



The Armed Forces Covenant



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 Service Families contribute to our Organisation, the Local Community and our country.

Signed on behalf of:
Ministry of Defence

Signed: *Colonel John Cummings*

Name: Colonel John Cummings

Position: Assistant Commander Army HQ South-West

Date: 18 October 2023

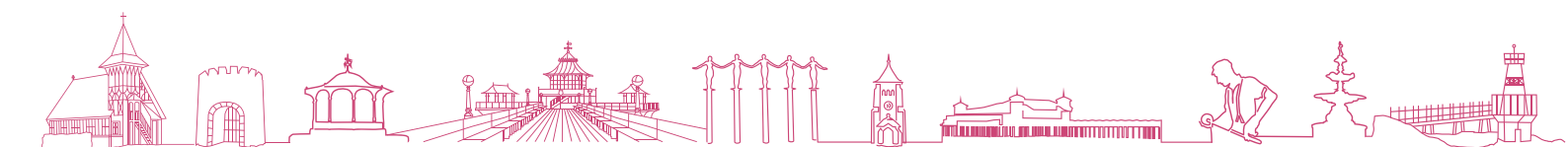
Signed on behalf of:
North Somerset Council

Signed: *Jo Walker*

Name: Jo Walker

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 18 October 2023



The Armed Forces Covenant

An enduring Covenant between the people of the United Kingdom His 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.

Our Progress so far in North Somerset Council

The contribution the Armed Forces Community bring to our Society, is important to us.

This is why 10 years after we signed our first Community Covenant in North Somerset Council, we are signing a new covenant to re-invigorate and evolve our pledges. Since 2013 we have continued to make progress.

We have gained and maintained a Silver Employer Recognition Scheme Award, which shows our commitment to the Armed Forces Community both as an employer and as a provider. This is valuable to us as it allows us in a practical way, to demonstrate our support to the Armed Forces Community and Cadet Forces within our Workforce and the Public we provide services for, North Somerset Council continues to strive to improve our commitment to our Armed Forces Community.

In order to maximise our efforts, we appointed an Elected Member as Armed Forces Champion and we have a Council Officer dedicated to Armed Forces Covenant matters.

North Somerset Council facilitate and support a thriving Armed Forces Covenant Partnership made up of many varied members of the Armed Forces Community and Public Service Providers, who meet on a regular basis to discuss issues affecting the Armed Forces Community and to discuss and consider how we can provide support and assistance. We also belong to the South-West Armed Forces Covenant Partnership, which covers most of the geographical area of the South-West.

With the signing of this document North Somerset Council shows its commitment to providing continued support to the Armed Forces Community



Section 1: Principles of the Armed Forces Covenant

North Somerset Council will endeavour to uphold the key principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, by paying ‘due regard’ to:

- The unique obligations of and sacrifices made by the Armed Forces
- The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces

This means members of the Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantage in the provision of services compared to any other citizen, however, this won't mean that you or

your families will be placed at the front of the queue, but it will mean your circumstances will be considered more fairly.

- The principle that special provision for Service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces.

In some circumstances special treatment may be appropriate especially for the injured or bereaved.

This means we may in very special circumstances, such as for those who have suffered the most, through injury or bereavement, consider taking actions that go beyond the support provided to reduce or remove disadvantage.



Section 2: Demonstrating our Commitment.

To demonstrate our commitment to the covenant, we will:

- Appoint an Elected Member as an Armed Forces Champion and a dedicated Council Officer in support of the delivery of the commitments listed in this Covenant.
- Support and maintain a North Somerset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership, meeting on a regular basis, with a varied membership from Armed Forces, Civilian Services, Local Authorities, Third Sector and Military Support Organisations. We will achieve this by hosting the Covenant Meetings. Our Armed Forces Champion will chair the meetings and we will provide the necessary administration and organisation required for them to take place.
- Further develop the role of the Armed Forces Covenant Partnership to provide proactive leadership in the delivery of this Covenant. We'll also make sure that emerging issues in North Somerset and from a national level, including the implications of the Armed Forces Act 2021, are addressed. Our Covenant Officer will ensure that any issues raised, are shared with the appropriate person/department/organisation and where appropriate acted upon.
- Take all opportunities we have to raise awareness of the Armed Forces and the contribution they make locally and nationally. We'll help to identify and promote further opportunities for the Armed Forces Community to contribute to civilian society.

Specifically, this will include:

- Nurturing public understanding and awareness of issues affecting the armed forces community.
- Encouraging local communities to support their armed forces community and vice versa.

- Promoting public understanding and awareness of issues that affect the armed forces community.
- Encouraging activities that help integrate the armed forces community into local life.
- Supporting our partners in developing their own Covenant.
- Providing support and assistance to Members of the Armed Forces Community to help ensure they are not disadvantaged by their service.
- Training on the requirements of the Armed Forces Act 2021 is available on our training programme for all staff.
- Progress towards the Gold Award of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

Upholding the principles of the Covenant within North Somerset Council

We recognise the value of Serving Personnel, Reservists, Veterans and Military Families bring to our council, local community and to our country. We will seek to uphold the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, by:

Communicating our support

- Promoting our work, activities and events through our own digital and social media channels as well as working with other Town and Parish Council's to support them to do the same.
- Publishing our Covenant pledges on a dedicated Covenant section/page on our website.
- Promoting our support of the Armed Forces for our staff, contractors, customers, suppliers and wider public. |

Support for Veterans

- Working with and advertising vacancies through Career Transition Partnership (CTP), as well as advertising as widely as we are able in the Armed Forces community, to ensure employment opportunities are made available to Veterans.
- We already welcome applications from Veterans who meet the essential criteria in the job specification and are working towards a position where we guarantee in-terviews for them
- Wherever possible recognising military skills, qualifications and transferable skills in our recruitment and selection process.

Support for Spouses and Partners

- Supporting the employment of Service Spouses and Partners by welcoming applications from Spouses/Partners who meet the criteria in the job specifications.
- Partnering with and advertising vacancies on Forces Families Jobs, advertising as widely as we are able within the Armed Forces Community
- Wherever possible endeavouring to offer a degree of flexibility in approving leave for services spouses and partners before, during and after a partner's deployment.

Support for Reservists

- Supporting our Employees who are already members of the Reserve Forces.
- We will actively encourage and support our Staff who wish to become Reservists..
- Granting up to an additional 10 days paid leave for Annual Reserve Forces Training.
- Supporting any mobilisations and deployment

We will support Reservists Day and Salute our Forces as part of Armed Forces Week. Our Covenant Partnership has representation from Reserve Forces Units who cover our geographical area in order to provide a two-way relationship (HMS Flying Fox & Wessex RFCA are members) and we have time off policies to allow Reservists and Adult Cadet Force Volunteers to train and deploy.

We will set up an employee's support group for Reservists, Veterans, Family of Serving Personnel and Cadet Forces Volunteers that will work to provide peer support and be a group where information relevant to the Armed Forces Community can be shared.

Support for Cadet Organisations

- Supporting our Employees who are volunteer leaders in Military Cadet
- Organisations.
- Granting up to an additional 10 days leave to attend Annual Training Camps and Courses.
- Actively encouraging members of staff to become Volunteer Leaders in Cadet Organisations
- Supporting local Military Cadet Units
- Recognising the benefits of employing Cadets/Ex-Cadets within the workforce

We will do this by supporting Reservists Day and Salute our Forces as part of Armed Forces Week. We have Wessex Reserve Forces and Cadets Association as part of our Covenant Partnership to represent the Cadet Forces and we have time off policies to allow Adult Cadet Force Volunteers to train and attend camps.



Photography by Weston SID © martinslade.com 2018

Supporting National Events

Locally we will raise the Armed Forces Day Flag during Armed Forces week, advertise and support Armed Forces Day, Reserves Day, Remembrance and Armistice Days and other Armed Forces Commemorations and we will encourage our staff to attend, volunteer and participate in such events.

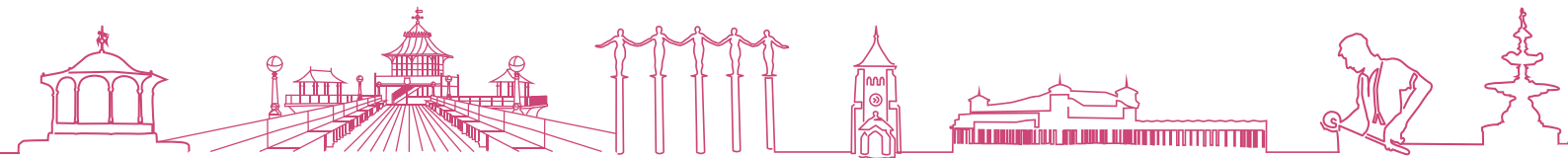
Whenever possible we will advertise these events internally and externally and encourage our staff to actively support them.

Support for Armed Forces Charities

Supporting Armed Forces Charities and supporting our staff who volunteer.

We support Armed Forces Charities through our Covenant Partnership. We have many Representatives of recognised Armed Forces Charities who sit regularly on our Covenant Partnership, such as SSAFA, RBL RAFA, RAFBF, Warrior Programme etc, they provide valuable guidance and input to our meetings.

We work regularly with these charities to provide improved outcomes for Armed Forces Community Members who seek help and assistance.



Seeking feedback

We will publicise these commitments through our literature and/or on our website, setting out how we will seek to honour them and inviting feedback from the Armed Forces community and our customers.

Contact details for our Armed Forces Co-ordinator are as follows:

Garry Hawkes

Armed Forces Co-ordinator

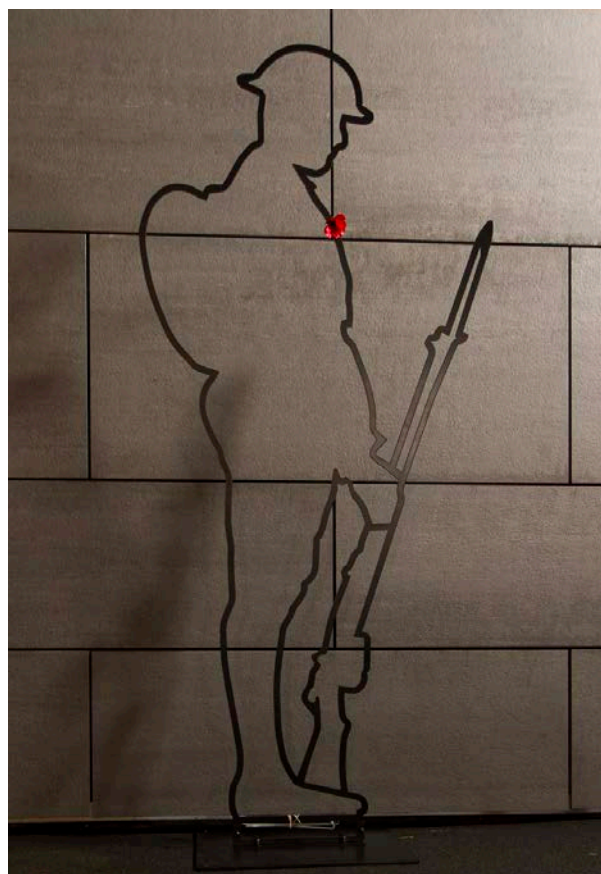
Inclusion & Corporate Development Team
People Services
North Somerset Council

E Mail: Garry.Hawkes@n-somerset.gov.uk

Tel: 01275 885398

Post: Town Hall, Walliscote Grove Road,
Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1UJ

Web: www.n-somerset.gov.uk



We will continue to monitor the progress of these commitments through the ongoing support of the South-West Armed Forces Covenant Partnership, meeting on a regular basis, working collaboratively with our Partners to consider the needs of the Armed Forces Community across the Partnership

Locally monitoring will take place through the North Somerset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership which is facilitated and hosted by North Somerset Council and will meet every 3 months on the first Monday Morning in March, June, September and December.

