

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 Marian Spall.

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.