



Flintshire County Council

Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2017/18



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Introduction

I am very pleased to introduce Flintshire County Council's second Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report, setting out the progress we have made since first signing the Covenant in 2013.

Since the last annual report, with the valuable support of the Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officer, we have accelerated our commitment to the Covenant, refreshing our action plan and extending membership of the Steering Group. We have now completed 77% of the actions we identified in our action plan. I am proud and delighted to report that this has resulted in the Council being awarded the Silver Award in the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

We recognise the important role that the Armed Forces community make to our community and nation and we are committed to ensuring that we recognise their contributions and ensure that those who give the most do not suffer detriment when accessing our services. During the next 12 months we will continue to push forward with our action plan, supporting the Armed Forces community and raising public awareness of the contributions they make.

**Councillor Andrew
Dunbobbin
Armed Forces Champion**



1. Background

1.1 The [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 Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at a local level.

1.2 The purpose of the Flintshire Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces community working and residing in Flintshire 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 Flintshire.

1.3 The Covenant encourages the integration of service life into civilian life as well as encouraging members of the armed forces community to help in their local community. Flintshire County Council signed the Covenant in July 2013 and hosted the North Wales Armed Forces Day in June 2013.

1.4 There are currently no army barracks in Flintshire, Royal Air Force (RAF) base in Sealand closed in 2006, however, according to research by the Royal British Legion (RBL) Flintshire has the highest number and proportion of veterans in North Wales- 10,440 (21%). A veteran is someone who has served in Her Majesty's Armed Forces and includes people who have served in the Reserves.

1.5 This report sets out what we have achieved since the last report and our key priorities for the next 12 months. It is set out under the following headings:

- What we have achieved during April 2017- December 2018
- Governance
- Next Steps

2. What we have achieved during 2017/18

2.1 Armed Forces Steering Group

The membership of the Steering Group has continued to grow and we have welcomed new members such as:

- Airbus
- The Probation Service
- Flintshire Local Voluntary Council
- Veterans
- Reservists

A full list of member organisations is attached as Appendix 1

Councillor Andrew Dunbobbin is the elected member Armed Forces Champion and chairs the Steering Group. A copy of the terms of reference for the Steering Group is attached as Appendix 1.

2.2 Action Plan

We agreed an action plan in 2016, setting ourselves 35 actions to complete. We have rated our progress against these actions as Red, Amber Green.

Red= No progress

Amber= Limited progress

Green= Complete or on track

A total of 27 (77%) actions have been completed or are making good progress, three actions are underway but limited progress has been made. No progress has been made against five actions.

The action plan is attached as Appendix 2.

2.3 Armed Forces Web pages on the Council website

We have dedicated several pages on the Council website to promote our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and providing information for the Armed Forces community. There is also an email address for anyone to submit enquiries and contact the Armed Forces Team.

2.4 Council Priority

We take seriously the commitment we have made to the Armed Forces Covenant and this is demonstrated in the Council's priorities for 2018/19. Under the priority of Modern and Efficient Council, we have agreed that we will:

Ensure our Armed Forces community and their families are not disadvantaged when accessing Council Services.

Achievement will be measured through:

- Optimising national grant funding available to support local projects
- Preparing as the first Council in Wales to collect and monitor pupil data from the Armed Forces Community and their families to better inform service provision
- Revising council policies to reflect the ambitions of the Armed Forces Covenant; and
- Achieving Gold status in the Ministry of Defence Employee Recognition Scheme.

We will monitor our achievement through monitoring the achievements of the Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan.

2.5 Education

The Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officer (AFLO) attended the meeting of the Primary and Secondary Schools Heads (Heads' Federation) to raise awareness of the importance of identifying pupils who are children of serving personnel and veterans. The AFLO provided schools with details of the questions needed to be asked of pupils. Schools are responsible for capturing this data which is collated by the Education department. Colleagues from the Welsh Local Government Association are working with the Welsh Government to look at opportunities for the data to be captured via "PLASC" (pupil level annual school census) which is the Welsh Government's system for ensuring all schools annually capture specific data on all pupils.

We will be able to report on this in more detail in our 2018/19 annual report.

Remembering a local hero

One primary school in Flintshire, Southdown community school, has been commended by Estyn for their approach to researching a local World War one hero, Frederick Birks V.C. M.M. The Estyn Inspection report said:

When studying a local war hero pupils were encouraged to use their own opinions to shape their history lessons. As the project grew it influenced the class in a new direction. Pupils gained a sense of personal achievement by knowing that their ideas contributed to changes in what they studied. Pupils were given an open approach to class planning, which enabled them to produce their own play on their research findings.

The school have made links to Frederick Birks family who have donated an award to the school which is given annually to a pupil who has shown the same qualities as Frederick Birks-strength, courage and compassion.

The school developed a play which was performed in front of many dignitaries including Frederick Birks family and the Australian High Commission. The work undertaken by the pupils was also reported in the national media. The next project for the pupils is to ensure Fred's memorial in St Matthews Church Buckley is cleaned. Through their research the pupils have created a lasting legacy for the community to remember the sacrifice and achievements of a local hero.

2.6 Employment

We proudly supported Reserves Day as we recognise the valuable contribution Council employees who are Reservists make to the Armed Forces, our community, our organisation and nation. Reservists give up their spare time to serve in the Reserve Forces, balancing their civilian life with a military career to ensure that should their country need them, they would be ready to serve. We raised the Armed Forces flag outside County Hall in Mold acknowledging our support and published a press release to demonstrate our support.

We agreed the Reserves Policy in 2016/17 and agreed a guaranteed interview for veterans who left the forces within the last three years and meet the essential criteria of a post.

2.7 Housing

Veterans face many challenges on leaving the services which can include financial debt, lack of employment opportunities, addiction, mental health problems or relationship breakdowns. The Council works towards the Welsh Government's Housing Pathway for Ex Service Personnel to ensure that veterans are treated fairly, their specific needs are recognised and they are allocated appropriate accommodation.

The Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officer reviewed Housing policies to ensure they are compatible with the commitments of the Armed Forces Covenant.

2.8 Leisure Services

The Welsh Government fund free swimming for Armed Forces personnel and veterans who reside in Wales, this is available in the following swimming pools in the county: Buckley, Flint, Holywell and Mold during public swimming sessions only. Veterans and armed forces personnel wanting to take advantage of the free swimming initiative must be in possession of an MOD Defence Privilege Card. Those without a card will be unable to access free swimming until they purchase a card from the MOD Defence Discount Service. These cards are available from www.defencediscountservice.co.uk.

Details of attendance at swimming sessions for Armed Forces personnel and veterans during 2017/18

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Buckley	73	46	28	47	194
Jade Jones Pavilion, Flint	3	4	2	4	13
Mold Leisure Centre	40	35	16	4	95

2.9 Social Care

The Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officers delivered training sessions to the mental health team to raise their awareness of the needs of veterans, enabling them to provide more effective services.

2.10 Covenant members

In October 2017, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) signed the Flintshire Armed Forces Covenant; Chief Fire Officer Simon Smith signed the Covenant on behalf of NWFRS in front of the Leader of Flintshire County Council Councillor Aaron Shotton, the Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officers, the Armed Forces Champion Councillor Andrew Dunbobbin and members of the Armed Forces Steering Group.



2.11 Commemoration and Promotion Events

Since the last annual report we have actively promoted our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant:

- June -Armed Forces Week- we published a press release and posted tweets to actively show our support to the Armed Forces community.
- 21 June 2017 and 2018- we raised the Armed Forces flag, 21 June, to celebrate Reserves Day and promoted our support for employees who are Reservists.
- November we held a two minute silence on Remembrance Day, inviting our customers to join employees in remembering those who lost their lives in the two world

¹ NWFRS sign the Flintshire Armed Forces Covenant. Left to Right Cllr Aaron Shotton, Fiona Mocko FCC, Karen Armstrong FCC, Cllr Andy Dunbobbin, Mark Powell Reservist and MOD representative, Janette Williams AFLO, Pete Fuller FCC, Stephen Townley AFLO

- wars and later conflicts. We also jointly funded with Town and Community Councils, ceremonial poppies to display on lamp posts during the Remembrance period.
- January 2018 – we marked Holocaust Memorial Day, with a press release and workforce news item.
- We were awarded two grants The Council was successful in submitting and being awarded a grant to commemorate the centenary of the end of World War One. The commemorations included:
 - the dedication of commemorative stones for two people from Flintshire who were awarded the Victoria Cross (V.C.) for their gallantry during the War-Frederick Birks V.C. from Buckley and Harry Weale V.C. from Shotton;
 - A “Thank You” project involving local primary schools to remember the names of soldiers who had lost their lives during battle and whose names are missing from the Connah’s Quay Shotton Memorial; and
 - “Battles Over” initiative on 11th November which involved lighting beacons across Flintshire to play tribute to those who lost their lives or were injured.
- A grant has also been awarded for a project “Planes over Talacre” to remember the relationship between the Royal Air Force and the people of Talacre during World War Two. This project will involve the reconstruction of a “pill box” as the existing pill boxes on Talacre beach are being eroded by the sea. Pill boxes are small, concrete forts and formed one of the defences to prevent German invasion. The project will culminate in an open day in July 2019.



² Raising the flag Armed Forces Week June 2017, Cllr Andy Dunbobbin, Mike Dodd FCC, Karen Armstrong FCC, Pete Fuller FCC, Cllr Bernie Attridge, Captain Neil Turnbull

2.12 We are an active member of the Regional Armed Forces Forum; the following organisations are also members:

- Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB)
- Barnardo's Family Service
- CAIS
- Glyndwr University
- Ministry of Defence
- Prison Service
- Royal British Legion (RBL)
- Six North Wales local authorities
- Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA)
- Welsh Government (WG)

The Regional Armed Forces Liaison Officer has supported several organisations to develop projects and bid for funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

3. Governance

3.1 As the Armed Forces Covenant has been identified as a priority in the Council Plan 2018/19, quarterly reports on progress are presented to Chief Officers, Cabinet and relevant Scrutiny Committees. This will ensure we keep focussed on achieving the outcomes set out in our action plan.

3.2 The Steering Group will report to the Public Services Board (PSB) (via one of the PSB priority themes) on a quarterly basis. We also produce an Annual Report which will be approved by Cabinet and full Council before being published.

Next Steps

The priorities for the Armed Forces Steering Group for 2019 are to focus outstanding actions, which will include:

- ensure services are capturing information from their customers to identify whether they are from the Armed Forces community and analyse this information to identify needs;
- encourage schools to capture data on pupils who are children of serving members of the Armed Forces or children of veterans;
- amending the comments and complaints form to capture the Armed Forces community; and

- review potential for Council discretionary services to apply to be registered for the Veterans Discount card.

and to:

- review the make-up and structure of the Steering Group to reflect the structure of the Regional Steering Group and Delivery Group;
- refresh the action plan to encompass the priorities identified in the ALO mapping of the Armed Forces Community in North Wales and their needs;
- implement an employee training programme to raise awareness of the needs of the Armed Forces community;
- continue to celebrate and commemorate key events recognising the contribution made by the Armed Forces;
- publish an annual newsletter to keep the Armed Forces community up to date with progress to meet the Armed Forces Covenant; and
- aim to achieve the Gold award in the Employers Recognition Scheme.

Thank you for reading this report. If you would like to find out more about the Council's commitment to the Covenant or would like to make any comments on this report please contact:

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The Armed Forces Community Covenant is designed to complement, at a local level, the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the nation, the government and the armed forces. The aim of the Community Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the service community in their area and promote understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the armed forces community.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation to ensure that those who serve, those who have served, and their families are treated fairly.

For Flintshire County Council and partner organisations, the community covenant presents an opportunity to coordinate support and advice to members of the armed forces community.

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.

The Flintshire Community Covenant signed in July 2013 by the Royal British Legion, Armed Forces' organisations³, third sector organisations⁴, NHS Trust, Department for Work and Pensions, Wales Probation, Coleg Cambria and the Council made the commitment to work closely together to ensure support is provided for the armed forces community.

³ Royal Navy, British Army, Royal Air Force, Soldiers, Sailors and Armed Forces Association (SSAFA), Reserve Forces' and Cadet's Associations (RFCA),

⁴ Flintshire Local Voluntary Council, North Wales Young Dragons, Citizens' Advice Bureau – Flintshire, Pennaf Housing Association, Wales and West Housing Association.

LOCAL STEERING GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE

AIMS

1. To encourage support for the Armed Forces community working and residing in Flintshire 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 Flintshire.
2. To foster opportunities for the civilian sector to give help, advice and support to serving and retired members of the Armed Forces and their families in Flintshire by joint dialogue and imaginative exploration of all possibilities.
3. To assist the realignment of service provision to meet the changing needs of the military, their families and veterans, including the Reserves of all three forces.
4. To create a culture wherein Armed Forces organisations in Flintshire can offer support to their local civilian communities.
5. To integrate, where possible, military and civilian activities and events to the mutual benefit of both communities.
6. To explore education, training and employment opportunities for those leaving or about to leave the armed forces, veterans and their families.
7. To further develop, monitor and review the commitments made in the Flintshire Community Covenant Action Plan.

Membership

To be reviewed:

Governance

The Steering Group will report to the Public Services Board (PSB) (via one of the PSB priority themes) on a quarterly basis. Secretariat support will be provided by the Corporate Business and Communications Executive Office Team.

Decision Making

Decisions will be arrived at by consensus and recorded in the minutes of the Steering Group.

Frequency of meetings




The Steering Group will meet twice yearly or more frequently if required and will be chaired by the Flintshire Armed Forces Champion.



Appendix 2 Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan




To encourage support for the Armed Forces community working and residing in Flintshire 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 Flintshire.



	Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Outcome/Output	Progress
1.1	Identify key Armed Forces events/remembrance days	FM	May 2017	Calendar of events available to Steering Group	Complete 
1.2	Develop action plan for each event to ensure that they are commemorated	FM	October 2017	Increased awareness AF and support available to AF community	On-going 




1.3	Further develop pages on Council website to promote AFC and encourage support to Armed Forces community	FM	September 2017	AF community can access information easily.	Complete. 
1.4	Ensure use of AFC logo on Council publications and promotional material	KA/Graphic Design	December 2017	FCC is promoted as AF friendly and its commitment to the Covenant is visible on all documents and promotional material	Logo is bilingual and is being used 
1.5	Ensure AFC e-learning module is available for all new employees as part of their induction	Corporate Training/Regional AFLO	March 2018	Employees understand the Council's commitment to the AF community and have an awareness of their needs	WLGA have developed bilingual module for Wales which can be adapted locally. Regional AFLOs have also developed e-learning package- to be launched during 2018/19 




1.6	Develop specific workshops for public facing employees to support them to understand the needs of the AF community	Regional AFLO	March 2018	Council services are aware of and deliver services that meet the needs of the local AF community	<p>Delivered to mental health team in Social Services</p> 
1.7	Flintshire AF events are promoted and supported through the County Forum	FM/KA	October 2017	Town and Community Councils work with the Council to promote AF events	<p>FM and Regional AFLO attended meeting with County Forum. County Forum. Town and Community Councils have been encouraged to contact AFLO to access grants.</p> 
To foster opportunities for the civilian sector to give help, advice and support to serving and retired members of the Armed					



Forces and their families in Flintshire by joint dialogue and imaginative exploration of all possibilities.

	Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Outcome/Output	Progress
2.1	To explore the role of FLVC and the Armed Forces Covenant	FM/KA	September 2017	Third sector organisations actively support the AF Covenant	Complete 
2.2	To include AFC within criteria for accessing FCC grants	FM/KA	December 2017	Grants provided by the Council support the Council's commitment to AF covenant where applicable. Public money is spent supporting AF community	Complete 
2.3	Commitment to AFC included as part of FCC's community benefit clauses within the procurement process	Arwel Staples/Tom Booty/KA	September 2017	Opportunities to support for the AF community are maximised. Public money spent on goods, works and services benefit	In progress 

				the AF community. Opportunities to train and employ local veterans are increased.	
2.4	Explore the opportunities to include commitment to AFC within Community Asset Transfers (CAT) and Alternative Delivery Models (ADMS)	KA/FM	March 2018	Increased support for the AF community is available CATs and ADMS meet the needs of the AF community	In progress 
To assist the realignment of service provision to meet the changing needs of the military, their families and veterans, including the Reserves of all three forces.					
	Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Outcome/Output	Progress
3.1	Services nominate a contact for AFC	KA/FM	September 2017	The Steering Group has mechanisms in place to communicate effectively with all services in the Council.	Services represented from across the Council. 





				There is a “joined-up” approach to support for the AF community across the Council	
3.2	Ensure that all services who have customer databases, ask customers at the point of contact with the Council whether they have an AF connection	AF Steering Group/ service representatives	March 2018	Services consistently ask questions about AF connections and capture the data on their customer databases	Education- in progress 
3.3	All services to amend equality monitoring questionnaire to include AF	Steering Group/service representatives	January 2018	There is a better understanding of the profile of the AF community in Flintshire and access to and take-up of services	To be started 
3.4	To amend and monitor customer comments and complaints to capture AF community	Ian McLaren (IMc) / RJ	December 2017	There is a better understanding of the satisfaction level of the AF community with Council Services and services which do meet needs.	To be started 

3.5	Monitor, analyse and review complaints/comments to identify any trends to inform service improvements	IMc/RJ	March 2018	There is a better understanding of the satisfaction level of the AF community with Council Services and services which do meet needs	To be started 
3.6	To review data to identify services used by AF community	Steering Group/service representatives	March 2018	To gain an understanding of the profile of the AF community in Flintshire, their needs and the take-up of services.	To be started 
3.7	Audit and suggest amendments to Corporate and service portfolio policies to reflect AFC	Regional AFLO	December 2018	Services are able to meet the needs of the AF community	Complete 




3.8	Establish base line of services that are AF community friendly	Regional AFLO/ service representatives	December 2018	List of AF community friendly services available. Action plan in place to ensure all services are AF community friendly	In progress 
3.9	Support Housing to embed Housing pathway for AFC	Regional AFLO	September 2018	Housing officers understand the needs of AFC Housing information is accessible for AFC Accommodation needs of veterans are met	Complete 




To create a culture wherein Armed Forces organisations in Flintshire can offer support to their local civilian communities.

	Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Outcome/Output	Progress
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4.1	Create a framework to promote opportunities for Council related and sponsored events using AF volunteers	Cptn NT/GM/PK/FM/KA/Gwenno Jones (GJ)	October 2018	AF volunteers participate in Council events. AF volunteers support local communities	Complete 
4.2	Promote FLVC on the Armed Forces pages of website	FM	May 2017	Increased number of AF Community become volunteers	Complete 
4.3	AFC to provide Flintshire County Council (FCC) with information that can be promoted on the website	Cptn NT/GM/PK	December 2017	An increased range of up to date information for the AFC is available on the website	Completed as part of regional website 
4.4	Develop AFC Volunteer network	Regional AFLO	March 2019	A sustainable network of AFC volunteers is in place and is actively involved in supporting veterans	Volunteering opportunities promoted to AFC 


To integrate, where possible, military and civilian activities and events to the mutual benefit of both communities.

	Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Outcome/Output	Progress
5.1	Develop annual communications plan	FM/KA	December 2017	Co-ordinated messages cascaded within the county and Council Collaborative working to avoid duplication and make best use of resources	Complete 
5.2	Implement training programme for public facing employees	AFLO	March 2018	Employees understand the needs of the AF community	In progress 
5.3	Promote the Veterans Discount Card	Cptn NT/PK/GM/MD	December 2017	Increased number of veterans apply for the discount card Increased number of businesses apply	In progress-promoted through Council website 

				to be registered.	
5.4	Review potential for Council discretionary services to apply to be registered	Service representatives	December 2017	Some Council services apply to be registered to accept the discount card	To be started 
To explore education, training and employment opportunities for those leaving or about to leave the armed forces, veterans and their families.					
	Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Outcome/Output	Progress
6.1	Review organisations offering opportunities to the AF community, veterans and their families	Regional AFLO	December 2017	A list of organisations and services they offer is available	Complete 
6.2	Promote these organisations on the website	FM	January 2018	Information is easily accessed. Increased take-up of these services.	Complete 

6.3	Create opportunities for drop-in centres/hubs for AF community and veterans	Regional AFLO/Cheryl Marland (CM)/PF/MD/FM	April 2018	<p>AF community can access information and support in AF friendly environment</p> <p>AF Hubs available in each Town centre</p> <p>Hubs are sustainable and supported by all agencies</p>	<p>Hubs provided by Regional AFLO, in the longer term to become mainstreamed within services</p> <p>G</p>
6.4	To produce periodic monitoring reports to FCC Chief Officer Team (COT) identifying areas for improvement and further action	FM/KA	First report due September 2017	<p>COT are informed and up to date with progress.</p> <p>Barriers to progress are removed</p>	<p>Complete G</p>
6.5	Complete an annual report to Cabinet and Corporate Resources and Overview Committee providing an overview of progress	FM/KA	First report April 2018	Elected members are reassured that the Council is committed to the AF Covenant.	<p>Complete G</p>

				Elected members support the Council's commitment to the AF Covenant	
Explore Funding Opportunities and Community Projects					
	Activity	Responsibility	Timeframe	Outcome/Output	Progress
7.1	Identify grants available to support the work of the AFC	FM/KA/ Regional AFLO	September 2017	List of grants available	Complete. 
7.2	Scope projects to support applications and submit applications for relevant grants	FM/KA/ Regional AFLO	March 2018	Applications for grants are submitted Grant applications are successful A number of initiatives within the county are	Complete. Two bids submitted during 2017/18. One was unsuccessful but the project was redeveloped and the second application for the grant was successfully submitted during

				supported by grants	2028/19. Further bids to be submitted during 2018/19 
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