

Oxfordshire Armed Forces Community Covenant

Action:

To consider pledging and demonstrating your support to the Oxfordshire Armed Forces Community Covenant.

1. What is a Community Covenant?

A Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It aims to encourage charities, local authorities, businesses, communities and individuals to work together with the military to offer support to service personnel and their families as well as reservists and veterans. Oxfordshire has been chosen because of the existing good practice supporting 11,000 members of the Armed Forces including setting up the military/civilian partnership, a health liaison group, financial support and the excellent support offered to children of service personnel in the county's schools.

The total number of service personnel based in Oxfordshire is 11,000 with the re-location of RAF Lyneham to Brize Norton. There are 6 bases located across the County. We are proud of our armed forces in Oxfordshire and we wish to engage and support the work of the military wherever we can.

1. Bicester Garrison
2. RAF Brize Norton
3. Abingdon Station
4. Shrivenham Station
5. Vauxhall Barracks
6. RAF Benson



The Community Covenant will see the County Council and partners working even more closely with the three Armed Forces together with a range of private, public, voluntary and charitable organisations and the local community.

2. Oxfordshire – the first to launch:

Oxfordshire was the first to launch the Armed Forces Community Covenant at an event held at County Hall on 20 June. The Right Honourable Andrew Robathan MP, Parliamentary under Secretary of State for the Ministry of Defence and Minister for Defence, Welfare and Veterans was present, and Brigadier Neil Baverstock, Commander 145 (S) Brigade gave an address on behalf of the Armed Forces in the county. At the event 42 partners signed up to the Covenant.

3. Pledge and demonstrate your support:

This is just the start and we will now work to demonstrate our continued support and act as a champion to encourage partners and other organisations to offer their support to the Covenant.

We want to make a real difference to the lives of our armed forces so this is about putting clear action and support in place. What are you planning to do? What existing support do you already have in place that complements the Covenant?

We would like to encourage as many organisations as possible to pledge their support and detail the action they will put in place to support the Covenant.

4. What work are we involved in so far?

We already have many positive links with the military through our schools and partnership projects. The community covenant is a very positive way of helping us to work even more closely and in a more joined up fashion. We hope that other partner organisations and businesses will join us in helping to embrace military and civilian needs in the county.

We have been chosen to launch the scheme due to our existing good practice and we already work very closely with 145 (S) Brigade in a number of ways.

This has included the setting up of the military/civilian partnership which brings together our County Council Management Team with the Commander of the Regional Brigade and Base Commander of each base on a six-monthly basis. This helps to address issues that are common to both organisations.

A military/civilian health liaison group, chaired by a representative of Oxfordshire Primary Care Trust, meets to discuss common issues around access to NHS healthcare, including dentistry, waiting lists and GP surgeries.

The council has set aside £100,000 for 2011/12 which will be used for a specific project to support service leavers resettling in Oxfordshire, particularly those with physical or mental health issues, to gain skills and employment.

Our recent work looking at children of service personnel has been praised by Ofsted, whilst improved communications and sharing of information with the RAF bases and Army stations has led to early discussion on the expansion of RAF Brize Norton.

Future areas we will be looking at within the county council will include:

- Continuing our support to the Civilian Military Partnership Board and ensuring that there is representation from the Armed Forces on our key strategic partnerships
- Supporting service leavers to resettle in Oxfordshire, focusing particularly on enabling those with physical or mental health issues to gain relevant skills and employment
- Ensuring school admissions and transfers are made as smoothly as possible
- Ensuring that military personnel can access council information easily
- Providing opportunities for the Armed Forces to talk about their experiences on operations
- Encouraging businesses to display a window sticker or similar and to offer discounts to serving personnel and their families

5. Who can participate in the Community Covenant?

The Community Covenant represents a relationship between the Armed Forces community and any or all of the following:

- Public service providers (this can include local authorities, health service providers etc)
- Private industry (such as shops, restaurants, non-public service providers)
- Charities
- Community groups
- Individual members of the public

6. How can businesses demonstrate support?

Support can take a variety of forms and will be determined by the capacity of the business. A number of organisations, large and small, already offer discounts through the Forces Discount Scheme (www.forcesdiscount-mod.co.uk) and businesses may choose to join this existing scheme or create their own.

7. How can members of the community demonstrate support?

If you are a member of the community then you can demonstrate support by promoting activity that integrates the Service community into local life. This might include running youth groups or sports clubs that include Service children, establishing support networks for Service families who often find themselves isolated when serving partners are on operations. Individuals or community groups can also reach out to the Service community veterans, to encourage inclusion in local activities

8. Future Funding Opportunities

The Defence Secretary has announced that £30M of central Government funding has been allocated over the next four years to support the Community Covenant. The details of the grant scheme have not yet been published. However it is likely that the scheme's aims will be defined in terms of supporting projects, at the local level, which strengthen the ties or the mutual understanding between members of the Armed Forces Community and the wider community in which they live.

Oxfordshire Partnership 13.7.11

Oxfordshire County Council will work with partners on any projects bids as they are developed.

9. Please pledge your support:

We would like to encourage as many organisations within the Oxfordshire Partnership as possible to pledge their support. Please take the time to let us know what steps you are taking and keep us informed of any further developments in the future.

Attached is a copy of the document and signatories to date.

*Claire Moore
Partnership Manager
July 2011*