

Report of: Leader of the Council

Meeting of	Date	Ward(s)
Council	29 June 2017	All

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Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant: Annual Update

1 Synopsis

- 1.1 Islington has a strong history of recognising and celebrating the valuable role played by our Armed Forces. In June 2013, the Council signed the Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant, pledging to recognise and support Armed Forces organisations, serving personnel and veterans in Islington. The Council also committed to report annually on progress in delivering the Community Covenant. This report summarises activity over the past year.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note activity over the past year to celebrate and support Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families.
- 2.2 To note that, from April 2017, the Council has agreed an additional measure to support veterans: payments under the War Pension Scheme are now fully disregarded in the financial assessment for social care charging (with the exception of payments of Constant Attendance Allowance).
- 2.3 To note that, in December 2016, the Council passed a motion to support the Royal British Legion's campaign for the 2021 Census to include questions concerning military services and members of the Armed Forces community, to provide more robust data to help target our support.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Armed Forces Covenant is a national agreement which sets out the relationship between the nation, the state and the Armed Forces. It recognises that the whole nation has a moral obligation to members of the Armed Forces and their families and establishes how they should expect to be treated. It applies to both current and ex-Forces personnel and their

families, with a view to redressing the disadvantages that the Armed Forces community faces in comparison to other citizens, and recognising the sacrifices they have made.

- 3.2 In addition to the national Covenant, the government has encouraged local authorities, their partners, and military organisations to sign their own Armed Forces Community Covenants, setting out how they will work together to celebrate and support the Armed Forces community within their areas.
- 3.3 Islington Council and its partners signed the Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant in June 2013, and the council backed this up by committing to a package of measures to celebrate and support Forces personnel in the borough. The details of these commitments are set out at Appendix A and on our website at <https://www.islington.gov.uk/advice/armed-forces-support/armed-forces-community-covenant>
- 3.4 The government has also established the Covenant Fund, with £10 million a year available for projects across the country which support the ambitions of the Armed Forces Covenants.
- 3.5 This report provides an update on our activity over the past year to recognise and support Armed Forces personnel and their families in Islington.

4 The Armed Forces population in Islington

Resident population

- 4.1 There is very little data collected on numbers of Armed Forces personnel or veterans at local authority level.
- 4.2 The two main datasets which provide an insight are the Census and the Annual School Census. The last Census in 2011 identified 75 Islington residents who were, at that time, employed in the Armed Forces. Latest data from the Annual Schools Census (January 2017), indicates that there are less than 5 pupils across Islington's schools who are from Forces families. Schools are required to capture data on children of service personnel through the annual census as these pupils are eligible for the pupil premium.
- 4.3 Based on this, and on anecdotal evidence from council and partner services, we estimate the number of current and ex-Forces personnel who live in the borough to be very low.
- 4.4 The Council recognises the need for more reliable data on the Armed Forces community in the borough. Better information would allow the Council, public sector partners, and the voluntary and community sector to direct resources more effectively to support Armed Forces personnel, veterans, and their families. Therefore, at Full Council on 16 December 2017, the Council passed a motion to support the Royal British Legion's campaign for the 2021 Census to include questions concerning military services and members of the Armed Forces community.

Street population

- 4.5 The Greater London Authority (GLA) publishes data on rough sleeping across London. Information is derived from the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN), a multi-agency database recording information about rough sleepers and the wider street population in London. People are categorised as rough sleeping if they have been encountered by an outreach worker bedded down on the street or in an open space 'not designed for habitation'. The reports do not include 'hidden homeless', for instance those who are 'sofa surfing'.
- 4.6 In 2015-16, 158 people were seen rough sleeping in Islington by outreach teams. Of these, 7 (5%) had experience of serving in the Armed Forces. Annual data for 2016-17 is not yet available but quarterly data for the period January to March 2017 indicates that there were

51 rough sleepers in Islington, of which 6 (12%) had experience of the Armed Forces. These will all have been offered support by our Street Outreach services.

Prison population

- 4.7 From January 2015, the Ministry of Justice began identifying veterans as they entered the prison service, following concerns about the management of ex-service personnel arising from a review of the criminal justice system. Data indicates that members of the armed forces represent about 5% of the prison population. In the year leading up to September 2016, 2,565 veterans were jailed across the UK.
- 4.8 Factors which contribute to the number of veterans entering the prison system include alcohol abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder.
- 4.9 Islington has one prison - HMP Pentonville – which takes suitable males aged 18 plus from local courts in the catchment area. The prison has a population of just under 1,300. There is no publicly available data on the number of inmates who are ex-Forces but, based on the national figure of 5%, this would equate to around 65 inmates.

5 Islington Armed Forces Covenant – celebration and remembrance

- 5.1 Each year, the Council nominates an elected councillor as its Armed Forces Champion. The current champion is Cllr Gary Poole. His role includes attending meetings of the Youth Organisations in Uniform (YOU) forum and celebration and commemorative events, and championing and supporting Armed Forces and veterans in Islington.
- 5.2 During the past year, the Council has recognised and celebrated a number of significant events related to the Armed Forces:
 - The Leader and the Mayor took part in the annual Remembrance Day events at Islington and St Pancras Cemetery on 10 November 2016 and at the Town Hall and other local memorials on 13 November
 - The Union Flag was raised on St George's Day (23 April) with the Mayor, Leader, Chief Executive, Islington Sheriff and two Pikemen and Musketeers from the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC)
 - The Deputy Mayor attended the HAC Open Day on 9 May 2017 and the Mayor attended the HAC's Active Officers' Dinner on 25 May 2017
 - The Armed Forces flag will be raised on the roof of the Town Hall on Monday 19 June with Members of the Islington Veterans' Association, the Mayor and Councillors, followed by an Armed Forces Day Parade and picnic on Islington Green on Saturday, 24 June (Armed Forces Day)
- 5.3 Looking ahead, the Mayor will be taking part in the annual Remembrance Day events at Islington and St Pancras Cemetery on 9 November 2017, followed by the main Remembrance events at the Borough's three War Memorials on Sunday 12 November.
- 5.4 Council Services also play their part. The Parks Service supports key events such as Remembrance Sunday, Armed Forces Day, Aztec Day etc. through ensuring that Islington's parks and memorials are looking their best and undertaking applications and risk assessments for each event, together with the Pageant Master, to ensure that things run smoothly on the day.
- 5.5 The Heritage Team ensures Islington's history and the achievement of veterans are recognised and remembered. Recent projects include:
 - 'Away from the Western Front': a two year project (2017-2019) funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with additional grants from the British Institute for the Study of Iraq

(Gertrude Bell Memorial) and the Centre for Hidden Histories. This project explores the heritage of the men and women from Islington who served in the campaigns of Salonika, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia and Africa. The Heritage Team is working with young people from Platform Youth Hub in Finsbury Park over the summer to produce an animation

- In 2015/16 funding from the Gallipoli Centenary Education Project was used to tell the stories of those men who travelled from Islington to fight in the disastrous Gallipoli campaign. We worked with six primary schools and two SEN secondary schools on this project, including a music project.
- In November 2016, the council, in partnership with Islington Veterans' Association, organised a public commemoration event to mark the centenary of the end of the Battle of the Somme
- 'The Story of Victor Hember' also commemorated the Battle of the Somme. Victor Hember was a local man who lost his life in the Battle. Correspondence from Victor to his family and friends was used to work with families from Clerkenwell to create a display, and held two public talks on him
- 'The Streets they Left Behind' is a HLF funded project to commemorate over 9,000 men and three woman who lost their lives in WW1. Working with the community, Islington Heritage have plaques on Islington streets to remember all those who died from each respective street, and the information used to produce these plaques is available on a digital, interactive map. This allows any local school, community group, family or individual to find out more about the men and women who came from our streets.
- 'The Victoria Cross Commemoration' (2014-2018) is a four year project to commemorate the five people from Islington who were awarded VCs in WW1. Each VC holder is commemorated with a public service in Islington Green and the laying of a paving stone inscribed with their name and military rank. This is also organised in partnership with the IVA. Over the past year, paving stones have been laid for:

Frederick Parslow: born in Balls Pond Road, Islington, Frederick Parslow was a civilian when his ship, the unarmed SS Anglo-Californian, was ambushed by a German U-boat on 4 July, 1915. He was killed in the attack, but not before managing to weave his ship back and forth across the North Atlantic, evading the attacking submarine

Frederick Booth: born in Davenant Road, Islington, Frederick Booth was a sergeant in the South African Police, attached to the Rhodesia Native Regiment. On 12 February 1917 he was involved in an attack on an enemy position in thick bush at Johannes Bruck, German East Africa. Under very heavy rifle fire, he went forward alone to help a man who was badly wounded, and brought him back. He also rallied troops from his regiment who had become badly disorganised, and brought them back into combat.

Full details of their amazing stories can be found on our Islington Life site at:

<http://islingtonlife.london/discover-islington/local-history/victoria-cross-memorial-stones/>

- 5.6 The Heritage Team is also working to secure funding to restore the War Memorial in Manor Gardens in time for Remembrance Day 2018. This is the largest historic war memorial in the borough and is on Historic England's Risk Register. Two other memorials – Thornhill Road Gardens and St Silas's Church – have recently been restored.

6 Islington Armed Forces Covenant – grants and funding

Local Initiatives Fund

- 6.1 Each year, the Council sets aside £225,000 Local Initiatives Fund (LIF) which enables ward councilors to support local projects and improvements in their wards. In 2016-17, LIF was used to support five projects related to the Armed Forces:
- Barnsbury ward councilors allocated £1,700 to the LBI Heritage Team to clean and conserve World War 1 memorials in St Silas Church garden (£1067.25) and Thornhill Road Gardens (£623.75). Match funding of just over £5,000 was secured through the War Memorials Trust
 - Barnsbury also allocated £250 to the Islington Veterans Association towards the cost of a Christmas meal for veterans (with a further £750 from IVA members)
 - St Mary's ward councilors allocated £583 to the Islington Veterans Association to cover the costs of the Armed Forces Day display and ceremony on Islington Green in June 2016, with funding used to cover first aid and event insurance.
 - Canonbury ward councilors awarded £5,000 to the Islington Sea Cadets towards the cost of improving their building with £10,000 matchfunding from the Marine Society. The Sea Cadets were also successful in their application to the Covenant Fund.
- 6.2 In the current year (2017-18) a LIF application for £961 has been submitted to cover costs associated with Armed Forces Day in June 2017.

Covenant Fund

- 6.3 Each year, the government sets aside £10 million through its Covenant Fund to provide grants for projects across the country which benefit the Armed Forces and the community.
- 6.4 In 2016-17, there was one successful application from an Islington based organisation. The Islington Sea Cadets received a grant of £20,000 to secure and renegotiate the lease on their building. The lease, which is held on a peppercorn rent, is dependent upon keeping the building in good repair. Funding not only enabled vital repairs to the buildings, but secured the lease and extended use to other partner organisations including the Islington Veteran's Association and the Scouts. Funding was also secured from LIF for building work.
- 6.5 In 2017-18, priorities for the Covenant Fund are:
- Families in stress
 - Strengthening local government delivery of the covenant
 - Armed Forces Covenant: local grants
 - Single grant to produce a map of need for the Covenant Fund
 - Single grant to produce an outcomes framework for the Covenant Fund
 - Single grant for the provision of a digital support programme for the Covenant Fund
- 6.6 Applications are invited from registered charities, local authorities, schools, Community Interest Companies and Armed Forces units. Projects must be rooted in the communities, have grown out of a specific local need, and demonstrate community integration with shared development, delivery and benefits for both local and armed forces communities.
- 6.7 Whilst the local authority has no formal role in assessing Covenant Fund applications, those seeking a grant are strongly advised to contact their Local Covenant Partnership to strengthen the bid and make sure it meets local needs. The contact for Islington's Local Covenant Partnership is our Armed Forces Champion, Cllr Gary Poole.
- 6.8 Further details on the Covenant Fund and how to apply can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covenant-fund>

7 Islington Armed Forces Covenant - supporting veterans and their families

- 7.1 The Council is committed to supporting to ex-forces personnel and their families who are in need, including through financial support, access to council housing, help with developing skills and getting a job, and support with health and care needs.

Financial support

- 7.2 One of the Council's key commitments, as set out in the Armed Forces Community Covenant, is that the income of war widows and war disablement will be disregarded when calculating entitlement to Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support and access to financial support through the Resident Support Scheme.
- 7.3 There are currently 9 war pensioners in receipt of Housing and/or Council Tax support. Of these, 4 are in council housing and 5 are in housing association properties.
- 7.4 The Resident Support Scheme (RSS), delivered in partnership with Cripplegate Foundation, provides crisis grants to help with housing costs, purchase of essential household items, and community care. The RSS application form does not ask applicants whether they have served in the Armed Forces. However, SSAFA is a referring partner to the scheme. To date, there have been no applications from SSAFA on behalf of ex-forces personnel. SSAFA have advised us that this is because they have access to other funding to support their members in times of crisis so, to date, have not had the need to apply to RSS.
- 7.5 The Council's Income Maximisation Team (IMAX) supports residents on low incomes to access all the support to which they are entitled, including benefits and discounts. In the past year there have been no requests for support from ex-forces personnel.
- 7.6 This year, we've added a further measure of support to our Armed Forces Covenant commitments. From 10 April 2017, payments to veterans under the War Pension Scheme will be fully disregarded in the financial assessment for social care charging, with the exception of payments of Constant Attendance Allowance, which may be taken into account. This has already had a positive impact upon 12 Islington residents whose war pensions are no longer counted towards what they can afford to contribute for social care.

Housing support

- 7.7 There are various housing options for ex-forces personnel, including specialist housing providers and support. Our housing allocation scheme gives specific priority for veterans.
- 7.8 There have been no new applications for council housing from ex-forces personnel in the past year, and indeed only one veteran has moved into a council property since the policy was introduced in 2013.
- 7.9 The Housing Needs team regularly deals with clients with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), including veterans, people seeking asylum, and others. All staff who work on housing applications have been trained on how to recognise PTSD, the specialist support available to veterans and the special provisions the council has made in its allocations policy. Anyone with suspected or diagnosed PTSD who applies for housing will be assessed by the medical adviser.

Employment support

- 7.10 Under the Covenant, the Council's Learning, Skills and Employment service prioritises ex-forces personnel and their families for employment and skills support. Since we reported last year, both iWork and the Adult and Community Learning Services have amended their application forms to capture data on clients from Forces background to monitor demand.

- 7.11 Over the past year, none of the learners who have enrolled on our Adult and Community Learning courses have a Forces background.
- 7.12 We checked with City & Islington College to see whether they had much demand from veterans. The College does not collect this information, but the Principal of the College was aware of examples of ex service personnel signing onto one of their courses, for instance, the Access to Bio Medical Science courses, with some great successes: one student was a former helicopter pilot and after completing his course went on to a train as a doctor.
- 7.13 In terms of employment support, the number accessing support through iWork has been very low – with fewer than five clients who had served in the Armed Forces, or from Forces families, seeking support through the team since the policy was introduced in 2013.
- 7.14 We contacted DWP to get a sense of the numbers of ex-Forces personnel who are on ‘out of work’ benefits in Islington. Our local lead told us that DWP does not record this data. However, anecdotal evidence from DWP work coaches across Islington job centres indicates that, whilst there are likely to be a few, the numbers are not large.

Health and social care support

- 7.15 The Council, in conjunction with the Islington Clinical Commissioning Group, provides or commissions a range of Social Care support and Public Health programmes, including support for mental health issues and for substance misuse. However, services do not specifically capture data on whether clients have serviced in the Armed Forces. Therefore, it is not possible to assess demand or take up of support from veterans.
- 7.16 However, we do know, anecdotally, that at least six rough sleepers who are ex-Forces will have been supported by Street Outreach services operating in Islington. And our Drug and Alcohol Services have confirmed that, whilst they don’t record information on experience in the Armed Forces, there are certainly ex-forces personnel accessing treatment.
- 7.17 Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust has been running a pan-London mental health assessment and treatment service for veterans and their families for many years. They have recently been awarded a contract from NHS England to expand this service to include London and the South East. There are a number of Islington residents accessing the service: 13 Islington veterans and 12 Camden veterans have been seen in the service in the past 2 years.

Feedback from London Fire Brigade

- 7.18 Finally, when contacting partners to research this report, we heard from the Borough Fire Commander. He told us that the London Fire Brigade has a number of staff in Islington who are ex- Forces, and two who are still serving as reservists (though not Islington residents). LFB has an active recruitment line with the Armed Forces and continues to have good numbers joining the service. There are currently four trainee firefighters within their first year of service at Islington fire station – two of these are ex-Forces. This highlights the valuable contribution that members of our Armed Forces continue to play, not only whilst they are serving, but when they resettle into civilian life.

8 Conclusion

- 8.1 Over the past year, the Council has supported a wide range of activity to celebrate and commemorate the Armed Forces in Islington.
- 8.2 Our evidence indicates that the number of current / ex-Forces personal in Islington is low and that those who have resettled here have little need of support. However, feedback from our Street Outreach and Substance Misuse services highlights that there are a small number of veterans who struggle to adjust to civilian life. The commitments set out in our Armed Forces

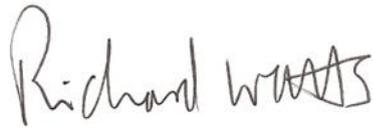
Covenant send an important message that the Council and its partners not only recognise and celebrate the achievements and sacrifices of our Armed Forces, but are there to offer tangible support to veterans and their families in times of need.

Background Papers: None

Appendices: None

Final Report Clearance

Signed by

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Waats". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Leader of the Council

15.06.2017

Date

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Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant: Council's Commitment

On 29 June 2013 – Armed Forces Day – the Council signed up to the Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant. In doing so it recognised and pledged to promote the valuable contribution of and sacrifices made by the Armed Forces and to provide practical support to help serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families living in Islington.

The Council already has in place a range of support services for residents, particularly for families on low incomes, disabled people, those with long term health conditions and vulnerable adults and children. Current and ex-serving personnel living in Islington will have access to the same services and support as other residents. This document sets out the commitments the Council has made, over and above the core offer, to support Armed Forces personnel and their families and recognise the contribution they make. We will honour our pledges in the community covenant through:

Financial support

The income of war widows and war disablement will be disregarded when calculating entitlement to:

- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Support
- Access to financial support through the Resident Support Scheme

From 10 April 2017, payments to veterans under the War Pension Scheme will be fully disregarded in the financial assessment for social care charging, with the exception of payments of Constant Attendance Allowance, which may be taken into account.

Access to council housing

Our housing allocations policy has been amended to support Armed Forces personnel and their families applying for council housing in the following circumstances:

- Service personnel will not be affected by residency restrictions if they have to live outside Islington as part of their service
- Welfare Category B is an award of 80 points and may be awarded in to bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service
- Welfare Category C is an award of 40 points and may be awarded to applicants whose welfare needs are comparable to former members of the regular forces
- Medical Category A gives the maximum 150 points and will be awarded to serving members of the regular forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service

Employment and skills support

Ex-forces personnel who are facing challenges in securing employment will be eligible for support through council employment programmes. This could include support in developing new skills and in accessing local vacancies. The discipline, resilience and team spirit of armed forces personnel could be a considerable incentive to employers.

The Council provides employment and skills support to vulnerable groups and / or those facing significant barriers as part of its commitment to tackle poverty and inequality in Islington.

Support for health and social care needs

The Council will provide:

- Mental Health First Aid training to Armed Forces organisations / charities enabling them to

recognise mental health issues and refer on to relevant support

- Alcohol awareness training to representatives of Armed Forces organisations / charities
- Support (both financial and practical) with housing adaptations – for those moving to private as well as council housing, and refer those with disabilities / longer term health conditions onto relevant support services

Appointment of an Armed Forces Champion

Each year the Council will formally nominate a councillor to be the Armed Forces Champion, ensuring good relationships with Armed Forces organisations in the borough and promoting engagement activities and support. The current Armed Forces Champion is Cllr Gary Poole.

Formally recognising the contribution of the Armed Forces

- The Armed Forces Flag will be flown on the roof of the Town Hall each year on Armed Forces Day
- A Veteran or Cadet of the Year Award will be launched during Armed Forces Week 2014 to highlight the contribution of individuals
- Freedom of the Borough has been awarded to:
 - The Honorary Artillery Company in 2009
 - Colonel Brian Kay, the former Deputy Lieutenant in 2010

Supporting 'Youth Organisations in Uniform'

Islington has a number of Air Training Corps, Army Cadets and Sea Cadets in the borough and the Islington Academy has just set up a Combined Cadet Force. The Council will support these positive activities for young people through:

- Active involvement of the Mayor in visiting and supporting the activities of the various cadet forces in Islington
- Access to funding for running costs and activities through the Council's two small grants schemes – the Local Initiatives Fund and Islington Community Chest
- Chiring meetings of Youth Organisations in Uniform (YOU) which brings together various organisations - the Cubs, Scouts, Boys Brigade etc. – to identify opportunities for sharing help and resources

Promote the Community Covenants Grants Scheme

The government has established a Covenant Fund, with £10m available per year for projects across the country which support the priorities of local Armed Forces Community Covenants, and which bring together the civilian and Armed Forces communities to promote integration and raise awareness of the contribution and sacrifices made by Forces personnel.

The scheme is administered on a regional basis. Applications can be submitted by any part of the community, including voluntary and community sector organisations / charities, community interest companies (CICs), local authorities and schools. Projects should deliver tangible results and meet the overall aims of the community covenant.

The Council will promote the Covenant Fund through its links with local Youth Organisations in Uniform (YOU), other voluntary and community sector organisations, statutory sector partners, schools and local businesses. The Council will also, through the Armed Forces Champion, convene a local panel to act as the Local Covenant Partnership (comprising senior Armed Forces / Council representatives) to review and support local bids to the Covenant Fund.

Islington Council will work closely with Armed Forces organisations to increase understanding of, and address issues faced by, serving and ex-personnel and to maximise awareness and take up of the commitments made through this covenant