



Report of: Leader of the Council

Meeting of:	Date:	Ward(s):
Council	27 June 2019	All

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SUBJECT: Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant – Annual Update

1. Synopsis

1.1 Islington Council is committed to recognising and celebrating the valuable contribution made by the Armed Forces, and to supporting veterans and their families in times of need. In June 2013, the Council signed the Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant, and agreed a package of measures to demonstrate how the spirit of the covenant would be delivered in practice. 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.

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. Details are set out at Appendix A and on our website at <https://www.islington.gov.uk/advice/armed-forces-support>.
- 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.

4. The Armed Forces population in Islington

- 4.1 One of the challenges we face in identifying and targeting support is the limited information we have on Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families. It is really difficult to get a sense of numbers of Islington residents who are ex-Forces, because this is not generally included as a distinct category in national or local services data collection.
- 4.2 This lack of information is being challenged by the Royal British Legion who point out that, despite an estimated 1 in 10 of the UK population being members of the Armed Forces community, there is very limited information about where they are or what their needs might be. To address this problem, they launched the 'Count Them In' campaign in 2017, calling on the Government to add new questions to the 2021 census so that we can improve our understanding of the Armed Forces community and ensure that politicians, charities and service providers fully meet the needs of serving personnel, veterans and their families. Islington Council has pledged its support to this campaign.
- 4.3 In December 2018, the Cabinet Office confirmed the Government's intention to recommend to Parliament the inclusion of a question on the Armed Forces Community in the next census in England and Wales.

Military presence

- 4.4 Islington is home to the Honourable Artillery Company, one of the oldest military organisations in the world. The HAC, which is based in the south of the borough, is a registered charity whose purpose is to support the defence of the realm. It supports the HAC Regiment, which is the oldest regiment in the British Army and now a renowned regiment within the Territorial Army. It also supports a detachment of the City of London Special Constabulary, plus a number of other charitable activities. The Company consists of 2,500 members, around 400 of whom are actively serving with the HAC regiment or the detachment of Special Constabulary. The remainder are veterans of the HAC Regiment or other military or police services.

Resident population

- 4.5 There is very little information on numbers of Armed Forces personnel or veterans at local authority level. The 2011 Census identified 75 Islington residents who were, at that time, employed in the Armed Forces. However, the Census did not record details of veterans.
- 4.6 Islington's allocation of the Pupil Premium includes an element based on pupils from Forces families. According to the allocation for 2018-19, there are currently less than 5 pupils across Islington's schools who are from Forces families.

Street population

- 4.7 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, managed by St Mungos, which captures data on people seen rough sleeping in each borough by outreach teams. 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'.
- 4.8 The data indicates that the overall number of rough sleepers in Islington has been increasing – from 53 in Quarter 1 2018/19 to 106 by the end of Quarter 4 (NB: these figures only reflect those seen by outreach teams - the actual number of rough sleepers is likely to be much higher). Of those seen rough sleeping, the number who have been in the Armed Forces remains very low. In Quarter 1 there were 3 rough sleepers in Islington with military experience. By Quarter 4 this had decreased to just one person.

Prison population

- 4.9 Since January 2015, the Ministry of Justice has been collecting 'experimental statistics' on inmates with Armed Forces experience. As part of the Basic Custody Screening (BCS) interview, individuals entering custody are asked whether they had previously served in the armed services. As of June 2018, 4% of inmates (who responded to this question) indicated that they were ex-Forces. Data is not publicly available for individual prisons so we are unable to access statistics for HMP Pentonville.

5. Islington Armed Forces Covenant – summary of commitments

- 5.1 The commitments set out by the Council to honour the Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant focus upon:
- Recognition, celebration and remembrance: championing the Armed Forces, formally marking important events and celebrating achievements and sacrifices
 - Grants for local projects and organisations
 - Support for veterans and their families: financial support, access to council housing, employment and skills support, and help with health and social care needs
- 5.2 An update on activity in each of these areas is set out below.

6. Recognition, celebration and remembrance

Championing the Armed Forces

- 6.1 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.

Marking and commemorating key events

- 6.2 The past year has seen a number of significant anniversaries related to the Armed Forces, over and above the annual commemorations. The Council has played an active role in both planning and attending these important occasions to recognise the achievements and sacrifices of our Armed Forces.
- 6.3 Key events attended by the Mayor, Leader, Armed Forces Champion or other Members and officers included:
- 1 September 2018: Reserve Forces and Cadet Association's WW1 Commemorations at the Royal Chelsea Hospital
 - 18 October 2018: WW1 Exhibition Launch at the Islington Museum (further details below)
 - 6 November 2018: Unveiling of Tommy statue at Islington Green, as part of the nationwide 'There But Not There' campaign. The statue provides a memorial to the 10,000 Islington men and boys who gave their lives in WWI
 - 8 November 2018: Wreath Laying Ceremony at Islington Cemetery War and Civilian Memorials with Islington Veterans' Association as part of Remembrance events
 - 11 November 2018: Remembrance Sunday / Armistice Day was marked by the annual parade and service at Islington Green, followed by further events at Spa Green War Memorial and Manor Gardens WWI Memorial. The day culminated in a Beacon Lighting event at Dartmouth Park to mark the 100th anniversary as part of a nationwide tribute to those who lost their lives in the First World War
 - 25 April 2019 – Anzac Day: parade and service at Islington Green to commemorate ANZAC Day with the Islington Veterans Association (IVA)
 - 6 June 2019: D-Day Commemorations at Islington Green with the IVA
- 6.4 Coming up in June 2019 is Armed Forces Week. On 24 June there will be the annual Armed Forces Flag Raising ceremony at the Town Hall, followed by further events on Armed Forces Day – 29 June 2019. The Mayor, Leader and other councillors will join representatives from local service units, veterans, St John's Ambulance, and scouts and guides groups in annual Armed Forces Day Parade, including a picnic and service at Islington Green with the IVA.
- 6.5 Our Greenspace Team have provided vital behind the scenes support in planning and delivering each of these events – including the logistics for the day, carrying out health and safety checks, and ensuring all sites were clean, tidy and safe. Our Heritage Service has also played a key role in developing and running these and other events – these are set out in more detail below.
- 6.6 In addition to the key commemoration events above, the Mayor has continued to support local military related organisations. Visits included:
- 24 September 2018: St John Ambulance Cadet to present awards, with a further visit on 30 April 2019
 - 17 November 2018: Islington Veterans' Association Monthly Breakfast
 - 14 May 2019: Honorary Artillery Company (HAC) Open Day

Exhibitions and memorials

- 6.7 During October 2018 to January 2019, the Heritage Service organised a WWI commemorative exhibition at Islington Museum. The exhibition - *Raid, Rations and Rifles: Islington during the First World War* – focused on Islington on the home front and fighting front during the Great War. This was well received by visitors and featured many objects and papers loaned to us by Islington residents. The programme included activities for adults and children, including WWI walks, talks, musical concerts, storytelling and sing-alongs. Museum staff also gave talks outside of the borough about the subject and various WWI projects
- 6.8 In November 2018, Islington libraries displayed panels featuring their library and surrounding area during WWI. Each library - from Archway to Finsbury, Caledonian Road to Newington Green - had a fascinating story to tell about their location.
- 6.9 The service played a key role in planning the commemorative event which took place on Islington Green earlier this month to remember those who fell during the D-Day landings on 6 June 1944. This included a series of tweets, as well as an article for Islington Life magazine.
- 6.10 Also in June, the service is organising a 75th anniversary commemoration service to remember those who died and were injured as a result of the V-1 rocket attack on Highbury Corner 27 June 1944; 28 were killed and 150 injured, many of whom were Islington residents. The event will start in the Mayor’s Parlour and concludes at the location on Highbury Corner.
- 6.11 A social media campaign is also planned for June 2019 to remember the 100th anniversary of the official end of the First World, and the signing of the Peace Treaty of Versailles. After the signing, peace street parties took place across the country, including in Islington and Finsbury.
- 6.12 Looking ahead, 8 May 2020 will mark the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) day. A major exhibition is being planned to feature Islington on the home front (1939-45), including a full supporting programme of events. It will provide a great opportunity to collect reminiscences from Islington residents, who experienced the war in the borough, as well as collecting material from other sources relating to WWII for future generations.
- 6.13 Over the past year or so, the Heritage Service has overseen the laying of five paving stones on Islington Green to remember Islington residents who were awarded the Victoria Cross. In addition to these, WWI commemorative street plaques have been installed around the borough since August 2014, which continue to be very popular with residents. In 2018, a further 30 plaques were installed in time for the WWI centenary commemorations. The Heritage team will ensure that all plaques are maintained and replaced where necessary.
- 6.14 The Heritage Team is keen to continue to collect material and stories reflecting life in Islington and Finsbury during the world wars, as well as in peace time. Anniversaries are especially effective in highlighting major events in the borough’s history and encouraging residents to tell their story.

7. Grants and funding

Local Initiatives Fund

- 7.1 The Local Initiatives Fund is a pot of funding available to Islington Councillors to support events and projects in their wards or across Islington. The bulk of the funding is allocated to local voluntary sector and community groups. These small amounts of money can make a huge difference to local residents.
- 7.2 Each year, the St Mary's Ward councillors allocate a sum of their LIF budget to the Islington Veteran's Association to organise Armed Forces Day, which takes place annually at the end of June. In June 2018, the figure was £960, and a similar sum is expected this year.
- 7.3 In 2018-19 the Canonbury Ward councillors allocated £5,250 of their LIF budget to the Islington Sea Cadets for ongoing work to their building meet health and safety regulations which will enable the building to be reopened and accessible for wider public use (£3,250 was contributed towards installing up to date fire safety measures and the remaining £2,000 funded infrared heaters for the building).

Islington Community Chest

- 7.4 The Council also works in partnership with Cripplegate Foundation to provide small grants through the Islington Community Chest. There have been no applications from organisations linked to the Forces or Youth Organisations in uniform (YOU) during the past year, but the fund has previously supported organisations such as the scouts and the sea cadets.

Armed Forces Community Covenant Grants Scheme

- 7.5 Each year, the Government sets aside £10 million for the Armed Forces Covenant Fund which supports initiatives which contribute towards delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant. This includes a Local Grants Programme which awards grants of up to £20,000 for projects that tackle community integration and delivery of local services.
- 7.6 There have been no applications from Islington organisations or for Islington based projects in recent years. However, in 2018-19, Local Grants were awarded to a number of London wide initiatives including:
- The Fighting Chance for Veterans - an employability programme to get Veterans back on the path to work by using boxing training to engage and motivate, and individualised employment support
 - The Soldiers' Arts Academy - staging a play with injured veterans to help them recover, retrain and return to work
 - Civil Engagement HQ London District - a project to create an accessible and enduring online resource in commemoration of the 85 VCs awarded to residents of the London Boroughs during the First World War. The project will map the locations of the commemorative paving stones (including paving stones in Islington) and provide further information of those honoured and the circumstances of their valour.

- 7.7 The grants programme for 2019-20 grants is now open. The application process is open to:
- Registered charities
 - Local authorities
 - Schools or other statutory organisations
 - Community Interest Companies
 - Armed Forces units
- 7.8 From April 2018, administration of the Covenant Fund passed to the Covenant Fund Trust. Details about the Covenant Fund and how to apply for the Local Grants Programme can be found on the Covenant Trust's website at <https://www.covenantfund.org.uk/>.

8. Supporting veterans and their families

Financial support

- 8.1 The Council currently administers Housing Benefit to help residents who are out of work or on low incomes to meet housing costs. There are currently eleven Housing Benefit claimants who are in receipt of war pensions (our only way of identifying veterans), though numbers have slowly reduced over the years.
- 8.2 Islington residents in times of need are able to claim crisis support through our Residents Support Scheme, including Discretionary Housing Payments to help meet shortfalls in rent. No veterans or their families have applied for support over the past year.

Support with Housing

- 8.3 Veterans and their families are a priority group in terms of help with housing. There is one known ex- serviceman who has applied to be on the waiting list for a council home – his case is being taken forward by our Housing Needs team.
- 8.4 In addition to this, our Housing Income Team has supported two existing council tenants who were previously in the Armed Forces and who were struggling with rent arrears. The Team provides advice and support to enable tenants to retain their tenancies.

Employment and skills

- 8.5 Armed Forces veterans and their families are a priority group for employment support through the Council's iWork team and the new Islington Working partnership. The service records whether a client has links to the Armed Forces when they are registered. Similarly, veterans are also a priority group for our Adult Learning Service. Neither service has received any requests for support during the past year.

Health and social care needs

- 8.6 Data on whether a client has links to the Armed Forces is not routinely recorded. However, our Adult Social Care service does support some people who were previously in the Armed Forces, although the numbers are extremely low. In a recent case, the council and health partners agreed a package of support to an Army veteran who had complex health and social care needs alongside PTSD linked to his experiences in the Army. We also support some older war

veterans from World War II in care settings (such as domiciliary care, residential or nursing care) although numbers of are dwindling.

- 8.7 Camden and Islington Mental Health Trust refer veterans through two specialist Veterans services, both commissioned by NHS England:
- NHS Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison services (TILs)
 - NHS Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS)
- 8.8 Feedback from the Trust is that they see very few Islington residents through these specialist services.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The commitments set out in our Armed Forces Covenant send an important message that the Council and its partners recognise and celebrate the achievements and sacrifices of our Armed Forces, and are able to offer practical support to veterans and their families in times of need to help them adjust to and resettle into civilian life.
- 9.2 Over the past year, the Council has led, organised and supported a wide range of activities to celebrate and commemorate the Armed Forces in Islington. And although evidence indicates that the number of ex-Forces personnel in Islington is low, with little demand for support, it is nonetheless important that we demonstrate our commitment and gratitude to veterans by maintaining that package of support should they ever need it.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant

Signed by:



17 June 2019

Leader of the Council

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

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
- Chairing 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