

**READING ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT<sup>1</sup>**  
**ACTION PLAN DEC 2020**

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.

Ref	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Progress to Health & Wellbeing Board Jan 21
<b>HEALTH AND WELLBEING</b> - <i>To ensure that the wellbeing of the Armed Forces community is not undermined by the nature of service life</i>				
<b>Recognise:</b> <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"> <li>Last report on health related actions to Health &amp; Wellbeing Board in July 2019 (July 2020 meeting cancelled due to Covid)</li> </ul>
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"> <li>As part of the NHS Long Term Plan, Military Veteran Aware accreditation will be rolled out nationally to practices over the next 5 years</li> <li>CCGs have developed guidance for practices on registering patients from the armed forces community</li> <li>Information on CCG web sites and social media</li> <li>329 Veterans currently coded in Reading at their practices as at Dec 2020</li> </ul>
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"> <li>JCP, SSAFA, RBL promote the service</li> <li>SSAFA and RBL working with South Central Veterans Mental Health Service within current casework</li> <li>CCGs have been raising awareness at council of practice meetings, on CCG websites, and on social media</li> <li>Hotline number included on Council's web page for support for Veterans</li> </ul>

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				<a href="http://www.reading.gov.uk/reading-armed-forces-community-covenant">http://www.reading.gov.uk/reading-armed-forces-community-covenant</a>
5	Development of a leaflet on accessing health services to be translated into Nepalese	Clinical Commissioning Groups/SSAFA/RBC	Spring 2014	<b>ACHIEVED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SSAFA runs classes with ex-Gurkha community using leaflet</li> <li>• Funding gained from covenant fund to develop the booklet further and to print and translate into Nepalese; revision version now complete and printed</li> <li>• Royal Berks Hospital were running 6 weekly meetings with ex-Gurkha community on diabetes, blood pressure etc, using the booklet</li> </ul>
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	<b>ACHIEVED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheme developed and in place for leisure centres</li> <li>• Use of 'tickets for troops' by Hexagon</li> </ul>
7	Consolidation of appropriate contact/ support lists in order to provide better signposting	ROSO 7 Rifles/ RBC	2014	<b>ACHIEVED</b> Reading Borough Council website includes key support contacts at: <a href="http://www.reading.gov.uk/reading-armed-forces-community-covenant">http://www.reading.gov.uk/reading-armed-forces-community-covenant</a>
<b>ECONOMY AND SKILLS</b> - Enhance the economic prosperity of Service personnel (including reservists), their families, and Veterans whilst benefitting the local economy wherever possible				
<b>Integrate:</b> Ensure Armed Forces benefit from ongoing economic development in county				
<b>Support:</b> 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"> <li>• Briefing provided at Nov 2020 at partnership meeting; recruiting is going well</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• MOD employer engagement strategy to promote to employers the value of employing Reservists</li> <li>• Ongoing briefing sessions between 7 Rifles and JCP (including Back to Work Programme and Armed Forces Employment Pathways Scheme)</li> <li>• 7 Rifles work with Gravity Personnel to promote the benefits of recruiting</li> </ul>

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				Reservists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UK CIC and Business Improvement District newsletters promotion of benefits of employing Reservists</li> <li>• 7 Rifles presence at job fairs</li> </ul>
10	Encourage Jobcentre Plus to register Veterans	Jobcentre Plus	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobcentre Plus systems allow recording of Veteran status at start of Universal Credit claim; JCP to promote more widely</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Regular recruiting activities in Oxon, Bucks and Berks in support of Operation Fortify recruiting initiative</li> <li>• JCP advisors kept up to date with Armed Forces vacancies, and promote Army Reserve generally</li> <li>• MOD employer engagement strategy</li> <li>• Ongoing briefing sessions between 7 Rifles and JCP</li> <li>• 7 Rifles presence at job fairs</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• SERFCA have set up jobs4reservists website, promoted via Reading UK CIC e-news</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Advice and support contacts promoted via RBC Armed Forces Covenant web page: <a href="http://www.reading.gov.uk/reading-armed-forces-community-covenant">http://www.reading.gov.uk/reading-armed-forces-community-covenant</a> and new Armed Forces Covenant website: (<a href="http://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk">www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk</a>)</li> </ul>
13	Defence discount service/ card	Reading UK CIC	2014/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raised with Business Improvement District businesses</li> <li>• A number of large companies with Reading branches already signed up to scheme</li> </ul>
14	Promotion of relevant events to businesses/ employers	Reading UK CIC/ROSO 7 Rifles/Jobcentre Plus	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JCP and Reading UK CIC general promotion of relevant events</li> <li>• Sandhurst Leadership Challenge (employers)</li> <li>• Job fairs at Hexagon, Reading College and University of Reading</li> </ul>
15a	Development of Reading Borough Council protocol for employment of Reserve Forces personnel	RBC	March 2014	<b>ACHIEVED</b> Agreed at Personnel Committee March 2014
15b	Promotion of Armed	RBC/ Reading	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Article in Reading UK CIC e-News</li> </ul>

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	Forces Covenant to employers	UK CIC/ Covenant partnership		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing work with MOD Defence Relationship Management to engage employers</li> <li>• RBC awarded Employer Recognition Scheme bronze award July 2017</li> </ul>

**EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE** - *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.*

**Integrate:** *Promote an understanding of the needs of Service children so that they are not disadvantaged in the state education system*

**Support:** *Enable optimal educational opportunity for Service children within the context of the state education system*

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"> <li>• 5 service children in Reading schools (Jan 20, School Census)</li> <li>• Best practice examples of how service pupil premium spent in other areas circulated to schools</li> </ul>
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	Reminders to encourage parents to inform school of Armed Forces status

**ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE** - *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*

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<b>Support:</b> <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>				
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"> <li>Some Veterans claiming benefits can be identified and support offered</li> <li>Support, initiatives and opportunities disseminated via charities' existing mechanisms (e.g. SSAFA, RBL, Reading Ex-British Gurkha Association, Forgotten British Gurkhas)</li> <li>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).</li> <li>Armed Forces question will be included in 2021 Census</li> </ul>
19	Ensure Veterans receive equitable treatment in allocation of social housing	RBC	ongoing	<b>ACHIEVED</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporated into Reading Borough Council's Housing Allocations Scheme</li> <li>69 households have been given additional priority for housing via the Housing Register since 2011; to date, 12 have been re-housed and 10 applications are currently live on the register (July 2019)</li> </ul>
20	Explore options for facility sharing in line with local needs and Defence Infrastructure Organisation plans	PSAO HQ Coy 7 Rifles/ RBC	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater use of Brock Barracks for community purposes agreed and promoted via alternativevenues.org</li> <li>Promoted to community groups via Reading Voluntary Action newsletter and Reading Borough Council website</li> </ul>
<b>SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES</b> - <i>Develop a stable and robust Armed Forces community which integrates into the wider society, whilst retaining a sense of itself</i>				
<b>Integrate:</b> <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	RBC/ X0 7 Rifles	ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Civil emergency liaison in place, and protocol for civil emergency funding has been improved</li> <li>Armed Forces assistance during flooding events in 2014</li> </ul>

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	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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During COVID-19 80 7 Rifles soldiers have supported the NHS through mobile testing under Op Rescript across the SE.</li> </ul>
<b>Support:</b> 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	<b>ACHIEVED</b> 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"> <li>Grant fund promoted on RBC website and via Reading Voluntary Action</li> <li>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</li> <li>Successful bid for £10,000 for museum centenary project, December 2013</li> <li>New Covenant grant fund launched Aug 2015</li> <li>Successful bid from REBGA for two Nepalese community development workers (£14,500)</li> <li>Successful bid from SSAFA for funding to update, develop and print copies of a health booklet translated into Nepalese (£1,000)</li> </ul>

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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"> <li>• Signatories include Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, Reading College and University of Reading</li> <li>• Ongoing work with MOD Defence Relationship Management to engage employers</li> </ul>
<p><b>RECOGNISE AND REMEMBER</b> - <i>Encourage recognition and remembrance of the unique sacrifices made by Armed Forces personnel in defence of society</i></p>				
<p><b>Recognise:</b> <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"> <li>• Armed Forces Day planned for June 2021; flag raising at the Civic Offices</li> <li>• Reserves Day June 2021</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Numerous recruiting and other community events throughout the year, although reduced in 2020 due to Covid-19</li> </ul>
<p><b>Remember:</b> <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 2021 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 - 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful bid submitted to Community Covenant Grant Fund by Museum service for funding to support the 'Reading at War' exhibition' in to mark the centenary of the beginning of the First World War</li> <li>• Royal British Legion commemoration services on 6<sup>th</sup> July and 4<sup>th</sup> Aug 2014 at Reading Minster</li> <li>• Operation Reflect activities including 7 Rifles visits to 5 primary schools</li> <li>• Commemorative paving slabs for home towns of Victoria Cross winners, placed with Trooper Potts VC Memorial</li> <li>• Trooper Potts VC Memorial unveiled in October 2015 outside the Crown Courts in Reading</li> </ul>

**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