



# The Community Covenant e-Newsletter

Issue #4, June 2013



## Welcome!

Welcome to the fourth Community Covenant e-Newsletter! In this edition we have reports on an innovative project run by Buckinghamshire County Council to help Service children integrate into a new school, a look at the steps local councils can take to support the employment opportunities of the local Armed Forces Community and an update on a number of successful grant scheme projects. We will also look at fantastic work being undertaken by the Armed Forces Champion in Argyll and Bute

*We welcome your thoughts – information on how to provide feedback or join our mailing list is located at the end of this e-Newsletter.*

## Buckinghamshire County Council: 'My Passport'

We are always keen to hear about the exciting new initiatives local authorities are developing, and in this edition we have an update from Buckinghamshire County Council. They signed a Community Covenant in July 2012, bringing together the district councils, the local NHS, GP commissioning groups, the emergency services, the business and voluntary community as well as armed forces charities. Both the local armed forces community and the local civilian population recognise the importance of the Community Covenant, with Councillor Marion Clayton, former Chairman of Buckinghamshire County Council and the Buckinghamshire Armed Forces Champion, saying "It's important that we seek ways in which we can improve mutual support and work together to the benefit of the whole community. This Community Covenant is a local statement of that mutual support".

As part of their work with the local armed forces community, Buckinghamshire County Council recognised the need to support Service



Buckinghamshire County Council's 'My Passport'

children in the local area. As a result the local authority launched an innovative scheme called 'My Passport', to help youngsters settle in as quickly as possible to their new surroundings. The colourful 'My Passport', which has now been delivered to dozens of schools, comprises six optional units. The children fill out information about themselves and their family, and this gives staff a better understanding of their background and history. It has been designed for all pupils who move schools, but youngsters from Armed Forces families appear to be the biggest beneficiaries so far. The 'My Passport' scheme was trialled and evaluated for 18 months before being launched in 2011. The scheme has been such a success that it recovered 80 per cent of its start-up costs after its first year, as schools from other authorities bought 'My Passport'.

## Community Covenant Update

Here in the Covenant Team we are always pleased to hear about a new Community Covenant being signed, and are delighted that of the 407 local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland, 324 local authorities have now signed a Community Covenant. Please do get in touch to tell us about the work that you are doing, and let us know if your area has recently signed a Community Covenant pledge.

"WE ARE NOT CLAIMING THAT WE SOLVED ALL THE PROBLEMS OVERNIGHT, BUT CLEAR IMPROVEMENTS WERE MADE IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PASSPORT WAS INTRODUCED AND WE FOUND HEADTEACHERS AND LEARNING SUPPORT ASSISTANTS WERE DELIGHTED WITH THE RESULTS."

**Sue Imbriano**

Buckinghamshire County Council's  
Strategic Director for Children and  
Young People

So far, about 70 schools from across the country have purchased it, and now all costs have been recouped. The 'My Passport' initiative has been praised for giving 'a voice' to the children - some of whom move on average every two to three years.

This idea is just one of many initiatives that are being delivered by the County Council as part of its Armed Forces Community Covenant, and its associated action plan is producing real benefit for those in the local area. For example, the Council's school board has agreed to fund the Service Pupil Premium (SPP) for five years if the parent on active service dies while on duty or subsequently from injuries sustained. This is broader than the national criteria at the time, which provides the SPP only when the serving personnel was 'killed in action'. The council has also helped to oversee £82,000 in successful funding bids from the MOD Community Grant Fund, including a project to increase the range of employment opportunities for service leavers by raising awareness amongst local employers via information event, web-based resources and information sheets, as well as the first Armed Forces Games being held at the Stoke Mandeville Stadium in August 2013. Additionally, the fund has enabled the purchase of a 4x4 emergency response vehicle which operates from RAF Halton to support the ambulance service and serve the local community.

For further information please contact Danielle Henry, Policy Officer, Buckinghamshire County Council: 01296 382829; [dhenry@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:dhenry@buckscc.gov.uk) or visit <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/community/armed-forces-covenant/>

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## Community Covenant Signings

The Armed Forces Community serving in Solent Station have signed a Community Covenant with the surrounding civilian communities. The ceremony at 17 Port & Maritime Regiment's Officers' Mess at McMullen Barracks involved the signing of six covenants between Brigadier Neil Baverstock, the regional Commander for the Army in the South of England and representatives from New Forest District Council, Marchwood Parish Council, Hythe & Dibden Parish Council and Fawley & Calshot Parish Council, the New Forest National Park Authority and the Forestry Commission.



**"IT'S WONDERFUL TO LINK THESE COMMUNITIES; THERE ARE SO MANY BENEFITS TO BE GAINED BETWEEN THE CIVILIAN AND MILITARY COMMUNITIES BY INTEGRATING AND EMBRACING EACH OTHERS AREAS OF SHARED MUTUAL INTEREST."**

**Councillor Mrs Alexis McEvoy,**  
Chair of the New Forest District Council

These Community Covenants highlight the importance of fostering integration between those living and working in the local area, and the mutual benefits for both the military and local civilian communities.

Such is the specialist nature of the work undertaken by the troops stationed at SMC, that a large proportion will serve much of their military careers based around Marchwood. This means many put down roots locally. Coupled with this is that many become highly qualified in all aspects of port handling operations, all of which are highly prized skills in the local maritime industry. A Community Covenant further helps to cement these links.

Before the Covenant signing the signatories were treated to an in-depth briefing and tour explaining the fascinating world of the UK's sole military port, the Sea Mounting Centre (SMC) at Marchwood. They learned that the SMC is the military's gateway through which it supplies its operations and overseas commitments with a variety of equipment and stores such as vehicles, materiel and bulk supplies worldwide. 17 Port & Maritime Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, is the British Army's only regiment with a port and maritime capability. The SMC handles shipping to and from places across the globe, such as Europe, the Falklands, various locations East of Suez, and has supported humanitarian aid operations such the delivery of relief aid to Haiti following the earthquake in 2010.

**"IT'S AN IMMENSELY ATTRACTIVE AREA FOR THE REGIMENT TO BE BASED. IT IS COMMON FOR SERVING AND VETERAN MEMBERS OF THE REGIMENT TO SETTLE IN AND AROUND THE MARCHWOOD AREA. A STRONG COMMUNITY SPIRIT ALREADY EXISTS, AND THE SIGNING OF THE COVENANTS REINFORCES THE ALREADY HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE ARMED FORCES AND THE LOCAL CIVILIAN COMMUNITIES."**

**Major Paul Calvert,**  
17 Port & Maritime Regiment's 2iC

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## Armed Forces Champions: Argyll and Bute

An important step in your Community Covenant may include nominating a council officer to lead on Community Covenant work. You may also want to appoint a Councillor to lead on the issues that your Community Covenant will focus on. For example, some councils have chosen to appoint Armed Forces Champions. This ensures there is someone responsible for ensuring that progress continues and that there is accountability in the commitments you make. For instance, you could ask the person leading to set up a working group bringing together key council staff, members of the Armed Forces Community, external service providers and local charities.

In this edition of the newsletter we will hear about the work of Councillor Maurice Corry, who was appointed to the cross-party role of Armed Services and Veterans Champion for Argyll and Bute. Councillor Corry notes that the

“ARMED FORCES CHAMPION IS A FASCINATING ROLE. UP AND DOWN THE COUNTRY ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS CHAMPIONS ARE THERE TO FLY THE FLAG WITHIN COUNCILS FOR THE MILITARY, AND VICE VERSA. ... ANOTHER TYPICAL EXAMPLE IS PEOPLE WHO HAVE CHILDREN WHO NEED TO MOVE SCHOOL AT A MOMENT’S NOTICE DUE TO A TRANSFER TO PORTSMOUTH. THROUGH MY OFFICES AND MY OPPO DOWN IN HAMPSHIRE, WE ARE ABLE TO ENSURE THAT A CHILD GETS INTO A SCHOOL WITHIN 24 HOURS. I ALSO LINK INTO SCHOOLS, TO THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION, SUBMARINERS ASSOCIATION AND INDIVIDUAL MILITARY FAMILIES – IN FACT, WHOEVER WOULD REQUIRE ME AS A CONDUIT BETWEEN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN.”

**Councillor Maurice Corry,**  
Armed Services Champion for  
Argyll and Bute

Community Covenant which Argyll and Bute Council signed recognises that there are areas in which servicemen and women may face disadvantage, and that there were steps that the council could take to prevent this.

He said: “With major bases like Faslane and Coulport in our area, it is especially important to consider the needs of servicemen and women and their families. We are committed to ensuring that these needs are met and have already developed strong relationships with the armed forces operating within Argyll and Bute. The creation of the Argyll and Bute Community Covenant Partnership helps to cement those strong ties. It also provides an opportunity for us to share knowledge, experience and expertise to give active and positive support to the armed forces community.”

For example, Councillor Corry highlights the work done to support issues faced in social housing saying, “from when someone comes back from military housing to civilian life, they would not have enough point to qualify for social housing. Now, 17 years in military houses would count as 17 years for social housing.”

About 1,000 extra personnel will be based in Faslane by around 2017, and Councillor Corry emphasises the importance of building integration between the military and civilian communities. “I’d also like to encourage families to stay here after service life and set up home. We as a council are trying to allay any concerns by issuing a welcome pack. We push all the plus buttons so they are not semi-detached residents. Equally, I’d like the civilian community to understand the benefits they are getting from the military through jobs and business, through the sheer presence of them here.”

## Armed Forces Day 2013

Very shortly Armed Forces Day will be celebrated on 29th June 2013. Across the UK people are getting involved as communities hold local events and business show their support. The national event will be held in Nottingham, but there are many more events up and down the country being held in support of Armed Forces Day.

It's an opportunity to do two things. Firstly, to raise public awareness of the contribution made to our country by those who serve and have served in Her Majesty's Armed Forces, Secondly, it gives the nation an opportunity to show support for the men and women who make up the Armed Forces community: from currently serving troops to Service families and from veterans to cadets.

We would love to hear about the great events you are running in your local area - as always please send us reports of the day so that we can tell everyone else what you are up to!

## Disaggregation of the Grant Scheme

You may have noticed that we recently changed the way in which the Community Covenant Grant Scheme is allocated, by setting up regional panels.

From June 2013, the Grant Scheme will be distributed through a number of regional panels, chaired on a rotating basis by the Navy, the Army and the RAF. Panels will normally be held three times a year, in February, June and October.

The Community Covenant and the accompanying Grant Scheme are all about local initiatives and the people best able to judge this are those at a regional level. In the coming year (2013 to 2014) we have some £10 million to spend, whilst this year we only had £5 million. Delegating the allocation of the Community Covenant Grant Scheme to regional panels will allow this money to reach the areas which will benefit the most. The Armed Forces Covenant Team and HM Treasury will retain oversight of the process.

Details of the panels which will be held over the next two years, and the email addresses for your new regional Community Covenant grant administration teams, can be found on the [Community Covenant Grant Scheme website](#).

## Local Government Responsibilities: Supporting Employment

Supporting the employment opportunities of your local Armed Forces Community is an important part of any Community Covenant. Veterans, service leavers, service spouses and Reservists all have valuable skills and can make a real contribution to your local economy and workforce. Also, helping the Armed Forces Community find a place in the local civilian workplace can make a real difference to the integration of the military and civilian communities.

We are very keen to encourage local authorities to work with the business community to support their understanding of the Armed Forces Community and the transferable skills of Service personnel. As part of your Community Covenant, you may want to involve prominent local businesses and representatives from industry bodies. Employers should also be encouraged to support the employment of military spouses. Due to the mobility of Service life, military spouses can find it difficult to find employment.

These measures support the commitments that we are making at a national level, and as an example, the 2012 Armed Forces Covenant Annual report recognised the need to do more to support the employment of Service spouses.

Councils up and down Great Britain are demonstrating great examples of the benefits that Community Covenants can have in supporting their local Armed Force's Community's employment opportunities.

For instance, Oxfordshire County Council and RAF Brize Norton organised a workshop to highlight the skills of former Service personnel. Oxfordshire County Council has also allocated £100,000 to support wounded, injured and sick personnel from Oxfordshire in their entry to the civilian labour market.

Meanwhile, Devon Country Council has identified staff members who are Reservists and established a staff group to represent their views and needs. They recognise and value their Reservists by inviting them to wear their uniform to work and so break down barriers and increase understanding of the issues affecting Reserve personnel.

In Stockton, the Council is tapping into employment forums to help communicate the valuable transferrable skills held by Armed Forces personnel and promote the employment of former Service personnel.

Information about vacancies within Sheffield City Council is routinely shared with the Armed Forces Careers Transition Partnership through a direct link from Sheffield City Council's website. This supports recruitment of ex-Armed Forces personnel and encourages wider integration the city.

These are just some of the great examples that we are seeing up and down the country. You may be running interesting projects in your area that you want others to know about. Make sure that you are sharing your stories through the LGA's knowledge hub or send them on to the Covenant Team so that we can publicise them for you!

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# Update on the Community Covenant Grant Scheme

The Scouts and Guides headquarters in Bedale, in North Yorkshire was one of the first successful bids in the first round of funding to come from the Community Covenant grant scheme. The Bedale Beckside Project received £159,000 to replace the dilapidated local Scouts and Guide headquarters with a new, up to date building. Work is scheduled to take 24 weeks to complete and the building has been designed to allow Scout and Guide meetings, with access to a separate teaching room for group work, and is designed to be a cost-effective building, with efficiency a top priority.



Bedale Beckside Project in partnership with RAF Leeming

Wing Commander John Crennell, Acting Station Commander RAF

## Talk to Us!

Here at the Covenant Team we are always keen to hear about the great projects and work that you are doing. There is fantastic work happening in local authorities all over Great Britain and we are keen to publicise it as widely as possible. So please send us information about what you are up to and the progress you would like to share with other local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales.

Leeming, said: "We at RAF Leeming value the support we receive from the local community, and we have been exceptionally pleased to work with Bedale in accessing the Ministry of Defence Community Covenant Scheme. Improvements to the provision and support of youth activities is acknowledged as important, and the town of Bedale, the surrounding villages and Military dependents will benefit from The Beckside Project which will provide a positive, modern, environmentally sound and energy-efficient community facility. We look forward to its opening later this year."

Meanwhile, Halton Community Combined School recently celebrated the opening of their new dining block and a new play area for the school. The new play area and equipment replaces the school's single climbing frame. It includes a new climbing frame, a fitness trail, two wooden wigwam 'dens', and a 'secret garden' story-telling area with stools in a circle under a canvas canopy entered through a willow tunnel. The £24,000 cost was met jointly by parents, the school and the Armed Forces Community Covenant grant scheme, a bid for which was made by nearby RAF Halton. The school has close links with RAF Halton and around 60% of its pupils are children from the base.

Acknowledging that link, special guests included Buckinghamshire County Council Chairman Marion Clayton and RAF Halton Station Commander Group Captain Simon Harper. Marion Clayton said: "I'm so impressed by the amazing way the school serves all its children, and particularly its work with pastoral support for service children, which is recognised nationally and internationally." Andrea Schaer, Chairman of the PTA, whose son, Finn, attends the school, was delighted the target for equipment had been met. "We certainly wouldn't be where we are today were it not for the Community Covenant grant," she said.



The youngest and oldest pupils, Cerys Sutcliffe and Charlie Warner, cut the ribbon

Children from the school served guests afternoon tea after a performance of songs and drumming.

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