. Since April 2018, the fund has become the independent Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and makes grants to support members of the Armed Forces community.
- 4.11 Under the 'local grants and digital developments programme', the trust will fund projects of up to £20,000 that support community integration or local delivery of services. Applications are open to charities, local authorities, schools, other statutory organisations, Community Interest Companies or Armed Forces units.
- 4.12 There are four application rounds for this programme in 2018/19, with remaining deadline dates of 29th July, 30th Sept, and 17th Dec. There have been some initial discussions about a potential bid to improve visibility of the Royal Berks Cenotaph from Oxford Rd via the keep entrance.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO READING'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The work on the Armed Forces covenant is in line with the overall direction of the Reading Health and Wellbeing Strategy and contributes to a number of the Strategy's eight priorities, including the following as they relate to the Veteran community, through strengthening the support provided to Veterans and service leavers:

1. Supporting people to make healthy lifestyle choices
2. Reducing loneliness and social isolation
3. Reducing deaths by suicide
4. Reducing the amount of alcohol people drink to safe levels

5.2 The proposal recognises that plans in support of Reading's 2017-20 Health and Wellbeing Strategy should be built on three foundations - safeguarding vulnerable adults and children, recognising and supporting all carers, and high quality co-ordinated information to support wellbeing. The proposal addresses these by providing support to the Armed Forces community and their families, including Veterans.

6. COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

6.1 Two of the key aims of the Armed Forces Community Covenant are to:

- encourage local communities to support the armed forces community in their areas
- encourage the armed forces community to help and support the wider community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 The covenant is intended as a vehicle for partners across Reading to help enable Veterans or Reservists to access health services, particularly mental health services, training and employment opportunities.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The general power of competence, introduced as part of the Localism Act 2011, replaces the well-being power from February 2012. The Act gives local authorities the power to do anything which an individual generally may do, which they consider is likely to be of benefit (directly or indirectly) to the whole or any part of their area. It therefore gives local authorities the power to do anything they want, so long as it is not prohibited by other legislation.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 £30m of central government funding was allocated over four years to 2014/15 to financially support Community Covenant projects at the local level which strengthen the ties or the mutual understanding between members of the armed forces community and the wider community in which they live. Reading submitted bids in three bidding rounds. £10m per annum was made available in perpetuity from 2015/16 onwards through the new Armed Forces Covenant fund.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Armed Forces Covenant Fund <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covenant-fund>

**READING ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT
ACTION PLAN JUNE 2018**

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 June 2018
HEALTH AND WELLBEING - <i>To ensure that the wellbeing of the Armed Forces community is not undermined by the nature of service life</i>				
<i>Recognise:</i> <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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report on health related actions to Board in July 2018 • Regimental Medical Officer to be invited to future meetings once in post
3	Devise protocol for GPs to register Veteran status	Clinical Commissioning Groups	ongoing	<p>GPs currently being encouraged to record status and a number of measures have been designed by the CCGs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'READ' codes provided to practices from Spring 2016. • CCGs have developed guidance for practices on registering patients from the armed forces community • Information on CCG web sites and social media (from June 2016). • A number of practices in Reading piloted the recording of veteran status for patients attending flu clinics in the Autumn of 2017.

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This resulted in the numbers registered as Veterans up to 114 (which represents an increase of 11%). This represents 30% of Reading Borough residents in receipt of armed forces pension (a proxy measure for veteran numbers). Practices within the two Reading CCG localities are considering various ways to build upon the pilots, including possible local targets to increase the number of known veterans.
4	Raise awareness of and signpost to Veteran's Mental Health Service for the South Central region	Covenant partnership/ Armed Forces charities/other partners	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 CCGs have been raising awareness at council of practice meetings, on CCG websites, and on social media Veterans Mental Health Service to attend a future 7 Rifles 'health fair' when RMO in place New hotline number added to RBC web page listing Armed Forces support organisations
5	Development of a leaflet on accessing health services to be translated into Nepalese	Clinical Commissioning Groups/SSAFA/RBC	Spring 2014	<p>ACHIEVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SSAFA runs classes with ex-Gurkha community using leaflet Funding gained from covenant fund to develop the booklet further and to print and translate into Nepalese; revision version now complete and printed Royal Berks Hospital now running 6 weekly meetings with ex-Gurkha community on diabetes, blood pressure etc, using the booklet
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 summer 2013	<p>ACHIEVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheme developed and in place for leisure centres Delivery of scheme via the Defence Discount Scheme being considered for leisure centres Use of 'tickets for troops' by Hexagon
7	Consolidation of appropriate contact/support lists in order to provide better signposting	ROSO 7 Rifles/ RBC	2014	<p>ACHIEVED</p> <p>Reading Borough Council website includes key support contacts at: http://www.reading.gov.uk/article/7300/Reading-Armed-Forces-Community-Covenant</p>

Ref	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Progress June 2018
ECONOMY AND SKILLS - Enhance the economic prosperity of Service personnel (including reservists), their families, and Veterans whilst benefitting the local economy wherever possible				
Integrate: Ensure Armed Forces benefit from ongoing economic development in county				
Support: Facilitate a sustainable pathway for Service leavers into civilian employment				
8	Keep local authorities and business updated on re-structuring of Defence	ROSO 7 Rifles	ongoing half yearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefing provided at March 2018 working group meeting; 7 Rifles actively recruiting
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"> JCP promoting Veterans Interview Programme to employers; promoting relevant employer events; circulating requests from employers for Service leavers; ongoing briefing sessions between 7 Rifles and JCP (including Back to Work Programme and Armed Forces Employment Pathways Scheme) 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 UK CIC and Business Improvement District newsletters promotion of benefits of employing Reservists 7 Rifles presence at Hexagon job fair Oct 2017; Reading College job fair March 2018
10	Encourage Jobcentre Plus to register Veterans	Jobcentre Plus	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobcentre Plus systems allow recording of Veteran status, though for JSA claimants only, but advisors are finding that interview times are becoming shorter with less opportunity to ask additional questions, therefore monitoring is incomplete Ongoing briefing sessions between 7 Rifles and JCP
11	Promote the Armed Forces (Regular and Reserve) as a career for the residents of Reading,	Reading UK CIC/ 7 Rifles/ Jobcentre Plus	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular 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

Ref	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Progress June 2018
	particularly young people Not in Education, Training or Employment			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOD employer engagement strategy • Ongoing briefing sessions between 7 Rifles and JCP • 7 Rifles presence at Hexagon job fair Oct 2017; Reading College job fair March 2018
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"> • SERFCA have set up jobs4reservists website, promoted via Reading UK CIC e-news • New Directions offer an employability course in partnership with JCP, covering employability and essential IT skills - for Universal Jobmatch, CV creation, job applications and interview preparation • Advice and support contacts promoted via RBC Armed Forces Covenant web page: (www.reading.gov.uk/reading-armed-forces-community-covenant) and new Armed Forces Covenant website: (www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk)
13	Defence discount service/ card	Reading UK CIC	2014/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness raised with Business Improvement District businesses • A number of large companies with Reading branches already signed up to scheme
14	Promotion of relevant events to businesses/ employers	Reading UK CIC/ROSO 7 Rifles/Jobcentre Plus	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JCP and Reading UK CIC general promotion of relevant events • Sandhurst Leadership Challenge (employers) March 2017, March 2018 and Sept 2018 • Hexagon job fair Oct 2017; Reading College job fair March 2018
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 Armed Forces Covenant to employers	RBC/ Reading UK CIC/ Covenant partnership	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Article in Reading UK CIC e-News • Ongoing work with MOD Defence Relationship Management to engage employers • RBC awarded Employer Recognition Scheme bronze award July 2017
16	Survey schools to determine numbers of Service family pupils and ensure schools maximise	RBC/ Schools in Reading Borough area/ 7 Rifles	annual survey (next due Jan 15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latest figures (Jan 18, School Census) - no service children in Reading schools • Best practice examples of how service pupil premium spent in other areas to be circulated to schools

Ref	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Progress June 2018
	the value of the Service Pupil Premium by encouraging registration and promoting best practice in utilisation of funding			
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	Reminder to encourage parents to inform school of Armed Forces status sent to schools in Autumn 16
<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 (e.g. SSAFA, RBL, Reading Ex-British Gurkha Association, Forgotten British Gurkhas) Total number of veterans in Reading difficult to ascertain; around 380 residents are in receipt of armed forces pension (a proxy measure for veteran numbers).
19	Ensure Veterans receive equitable treatment in allocation of social housing	RBC	ongoing	<p>ACHIEVED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporated into Reading Borough Council's Housing Allocations Scheme 66 households have been given additional priority for housing via the Housing Register since 2011; 25 currently on the register (March 2018)
20	Explore options for facility sharing in line with local needs and Defence	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

Ref	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Progress June 2018
	Infrastructure Organisation plans			and Reading Borough Council website
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>				
Integrate: <i>Promote common understanding and closer integration between military and civil communities</i>				
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 event of a civil emergency (e.g. severe weather event) and/ or community projects where manpower is required	RBC/ X0 7 Rifles	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil emergency liaison in place • Armed Forces assistance during flooding events in 2014
Support: <i>Support civil agencies in their dealings with members of the Armed Forces community, in order to optimise outcomes and use resource more efficiently</i>				
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	RBC/Covenant partnership/	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

Ref	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Progress June 2018
	Covenant grant funding which will benefit both the civil and Armed Forces communities	ROSO 7 Rifles		<p>awareness of health and social care services amongst the ex-Gurkha community, December 2012</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful bid for £10,000 for museum centenary project, December 2013 • New Covenant grant fund launched Aug 2015 • Successful bid from REBGA for two Nepalese community development workers (£14,500) • Successful bid from SSAFA for funding to update, develop and print copies of a health booklet translated into Nepalese (£1,000)
24	Encourage organisations and communities to sign up to the Armed Forces Community Covenant	RBC/ Covenant partnership/ ROSO 7 Rifles	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signatories include Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, Reading College and University of Reading • Ongoing work with MOD Defence Relationship Management to engage employers
<p>RECOGNISE AND REMEMBER - <i>Encourage recognition and remembrance of the unique sacrifices made by Armed Forces personnel in defence of society</i></p>				
<p>Recognise: <i>Support civil events that allow the community to recognise the Armed Forces</i></p>				
25	Support the annual Armed Forces Day	PSOA HQ Coy 7 Rifles/RBC	Annual (June)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armed Forces Day planned for 30th June 2018 in Broad St and Forbury Gardens; flag raising at the Civic Offices • Reserves Day 27th June 2018
26	Armed forces participation in public events as appropriate	RBC/ PSAO HQ Coy 7 Rifles (PSOA HQ Coy)	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carol concert at St Georges church in December 2017, planned again for 2018 • Numerous recruiting and other community events throughout the year
<p>Remember: <i>Commemorate those members of the Armed Forces who have made the ultimate sacrifice</i></p>				
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 planned for Nov 2018 in Forbury Gardens

Ref	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Progress June 2018
28	Plan and conduct appropriate event(s) in support of the centenary anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War	RBC/ Adjt 7 Rifles/ communities	Aug 2014 - 2018	<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 • Royal British Legion commemoration services on 6th July and 4th Aug 2014 at Reading Minster • Operation Reflect activities including 7 Rifles visits to 5 primary schools • Commemorative paving slabs for home towns of Victoria Cross winners, placed with Trooper Potts VC Memorial • Trooper Potts VC Memorial unveiled in 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
 RMO – Regimental Medical Officer