



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL



AN ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

BETWEEN

STOCKPORT COUNCIL, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHARITABLE AND
VOLUNTARY SECTORS,
THE CIVILIAN COMMUNITY OF STOCKPORT

AND

THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY IN STOCKPORT

**We, the undersigned, agree to work and act together to
honour the Armed Forces Community Covenant.**

Signed:

Two handwritten signatures in black ink, one above the other, representing the signatories.

Laureen Donnan,
Deputy Chief Executive

THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT

An Enduring Covenant Between

The People of the United Kingdom,
Her Majesty's Government

– and –

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of
the Crown

And their Families

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.

SECTION 1: PARTICIPANTS

1.1 This Armed Forces Community Covenant is made between:

The serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families working and residing in Stockport

And

Stockport Council

And

The Charitable and Voluntary Sector

SECTION 2: PRINCIPLES OF THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

2.1 The Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at the local level.

2.2 The purpose of this Community Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in Stockport and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel their families and widow(er)s in Stockport.

2.3 For Stockport Council and partner organisations, the Community Covenant presents an opportunity to bring their knowledge, experience and expertise to bear on the provision of help and advice to members of the Armed Forces Community. The Covenant does not intend to replace current work by public service providers, charities and individuals, but rather formalise a commitment and build on existing sources of support.

2.4 For the Armed Forces community, the Community Covenant encourages the integration of Service life into civilian life and encourages members of the Armed Forces community to help their local community.

SECTION 3: OBJECTIVES AND GENERAL INTENTIONS

Aims of the Community Covenant

3.1 The Armed Forces Community Covenant complements the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant which defines the enduring, general principles that should govern the relationship between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces community

3.2 It aims to encourage all parties within a community to offer support to the local Armed Forces community and make it easier for Service personnel, families and veterans to access the help and support available from the MOD, from statutory providers and from

the Charitable and Voluntary Sector. These organisations already work together in partnership at local level.

3.3 The scheme is intended to be a two-way arrangement and the Armed Forces community are encouraged to do as much as they can to support their community and promote activity which integrates the Service community into civilian life.

SECTION 4: THE ARMED FORCES IN THE NORTH WEST AND STOCKPORT

4.1 *Demography*

4.1.1 There are no definitive figures for the total number of serving personnel, veterans and armed forces families living in Stockport at the present time.

4.1.2 Since Stockport does not have any military bases or garrisons, there are substantially fewer Armed Forces families living in the borough compared to areas such as Hampshire, North Yorkshire and Oxfordshire. However estimates suggest there is a significant armed forces presence in the North West and a representative proportion of these are likely to live in the Stockport area.

- We know about 20% of the Army is recruited from the North West and it is believed that their families usually remain in the region during service.
- In addition it is estimated that up to 1 in 5 servicemen will return to live in the North West after service and over 500,000 veterans currently live in the region. This number is likely to increase over the next few years as a result of the Armed Forces redundancy programme.
- In addition there are approximately 5,000 servicemen, regular and active reserve, stationed in the North West. Though there are no regular units in Greater Manchester, there are Territorial Army Units in Stockport, Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Salford, Tameside and Wigan, which together with their families make up a total population of approximately 3,000 people.
- There is also a strong Army Cadet presence across Greater Manchester, with 1400 cadets in 47 detachments.

4.1.3 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Royal British Legion (RBL) attempted to disaggregate the veteran population by metropolitan borough in 2007. The data suggest that approximately 22,524 veterans were living in Stockport.

4.2 *Needs*

4.2.1 The Armed Forces population is not a homogeneous group and individual has a diverse range of experiences, which impact on their needs and the needs of their families.

4.2.2 The ONS and RBL data indicates that the diversity of the Armed Forces population is reflected in Stockport's veteran community. The borough's veterans range from 16 years of age to 75+, with approximately 5,923 in 65-74 age bracket and a further 8,412 over the age of 75. In addition in 2007 an estimated 475 veterans living in Stockport were in receipt of a pension which indicates they had been injured during service.

4.2.3 Evidence indicates that the Armed Forces Community is generally a settled community. Nationally, about 92% of servicemen make a successful transition into the civilian community without issue, finding accommodation and employment within six

months of discharge. Effective support from the Armed Forces, public service providers, charities and the civilian community is essential in facilitating this successful transition.

4.2.4 A small but significant minority encounter more difficulty, this has a human cost, a reputational cost and a real cost in terms of the service provision required for support and intervention. Measures to ensure that 'vulnerable' ex-servicemen are identified at an early stage and supported accordingly are therefore essential.

SECTION 5: LOCAL PRIORITIES AND MEASURES

5.1 Whilst the Armed Forces have an important role in preparing serving personnel and veterans for civilian life, the local authority and community also have an important role in supporting the successful transition and providing support for Armed Forces families.

5.2 Stockport Council and its partners already provide a range of services which serving personnel and veterans can access for support in relation to housing, education, employment and welfare rights. The key services include;

5.1 Housing

Stockport Council's new Allocation Policy (approved in December 2016) includes 'additional preference' for ex-forces personnel with urgent housing needs as well as priority status for those in the process of leaving the military.

Information and advice is also available for new Stockport Homes' tenants, including advice about housing options and resettlement support for new tenants who require help accessing employment, training and benefits.

Stockport Homes work closely with the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) and the British Legion to help prevent homelessness. Where homelessness cannot be prevented, Stockport Homes complies fully with legislation and guidance around people leaving the Armed Forces.

5.2 Education

Children of serving UK personnel are treated as a 'permitted exception' for admission into reception to place them in school and get them settled quickly.

Support packages are available to support children's learning, social and psychological development if necessary and wider support is available for the family through CAMHS if there are any issues.

The Government's Pupil Premium also provides schools with additional funding to support children of service personnel.

5.3 Engagement with Schools

Encourage and promote youth engagement in the Armed Forces community. This includes supporting the four youth Cadet organisations, all of which offer a wide range of activities for young people. The Armed Forces sees its Cadets as a vital part of preparing our young people for their role in the community while developing valuable life skills. Local schools will be encouraged to similarly support and promote the youth initiatives.

Engage the Armed Forces in local public events and work with the Armed Forces to support local events such as the annual Armed Forces day to acknowledge the work of currently serving troops, to service families, veterans and cadets.

5.4 Employment

The National Careers Service provides the first port of call for individuals wanting Advice and Guidance on how to develop their career aspirations, improve their skills and prepare for work. The service includes face-to-face adviser support, telephone support and online support, with more intensive personalised support available to individuals in priority groups (out of work benefit claimants, people with low skills).

Jobcentre Plus provides support in dealing with out of work benefit claims and payments, as well as providing a further source of back-to-work support for the shorter term unemployed. Meanwhile support for longer term unemployed is provided through the DWP Work Programme.

The council also runs a number of Work Clubs throughout the borough, providing advice and support for jobseekers looking to find employment.

5.5 Information and Advice Services

The Council's Advice Service provides a free, confidential service accessible to all.

The service includes a network of 11 local centres providing one-stop shops for face-to-face advice covering a wide range of issues, including benefits, debt, employment and consumer issues. Information and access to Council and other public services are available at all libraries.

5.6 Health and Wellbeing

The Council's Adult Social Care team provides a range of support to those presenting with more complex needs, including case work with individuals with mental health needs and / or physical injuries.

5.7 Communities Leadership

Encourage local businesses and employers to adopt the principles of Armed Forces Corporate Covenant and show their support to Armed Forces personnel and their families. This includes increasing awareness of how employing reservists and veterans can benefit the workplace through making the most of the leadership and skills they have learnt through their service. To do this, we will encourage businesses to sign up to the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS), that encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

5.8 Understanding our Armed Forces Demographics

Take steps to better understand the needs of both the Armed Forces community and our internal workforce, by making a commitment to collecting data on veterans, their dependants, Reservists and those currently service to ensure services are tailored accordingly. This includes support for the inclusion of questions concerning membership of the Armed Forces Community in the census.