

**READING ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT
ACTION PLAN NOV 2023¹**

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 24 |
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| 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Last report on health related actions to Health & Wellbeing Board in Jan 2023 |
| 3 | Devise protocol for GPs to register Veteran status | Clinical Commissioning Groups | ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 395 Veterans are coded by Reading GP practices (November 2022) Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board are planning to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Veterans Accreditation at our GP Protected Learning Time Sessions Mailout to all GP Practices and PCNs who have not signed up to the Accreditation. Promote via our GP Newsletter Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust has achieved Veteran Aware status, and has also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continued to build on our partnerships in the local community to improve joint working and signposting – for example we have |

¹ Red= new note; yellow highlight = action

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| | | | | <p>particularly built relations with Brock Barracks who have run military recruitment events onsite and attend our Forces Forums on a regular basis, as well as Op Courage colleagues at Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Been recognised for our work with our local Gurkha community – we were finalists at the prestigious HSJ Awards in the Military and Civilian Partnerships category in the 2023 Awards – we continue to support this community and now run regular health check sessions with them on a monthly basis. ➤ Continued to build our networks of those interested in supporting the Armed Forces through our Staff Forces Forum where we get speakers and have discussions about important issues related to patients and staff in the Armed Forces and veterans. We have recently started work to look at our Reservist policy. ➤ Started work to offer a Befriending Service for patients where members of the Armed Forces, both internal members of staff and volunteers from Brock Barracks would sit with patients with military backgrounds to aid in recovery. We plan to do this in collaboration with our Defence Medical Welfare Service colleagues who are able to identify patients who need support ➤ Work is ongoing to address the challenges with our systems to be able to flag and therefore capturing the number of Armed Forces / veteran patients we have, along with our important characteristics which will improve patient care. |
| 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 • Hotline number included on Council’s web page for support for Veterans https://www.reading.gov.uk/leisure/funding/reading-armed-forces-covenant/ Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS) and Complex |

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| | | | | Treatment Service (CTS) now rebranded as Op Courage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for Medical Welfare Service to visit Royal Berks Hospital every week to seek out and offer support to veterans. |
| 5 | Development of a leaflet on accessing health services to be translated into Nepalese | Clinical Commissioning Groups/SSAF A/RBC | Spring 2014 | ACHIEVED <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 were running 6 weekly meetings with ex-Gurkha community on diabetes, blood pressure etc, using the booklet Booklet used as basis for Kent health toolkit Covid advice leaflets also produced for ex-Gurkha community |
| 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 | ACHIEVED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheme developed and in place 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 | ACHIEVED Reading Borough Council website includes key support contacts at: Reading Armed Forces Covenant - Reading Borough Council |
| ECONOMY AND SKILLS - <i>Enhance the economic prosperity of Service personnel (including reservists), their families, and Veterans whilst benefitting the local economy wherever possible</i> | | | | |
| Integrate: <i>Ensure Armed Forces benefit from ongoing economic development in county</i> | | | | |
| Support: <i>Facilitate a sustainable pathway for Service leavers into civilian employment</i> | | | | |
| 8 | Keep local authorities and business updated on re-structuring of Defence | ROSO 7 Rifles | ongoing half yearly | □ Briefing provided at partnership meeting; recruiting is going well |

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| 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"> • MOD employer engagement strategy to promote to employers the value of employing Reservists • Ongoing briefing sessions between 7 Rifles and JCP (including Back to Work Programme and Armed Forces Employment Pathways Scheme) • 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 job fairs |
| 10 | Encourage Jobcentre Plus to register Veterans | Jobcentre Plus | ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Credit claim process doesn't now record Veteran status • DWP now have Armed Forces champions |
| 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"> • 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 • MOD employer engagement strategy • Ongoing briefing sessions between 7 Rifles and JCP • 7 Rifles presence at job fairs, including freshers' week fairs |
| 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"> • 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: https://www.reading.gov.uk/leisure/funding/reading-armed-forces-covenant/ and new Armed Forces Covenant website: (www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk) • NHS guaranteed interview scheme for service leavers • Plans for a SERFCA portal for AF leavers and cadets to find apprenticeships. |
| 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 | Reading UK | ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JCP and Reading UK CIC general promotion of relevant events |

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| | businesses/ employers | CIC/ROSO 7 Rifles/Jobcentre Plus | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandhurst Leadership Challenge (employers) Job fairs at Hexagon, Reading College and University of Reading |
| 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 |

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*

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| 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"> 7 service children in Reading schools (Jan 21, School Census) Best practice examples of how service pupil premium spent in other areas circulated to schools |
| 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*

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| <i>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> | | | | |
| 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> | | | | |
| 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 benefits can 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 – 3,643 (Census 2021) Tri-service Veterans breakfast every 2nd Sunday at the Beefeater at Reading Gateway |
| 19 | Ensure Veterans receive equitable treatment in allocation of social housing | RBC | ongoing | ACHIEVED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporated into Reading Borough Council's Housing Allocations Scheme 92 households have been given additional priority for housing via the Housing Register since 2011; to date, 14 have been re-housed and 12 applications are currently live on the register (Nov 2022) |
| 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"> Use of Brock Barracks for community purposes promoted to <u>community groups via Reading Voluntary Action newsletter and Reading Services Guide.</u> |
| 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 | RBC/ X0 7 Rifles | ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil emergency liaison in place, and protocol for civil emergency funding has been improved Armed Forces assistance during flooding events in 2014 |

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| | 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"> During COVID, 80 7 Rifles soldiers supported the NHS through mobile testing under Op Rescript across the SE. |
| 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 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). Force for Change programme is for bids up to £10k for projects which reduce isolation and promote integration. |
| 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 |

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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 June 2023; flag raising at the Civic Offices Reserves Day June 2023 Remembrance events Nov 2023 |
| 26 | Armed forces participation in public events as appropriate | RBC/ PSOA HQ Coy 7 Rifles (PSOA HQ Coy) | ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Numerous recruiting and other community events throughout the year, although reduced in 2020/21 due to Covid-19 |
| 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 in Nov 2023 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"> 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 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