The Armed Forces Covenant and our Armed Forces Community Covenant

Contents

— Introduction
— Our commitment
— Housing support
— Mental health support
— Veterans bereavement support
— Support for those with physical injuries
— Support if you are disabled
— Skills and employment
— Other sources of support

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation to those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families that they will be treated fairly when accessing services and not face discrimination compared to other citizens. In some cases, special consideration is appropriate for those who have given most, such as the injured and the bereaved. You can read more about the Armed Forces Covenant on the Armed Forces Covenant website (https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/).

The Armed Forces Covenant Duty

The Armed Forces Act 2021 strengthened the Armed Forces Covenant with a new legal duty on public bodies to have due regard to the Covenant principles when exercising certain statutory functions in healthcare, education and housing. This legal obligation is known as the Armed Forces Covenant Duty and it came into effect on 22 November 2022. This Duty applies to our council.

The three Covenant principles are:

- recognising the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces
- that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces
- that specials provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the armed forces

The Armed Forces Community

The Armed Forces community includes:

- Serving or regular personnel
- A reservist (volunteer and regular)
- Members of British overseas territory forces who are subject to Service law
- A veteran (those who have served at least one day in HM Armed Forces)
- Family of serving personnel, reservists and veterans (including spouses, civil partners, children whom they are responsible for and, where appropriate, parents and unmarried partners)
- Immediate family of serving personnel and veterans who have died, whether or not that death has any connection with service

Our commitment

Along with fulfilling our obligations under the Armed Forces Covenant Duty, we have signed a pledge for wider support to the armed forces community.

The Basingstoke and Deane Armed Forces Community Covenant (/content/doclib/4446.pdf) was signed by our council on the 25 June 2013 in conjunction with RAF Odiham, South East Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association, Service Personnel and Veterans Agency and Basingstoke Voluntary Services. We have since signed and updated our Armed Forces Covenant in July 2024 (https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/content/doclib/4193.pdf).

We will support the armed forces community by:

- ensuring that they can access services that they are entitled to
- ensuring that when services are being reviewed or designed that the issues armed forces personnel and their families face are considered

- encouraging local businesses, community groups and individuals to work with us to pledge their support (https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/support-and-advice/businesses/) to armed forces personnel and their families as well as reservists and veterans

Cadets

Joining one of the cadet forces is a great way to build confidence, learn new skills and be part of a supportive team. They offer exciting opportunities like outdoor activities, leadership training and community events, all while helping you develop discipline and resilience.

- Army Cadets (https://armycadets.com/)
- Army Cadets Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (https://armycadets.com/county/hampshire-and-isle-of-wight-acf/)
- Royal Navy Cadets (https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/our-organisation/cadets-and-youth)
- Air Cadets (https://www.raf.mod.uk/aircadets/)

As part of our Armed Forces Covenant pledge, we are committed to supporting cadets and the valuable opportunities they provide.

Armed Forces Officer and Armed Forces Champion

If you need to contact the armed forces officer please email strategyandperformance@basingstoke.gov.uk (mailto:strategyandperformance@basingstoke.gov.uk)

As part of our commitment, we have an Armed Forces Champion, an elected councillor who represents and advocates for the local Armed Forces community. They help ensure the council meets its Armed Forces Covenant commitments, raise awareness of the needs of serving personnel, veterans and their families, and strengthen links with military units and charities.

If you would like to, you can email our Armed Forces Champion (mailto:cllr.paul.miller@basingstoke.gov.uk).

Housing support

There are several housing options to consider if looking for accommodation. Here you can find out about options on finding a home as well as what to do if you're homeless or threatened with homelessness.

Social rented housing

To ensure that current and former service personnel are not disadvantaged when applying for social housing, our allocations policy provides exemptions to the 2-year residency/employment criteria. The exemption criteria applies to applicants:

- currently serving in the armed forces
- who are a former member of, the armed forces, and are not currently residing in the district (but had previously resided in the borough for 2 years, immediately prior to being posted in the armed forces)
- who are a former member of the armed forces who are applying for social housing within 5 years of discharge
- who are a bereaved spouse or civil partner of a member of the armed forces or a seriously injured reservist who is either currently employed or resident in the borough

All applicants must meet the other eligibility criteria and have a reasonable preference (housing need) as defined in the allocations policy.

View the council's allocation policy and find out how to apply for the councils housing register. (https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/housingallocations) Contact the team at housing@basingstoke.gov.uk (mailto:housing@basingstoke.gov.uk) or by calling 01256 844844 if you require assistance with the application.

Private rented accommodation

Normally the fastest route into accommodation, the private rented sector gives you more choice and flexibility in where you would like to live. Find out more about securing accommodation in the private sector (https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/private-rented-accommodation).

Information to the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords can be found on the government website. (https://www.gov.uk/private-renting)

Low cost home ownership

Low-cost home ownership opportunities are open to people who cannot afford to purchase a home on the open market but want to buy their own home. There are a variety of options available. Find information on the options available, events and how to join our Low-Cost Home Ownership register (https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/low-cost-home-ownership)

Discounts on Council Tax

Find out about discounts available to eligible members of the Armed Forces (https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/council-tax-reductions)

Mental health support

Op COURAGE

Provides specialist care and support for service leavers, reservists, veterans and their families.

The team offers mental health assessment by a specialist veterans mental health practitioner who is from or has experience of working with the Armed Forces community.

You can contact the service yourself, be referred by a family member, a third sector organisation or a GP.

Make a referral or self-refer, by calling 0300 365 2000 (option 4) or emailing gateway@berkshire.nhs.uk (mailto:gateway@berkshire.nhs.uk)

View the OpCOURAGE SouthEast website (https://www.opcouragesoutheast.nhs.uk/)

Find out more about the NHS mental health support for veterans, service leavers and reservists (https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-community/mental-health/veterans-reservists/)

Veterans Outreach Support

Provides a welcoming and relaxed setting where UK veterans and family members can drop in (https://vosuk.org/drop-ins/portsmouth/) for confidential social or psychological support. Members of the British Armed Forces and Reserves, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and the Merchant Navy are welcome.

Contact Veterans Outreach Support by calling 02392731767 or emailing admin@vosuk.org (mailto:admin@vosuk.org)

Find out more from the Veterans Outreach Support website (https://vosuk.org/)

Boots on the Ground

Founded by veterans, with the simple mission statement of supporting soldiers, veterans and family members whenever help is required. The charity was founded in memory of a former soldier Wayne Passmore who took his life after his return home from Bosnia.

The charity runs small activity weekends for veterans and their families, offer life support, back to work programs, sign posting and other support services.

Contact Boots on the Ground by calling 08000 699990 or by completing the Contact us form on their webpage (https://www.bootsontheground.org/contact-us/)

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

Leading a movement against suicide, CALM runs a free and confidential helpline and webchat, 7 hours a day, 7 days a week for anyone who needs to talk.

Find out more on the CALM website (https://www.thecalmzone.net/) or call their helpline on 0800 58 58 58.

Silent Storms

Provides mental health and wellbeing support, offering a safe, welcoming environment for anyone who identifies as a man aged 18+ to come together, share their experiences, and receive peer to peer support.
Learn more on the Silent Storms website (http://www.silentstorms.co.uk)

Walking With The Wounded

Supports those who have served in the military with mental health, employment and wraparound care coordination programmes tailored to the unique needs of each individual. Their mission is to help those who have served regain independence and stability.
Find out more on the Walking With The Wounded website (https://walkingwiththewounded.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/)

Veterans bereavement support

A community-based organisation providing free advice and information for all those who have served or have served in the Armed Forces and Merchant Navy.

Providing ongoing bereavement care for families and friends of those who have served and who struggle with the passing of someone special, including advice and information on funeral etiquette including the loan of regimental or general service drapes for the coffin.

Contact the Veterans Bereavement Service by:

- emailing info@veteransbereavementsupport.co.uk (mailto:info@veteransbereavementsupport.co.uk)
- texting or WhatsApp 07885498462 (https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/tel:%C2%A007885498462)

Support for those with physical injuries

Op RESTORE (Previously known as The Veterans Trauma Network)

Provides care and treatment to those who have been injured during their time in the Armed Forces. The service is available in selected NHS health centres across England.

The referral process is simple. Tell your NHS GP you served in the Armed Forces and they can refer you. For more information please visit the NHS website (https://url.uk.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/rFJ1CGvjjSJNO7YU7DGXV?domain=nhs.uk/).

Help for Heroes

Provides a range of support and services for wounded, injured and sick service personnel (regular and reserves) and veterans who have suffered illness or injuries in serving the nation.

Find more information on the Help for Heroes website (https://www.eastriding.gov.uk/url/easysite-asset-780993/) or call 07808 789492.

Blesma

An Armed Forces charity dedicated to assisting serving personnel and veterans who have suffered life-changing limb loss or use of a limb, an eye or sight. It provides financial and emotional support to individuals and their families.

Find out more on the Blesma website (https://www.eastriding.gov.uk/url/easysite-asset-780999/) or call 020 8590 1124.

Veterans Hearing Foundation

If you have served in the UK Armed Forces and now have hearing loss, tinnitus or both, you may be able to apply for support from the Veterans Hearing Foundation. Find more information on the Veterans Hearing Foundation website (https://www.eastriding.gov.uk/url/easysite-asset-781002/) or call 01455 248900.

Basingstoke Tinnitus Support group

Offering information and support about tinnitus. Find out more on the Basingstoke tinnitus group website (https://www.basingstoketinnitusgroup.org/) or email baatingroup@outlook.com (mailto:baatingroup@outlook.com)

Blind Veterans

Providing rehabilitation, training, practical advice and emotional support to veterans regardless of how or when they lost their sight. Helping blind veterans regain their independence and live the life they choose. Find out more on the Blind Veterans website (https://www.blindveterans.org.uk/)

Support if you are disabled

Blue Badge parking permit

The parking permit allows people with severe mobility problems (caused by visible and non-visible disabilities) to park close to their destination making it easier to access goods and services. The badge holder can use the permit whenever they travel as a driver or passenger.

Find more information about Blue Badges and to apply for a Blue Badge (https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/parking/bluebadge/howtoapply)

Disabled facility grant scheme

If you are a disabled person with physical barriers that make it difficult for you to carry out ordinary day-to-day activities in your home. Or someone you live with has a disability, you may be eligible for a grant to pay for adaptations to your home.

This grant is available to owner-occupiers, private and housing association tenants (with the landlord's permission) and council tenants who have had the work refused by housing services.

Find out more about the disabled facilities grant, including how to apply (https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grant)

Personal care for veterans

NHS England and NHS Improvement, together with the Ministry of Defence have set out a new personalised care approach for those veterans who have a long-term physical, mental or neurological health condition or disability.

Organisations are encouraged to work together with the veteran to plan and deliver coordinated and personalised care. As part of this, veterans may be eligible for a personal budget to pay for some of the care and support they need.

Find more information on the NHS website (https://www.eastriding.gov.uk/url/easysite-asset-781007/) or speak to your GP.

Skills and employment

We know that the move from military to civilian life can be challenging and that securing fulfilling and sustained employment is a crucial factor in a achieving a successful transition.

We recognise and value the many skills, strengths and behaviours which have been gained during service and how these can be transferred to future employment opportunities.

As a council and through our commitment to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant and Action Plan, we are dedicated to supporting your careers transition by signposting to information and guidance.

To discover local and national organisations, dedicated to supporting service leavers, please download our Armed Forces Employment and Skills support information which has links to recruitment sites, business start-up, volunteering opportunities, courses and sector specific careers information.

Still in service or transitioning

Providing comprehensive support, employment advise and training opportunities for serving personnel, service leavers and their families.

- Career Transition Partnership (https://www.modctp.co.uk)
- Forces Employment Charity (https://www.forcesemployment.org.uk/)

- Forces Families Jobs - Forces Families Jobs (https://www.forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk/)

Employment Support and Courses

Providing employability skills training, job seeking support and self-employment advise tailored to the needs of ex-military personnel.

- Lifeworks (https://wearelifeworks.org.uk/?gad_source=1&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI0MGdw8WhhgMVu5xQBh0IggSGEAAYASAAEgKpOvD_BwE)

Local Support

Organisation based in Basingstoke and Deane providing career transition support, signposting, referrals and camaraderie.

- Basingstoke Veterans Hub (https://www.bvaction.org.uk/basingstoke-veterans-hub)
- Community Furniture Project Basingstoke (https://www.n-c-r-c.org/community-furniture-project-basingstoke/cfp-basingstoke-contact-us/)

Recruitment and Job Sites

A range of job sites and recruitment services specifically for ex-military personnel from employment opportunities to careers advise.

- First Military Recruitment (https://first-military.co.uk/)
- SaluteMyJob (https://salutemyjob.com/)
- Demob Job (https://www.demobjob.co.uk/)
- Ex-Mil Recruitment (https://www.ex-mil.co.uk/)
- Forces Recruitment Solutions (https://www.forcesrecruitment.co.uk/)
- JobOppO (https://www.joboppo.co.uk/)
- Armed forces access to Jobcentre Plus (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jobcentre-plus-services-for-the-armed-forces-and-their-families/armed-forces-enhanced-access-to-jobcentre-plus-services-and-armed-forces-champions)

Wounded, injured and sick

Providing support for wounded, injured or sick veterans, enabling them to transition into meaningful work and new careers:

- The Poppy Factory (https://www.poppyfactory.org/)
- Walking with the Wounded (https://walkingwiththewounded.org.uk/)

Self-Employment and Business Start-Up

Providing advice and guidance, financial support and courses to help service leavers and their families to realise their business ambition.

- X-Forces Enterprise (https://x-forces.com/)
- Heropreneurs (https://www.heropreneurs.co.uk/)

Volunteering

Providing support and guidance to find meaningful volunteering opportunities across Hampshire:

- Basingstoke Voluntary Action (https://www.bvaction.org.uk/)
- Hampshire County Council (https://www.hants.gov.uk/jobs/volunteering)
- Volunteering in the borough (https://www.lovebasingstoke.co.uk/news/volunteering-in-basingstoke-and-deane)

Sector Specific Support

Providing sector specific support for service leavers to transition into careers from construction to logistics, healthcare and land-based employment.

- BuildForce (https://www.buildforce.org.uk/our-services/)
- Building Heroes (https://www.buildingheroes.org.uk/)
- Veterans into Logistics (https://veteransintologistics.org.uk/)
- High Ground (https://highground-uk.org/)
- Step into Health (https://www.militarystepintohealth.nhs.uk/)

Other sources of support

- Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs (https://afvbc.com/armed-forces-veterans-breakfast-clubs-directory)
- Basingstoke and Deane Veterans' Hub (https://www.asdic.org.uk/member-directory/#member-2381)
- Basingstoke Salvation Army (https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/basingstoke)
- Citizens Advice (https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/) providing advice on a wide range of welfare issues including benefits, money advice, employment, family, housing and health.

- Funding opportunities (https://covenantfund.org.uk/programmes/) for veterans and support organisations.
- Gurkha Services (delivered by SSAFA) (https://www.ssafa.org.uk/get-help/gurkha-services)
- Gurkha Welfare Trust (https://www.gwt.org.uk/about-us/services/uk-services/) - Gurkha Welfare Advice Centres (GWAC) provide help and advice to those choosing to settle in the UK.
- How to set up a Veterans Hub guide (Forces Connect South East) (https://documents.hants.gov.uk/armed-forces/growyourhub-guide.pdf)
- Individual Planning and Personal Development (IPPD) (https://www.army.mod.uk/support-and-training/veterans/transition-to-civilian-life/)an Army run programme, assisting service leavers with a smooth transition into civilian life.
- Money Helper (https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en) brings together the support and services of three government-backed financial guidance providers: the Money Advice Service, the Pensions Advisory Service and Pension Wise.
- Royal Air Forces Association (https://rafa.org.uk/)
- Royal Air Forces Association Basingstoke (https://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/Old-basing?_gl=1*klqvje*_up*MQ..*_ga*OTI0MDE4OTAwLjE3NjAzNTQ2Mjk.*_ga_N0H21K3H1R*czE3NjAzNTQ2MjkkbzEkZzAkdDE3NjAzNTQ2MjkkajYwJGwwJGg
- Royal British Legion (http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/) provides help for members of the Royal Navy, British Army, Royal Air Force, veterans, women and their families.
- Royal British Legion Old Basing, Basingstoke (https://branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/Old-basing?_gl=1*klqvje*_up*MQ..*_ga*OTI0MDE4OTAwLjE3NjAzNTQ2Mjk.*_ga_N0H21K3H1R*czE3NjAzNTQ2MjkkbzEkZzAkdDE3NjAzNTQ2MjkkajYwJGwwJGg
- Royal Air Forces Association (https://rafa.org.uk/)
- Royal Air Forces Association Basingstoke (https://branch.rafa.org.uk/basingstoke/)
- Serve and Protect is a not-for-profit organisation (https://serveandprotectcu.co.uk/?utm_campaign=homepage&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=basingstoke-and-deane-borough-council) dedicated to supporting the Armed Forces community. Backed by the Ministry of Defence, they offer simple way to save and borrow, with repayments made directly through salary deduction for added convenience. Their support extends beyond Service Personnel to include Reservists, Veterans receiving an MOD pension, and the families of Armed Forces members.
  SSAFA Hampshire (https://www.ssafa.org.uk/hampshire)
- The Forces Connect App (https://www.forcesconnect.co.uk/) links the armed forces community to local and national organisations offering support across a wide range of services, from crisis help to finding a dentist, starting a business or getting housing advice. Download the mobile app by searching Forces Connect in the Apple app or Google Play store or access the web version via the Forces Connect website (https://www.forcesconnect.co.uk/)
- The Veterans Directory (https://www.veteransdirectory.org.uk) is a complete directory of help services for veterans.
- Togetherall (https://togetherall.com/en-gb/) a safe, online community where people support each other anonymously to improve mental health and wellbeing.

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