



Wigan Council

We, the undersigned, commit to honour the Armed Forces Covenant and support the Armed Forces Community. We recognise the value Serving Personnel, both Regular and Reservists, Veterans and military families contribute to our business and our country.

Signed on behalf of:
Wigan Council

Signed: *[Handwritten Signature]*

Position: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Date: 28/11/18

The Deal

Wigan
Council

The Armed Forces Covenant

An Enduring Covenant Between

The People of the United Kingdom

Her Majesty's Government

– and –

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown

And their Families

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.

Section 1: Principles Of The Armed Forces Covenant

1.1 Wigan Council will endeavour in our business dealings to uphold the key principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, which are:

- *no member of the Armed Forces Community should face disadvantage in the provision of public and commercial services compared to any other citizen*
- *in some circumstances special treatment may be appropriate especially for the injured or bereaved.*

Section 2: Demonstrating our Commitment

2.1 Wigan Council recognises the value serving personnel, reservists, veterans and military families bring to our business. We will seek to uphold the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, by:

By creating a purpose built Armed Forces HQ (Wigan Borough Armed Forces HQ) Wigan Council recognise the Armed Forces Community as a distinct group that may experience common issues and needs. This Armed Forces HQ will provide an essential, multi-functional facility for the recreational, rehabilitation, training and support needs of serving and former service personnel and their families (The Armed Forces Community), bringing together social, pastoral and medical support services in a one-stop shop environment. This will encompass:

- Agile working space for Armed Forces service providers and charities;
- Medical and welfare consultation space;
- Social and meeting space for Armed Forces groups and associations to use;
- Exhibition/display space for use in support of Armed Forces campaigns.

Wigan Council will provide a unique place based holistic support service, engagement programme and delivery model for the Armed Forces Community across the Borough and surrounding areas. It will create an operational environment that will enable professional agencies and charities to deliver support services to the Armed Forces Community covering, but not limited to the following areas:

- **Housing** – Both research and anecdotal evidence has shown that access to housing can be a problem, particularly for those leaving the services or for the families of those currently serving or recently widowed. Those injured during service may also require additional support into adapted housing to help retain independence and remain in their own home, while homelessness is also recognised as an issue that may be faced by those discharged from the Armed Forces. For members of the Armed Forces leaving the

service that have previously lived in the borough or who have a local connection we will give priority status (Group A) on the housing waiting list. Priority status will also be awarded to former members of the Armed Forces, Reservists and bereaved spouses or civil partner of someone who served in the Armed Forces and whose death was attributed to that service. There is also a nominated Armed Forces Champion in the Housing department.

- **Employment Skills** – Access to employment opportunities and benefits can be challenging for those leaving the services or the partners of those in service. Those leaving the service may have spent the majority of their career within the Armed Forces and may therefore require additional support when entering the job market. Working with CTP and local businesses we aim to provide job opportunities, career advice and training. Information and advice will be provided to veterans to ensure they are made aware of skills provision, job opportunities and grants that may be available. As a large employer of veterans and their families we will continue to sustain and create opportunities and embed this approach in the wider service delivery strategy ensuring it continues to be enshrined in business as usual for Wigan Council.
- **Further Education and Training opportunities** – Working with Wigan and Leigh College along with other training providers within the borough we will support the further education and retraining of veterans and their families. We will identify local employers who are prepared to offer work experience, to veterans and their families and provide a wide range of training opportunities at the Armed Forces HQ.
- **Family Support** – In accordance with the School Admission code for children in the UK, Service Personnel with a confirmed posting to the area, or crown servants returning from overseas to live in the area, Wigan Council will allocate a school place based on their future address in advance of the family arriving in that area. Their application will be considered against the over-subscription criteria for their proposed schools providing the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date and a unit posting address or quartering area address. It is estimated that in the Wigan Borough there is circa 22,000 members of the Armed Forces Community and we support families with social, pastoral and medical support services in a one-stop shop environment. In addition we will support young people through the work of the Sea Cadets, (embedded in the Armed Forces HQ) and other cadet organisations. This project will see delivery of training to cadets from Wigan, but also the Greater Manchester region. By using the experience of veterans we can also support young people into careers within the military.
- **Health, Wellbeing and Recreation** – Wigan Council is committed to developing services focused on the Health and Well-Being of service personnel, veterans and their families. This will include Mental Health support, by responding to the emerging needs of the Armed Forces Community and their families with regard to community care needs and ensuring continuity or social care enabling ease of access to a range of support mechanisms. We will raise awareness with all our member practices about the needs and

issues facing war veterans and their families within the Borough. We will work with all our providers to ensure protocols are in place to identify and prioritise war veterans and their families for access to services; and support, encourage and work with veteran organisations to develop services which will meet their needs. In addition we will have partners embedded in the Armed Forces HQ to provide our recreational Health and Well-Being offer.

- **Veterans in Custody/Leaving the Criminal Justice System** – Wigan Council work closely with Greater Manchester Probation Trust to support veterans who find themselves in prison and ensure they are aware of the advice and support available to them as ex-service personnel. Wigan Council will facilitate support agencies to ensure veterans who are in the criminal justice system and their families are aware of support available to them through external agencies, such as, Veterans Agency, Project Nova and ex-services charities. We will work with the prison services to provide support for veterans as they leave the criminal justice system and look to provide day release job opportunities for Cat D prisoners at the Armed Forces HQ.
- **General Information, Advice and Signposting** – Wigan Council in conjunction with the Armed Forces HQ and working with external support agencies across Greater Manchester will use the Hub as a focal point for the provision of information, advice and signposting. This will allow partner organisations to work from the HQ in order to provide a joined up service for the Armed Forces Community. By working in collaboration with existing services in the Council, across the Borough, GM and Nationally we will be better placed to support a wide range of needs through a place based partnership working model. A number of organisations already offer support and assistance with the delivery model.
- **Financial Inclusion** – Support with debt and financial matters is an important area for the Armed Forces community. Wigan Council will provide help with debt management, gambling addiction, rent and council tax arrears as well as support with securing the right entitlements to benefits, including housing, employment, free school meals and the like using in house support teams as well as external agencies such as DWP and CAB.
- **Greater Manchester Combined Authority** – Wigan Council will continue to work with the combined authority to ensure there is a minimum guaranteed offer for the Armed Forces Community across GM and support a central point of contact in support of the ten local authorities that make up GM. In addition we will support the development and use of an e-learning package for forward facing staff which will enable them to better understand the needs of veterans and their families ongoing.

2.2 We will publicise these commitments through our literature and on our website, setting out how we will seek to honour them and inviting feedback from the Service community and our customers on how we are doing.