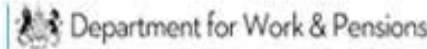




Armed Forces Conwy Community Covenant Bringing the Communities Together 2016

www.conwy.gov.uk/communitycovenant



01 ▶ Introduction

Foreword Cllr Liz Roberts, Conwy County Armed Forces Community Champion



From a personal perspective I am delighted and proud of my role as Conwy Armed Forces Community Champion. This is a role that I cherish, that I do what I can to ensure that the Armed Forces Community in Conwy suffers no disadvantage as a result of their service to our Country.

This Action Plan is the second publication and as you will see we are working collaboratively to recognise the specific needs of Veterans, Servicemen & Servicewomen, Reservists and their dependents. Our aim is to ensure assistance is in place and easy to find as they make their transition into their community.

This assistance is coordinated through our Armed Forces Community Covenant Committee, a group of like-minded Partners who share the same vision, and are committed to achieving and delivering our ambitious Action Plan.

Armed Forces Day 2015 in North Wales provided the community with an opportunity to show our support and to salute the Forces for all they do, many of whom are busy working around the world, promoting peace, delivering aid, tackling drug smugglers, providing security and fighting terrorism.



'We are so proud to have the Coat of Arms on The Royal Welsh Goat Major's Belt, this demonstrates our continued support and Respect for the Armed Forces'. Goat Major's Belt sponsored by Conwy County Borough Council.



I have met so many inspiring people along the way and I am indebted for the work that has been done by so many people.

They have given up so much of their time and been instrumental in ensuring that we, through this Action Plan can do our bit and give something back to our Armed Forces Community we in North Wales can be truly proud of.

I thank you.

Cllr Elizabeth Roberts, Conwy County
Armed Forces Community Champion



'The Armed Forces in Wales Award for the individual who has most contributed to the Armed Forces (Regular or Reserves) within Wales' – Cardiff, January 2016.

02 ▶ Aims of the Covenant

The covenant aims to encourage support for our Armed Forces and Veterans within the community and increase integration between Armed Forces Community and Local Community in Conwy for increased community cohesion. This will be done by working towards these objectives-

- Increasing the local community awareness and understanding of the issues affecting the Armed forces Community.
- Ensuring sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces Community are recognised and remembered.
- Establishing activities/supporting activities to integrate Armed Forces & local communities.
- Encouraging the Armed Forces Community to help & support the wider community- including participation in events, joint projects and other engagement opportunities.

It is recognised that the Armed Forces community encompasses many different people with differing needs including regular & reservist personnel, veterans, families & dependents. The Covenant aims to include all of the community.

This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.' (Armed Forces Annual Covenant Report 2015)

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.



03 ▶ The Armed Forces in Conwy

3.1 Reservists

There are approx 30,000 volunteer reservists in the UK which make up around 14% of the nation's total defense capacity.

- ▶ Reservist Strength
- ▶ D Company 3rd Battalion The Royal Welsh – Colwyn Bay has six permanent staff members
- ▶ Permanent Staff x 2
- ▶ 5 x Officers
- ▶ 87 x Soldiers
- ▶ C Detachment 203 Field Hospital (W) - Llandudno
- ▶ Reservist Officers x 10
- ▶ Reservist Soldiers x 17



3.2 Army Cadet Force

The AFC is a voluntary uniformed youth organization. It is sponsored by the Army but not part of it and cadets are not subject to military call-up. Cadets range from 13 years to 18 years and there are 5 groups in Conwy encompassing 95 cadets and 16 adult volunteers to support these groups.

Sea Cadets

- ▶ The Sea Cadet Corps (SCC) is a national youth organisation sponsored by the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Navy.
- ▶ 1 Unit in the county. TS Aberconwy - Conwy County Sea Cadets.
- ▶ 10-18 years olds 32 cadets 14 adults

Air Training Corps

- ▶ The Air Training Corps (ATC) is a youth organisation sponsored by the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Air Force
- ▶ 2 Units in the county 59 cadets and 16 adults. Age range 12-17.

3.3 Veterans

Welsh Government state there are around 250,000 members of the Armed Forces Community in Wales – this comprises Serving Personnel, Veterans, their families and dependents. The Royal British Legion estimate it could be nearer to 400,000.

There are at least 13 identified Armed Forces Personnel that have left the Armed Forces and relocated to Conwy in 2014
(Projected figures April 2014 to August 2014)



04 ▶ The AFCC in Conwy Plan

4.1 The Covenant Action Plan

Aims to build on the existing provision and services in Conwy and ensure Conwy is a County that can support its Armed Forces and Veterans within its local communities. In 2015 a workshop was held and ideas generated for the action plan and moving the Covenant forward. The Covenant Plan aligns to the Single Integrated Plan - One Conwy and supports many of the outcomes including:

- People in Conwy are educated and skilled.
- People have the skills to get and maintain a job and have the opportunity to improve their skills, qualifications, experience and employability.
- People in Conwy live in safe and appropriate housing- Provide and enable accessible, affordable and good quality housing for our communities and prevent homelessness.
- People in Conwy are healthy and independent- Encourage healthy lifestyles, and ensure people with disability and chronic conditions have the best quality of life possible, improve emotional wellbeing and good mental health.
- People in Conwy live in a county which has a thriving economy - Create jobs across the County through development and investment, ensure businesses and tourism in rural Conwy are thriving and tackle poverty.
- People in Conwy are informed, included and listened to - People are respected and treated as a valued member of the community and all members of the community are able to influence public services.



05 The AFCC in the Conwy Plan

5.1 Education, Employment & Training

There are existing partnerships in Conwy between the Job Centre and the Armed Forces. Each office has an Armed Forces Champion who has had additional training and access to resources designed to help and support Veterans. They also identify employers and employment opportunities for Veterans including new developments in the County and facilitate access to these opportunities. Remploy also work with Jobcentre plus to give support to those who need it in preparation for employment (CV writing, interview skills etc.)

5.2 Housing

Several of the Covenant partners have played active roles in the consultation on the Single Access Route to housing. As a result of this Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans are now a priority group for housing. This is a big step forward for Conwy and vital considering a number of Veterans will be entering Conwy over the next few years due to redundancies. In Conwy now personnel leaving the Armed Forces will be given priority (Band 1) in the common allocation policy. CCBC in partnership with Cartrefi Conwy are developing a social letting

agency to improve access to good quality and affordable housing. Advice on and options to prevent homelessness is available from both Conwy Housing Solutions Service and also Shelter Cymru. At the Covenant workshop it was identified that homelessness was an issue among Veterans especially in relation to money management and relationship break down. Special Local Authority provision was only accessible if the person presented homeless within six months of leaving the Forces. It was specified that this was too short a period and most presented 9-18 months later.



06 ▶ The AFCC in Conwy Plan

6.1 Health and Well-being

Conwy have a range of sporting opportunities appropriate for all ages and abilities with participation and performance outlets available for both disabled and non-disabled people. We are committed to providing a high quality, inclusive service which includes using sport as a vehicle to improve the well-being and health of individuals. Sport and physical activity can be used as a fundamental element of the rehabilitation process for people who have acquired impairments and Conwy strive to provide appropriate outlets for ex-Service Veterans.

▶ We are also keen to identify any gaps within provision to inform our future planning and link with key events, such as Armed Forces Day, to raise the profile of disability and inclusive sport. As a result of the Covenant, in July 2013 free swimming was made available to all Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans in Conwy. As of December 2015, 234 have signed up locally, 309 within the UK. Conwy also has active support from Disability Sport Wales and has many opportunities for disabled people in Conwy. There is also support for those with mental health issues and PTSD including the Veterans NHS Wales. www.veteranswales.co.uk
www.disabilitysportwales.com

6.2 Access to Information

As a result of the Covenant a website has been developed across the partners as a One Stop Shop for information for all Armed Forces and Veterans in Conwy. It is hosted on the Conwy County Council website and details local, pan-Wales and national provision was launched April 2014.

There is a central point of contact for the Covenant

- ▶ CCC@cvsc.org.uk
- ▶ www.conwy.gov.uk/communitycovenant



07 ► Covenant Funding

7.1 Covenant Funding

The Community Covenant Grant Scheme is now administered via a new standalone MOD grant team with expertise from the Big Lottery.

The grant scheme welcomes applications for projects that deliver tangible results and meet the overall aims of the Community Covenant Scheme.

The 3 priorities for 2015-2016 are: community integration: the coordination and delivery support to the Armed Forces community; and Veterans in the criminal justice system.

7.2 Remember our Heroes

Over 11 months, Veterans across North Wales helped to tidy over a thousand war graves with the Remember our Heroes project. With the help of the Armed Forces Community Covenant Grant the **Change Step** team liaised with the Commonwealth War Grave Commission, Local Authorities and the Bangor and St Asaph Diocese to locate the 2,000 war graves in North Wales.

With 6 volunteering days each month the team visited 42 cemeteries and tended to 1,033 war graves between May 2014 and April 2015. Although the funding for the Remember our Heroes project has finished the **Change Step** team hope to continue volunteering in the local community.

Change Step is a peer mentoring and advice service delivered by Veterans for other Veterans who wish to make positive changes in their lives. The service aims to support those seeking help for problems encountered as a result of military or operational duty through peer support, training opportunities and signposting to relevant health and welfare services. Examples of issues faced by Veterans can include homelessness, unemployment, mental health problems and substance misuse issues. For more information about the Remember our Heroes Project please visit: www.northwaleswargraves.co.uk
To find out more about **Change Step** please visit www.changestepwales.co.uk



08 ► Priority Project Going Forward

8.1 The Veterans/Families Project

The aim of the Veterans Project is to co-productively develop an Interconnect Programme (IP) that will bring about a sense of community belonging, and contribution. The IP will be developed by members of the community for the community; we include in the community Veterans and their families, in essence we will be working alongside each other in a holistic and co-productive manner. We have created an Operational Group and a Senior Strategic Group to take this work forward.

The projected outcomes of this work include:

- Building partnerships in the community
- Including and providing opportunities for groups to meet.
- Learning from each other in order to develop an Interconnect Programme.
- Having an IP that facilitates independence, health/social/economic wellbeing that is meaningful to Veterans/families.
- Providing opportunities for people to learn and deliver the IP in the future
- Identifying what works, what can be improved on, and sharing learning with others.

We welcome partnerships, and collaborations, and in an effort to share learning envisage having regular updates/meetings with all who want to be involved.

8.2 Veterans

Veterans returning to Conwy County Borough Council have access to appropriate accommodation via SARTH (Single Access Route to Housing).

Band 1 (on discharge from the Forces and have local connection)

Band 3 (on discharge from Forces and have no local connection)

Action:

- Monitor the implementation of SARTH and the ease with which Veterans report accessing housing on discharge from the Forces (with or without a local connection).
- Monitor via the Covenant Committee housing sub-committee including the Housing Strategy Team.
- Record numbers seeking accommodation in Band 1 and 3, compare speed of access with whole population in same bandings.
- Report to the Covenant Group six monthly.



09 ▶ Armed Forces Day 2015

On June 20 2015 Conwy County Borough Council hosted the Armed Forces Day at Parc Eirias Colwyn Bay. Over 5000+ in attendance.
To recognise and honor our current Service Personnel and our Veteran Community.
The day raised £3K to be shared equally between North Wales Branches of RBL & SSAFA.





Appendix 01

Forward Work Programme

Action/Project

- Produce Action Plan.
- Covenant team 4 x meetings a year.
- Veterans Awareness Workshops x 2.
- Conwy Forum (bringing everyone together to share work at the Covenant team) x 1.
- Support N Wales Forum and N Wales Lead Officers Group.
- Produce Annual Report.
- 'Eirias extreme' to run an annual event as part of the AFD 2015 legacy project.
- Maintaining up to date information on the website.
- Production of marketing material.
- Acquire funding for the state of the art multi Alter G.
- To establish a Quality Assurance Group following successful grant funding.
- Visiting areas of best practice.
- Corporate Covenant workshops.
- Development of Veterans Focus group.
- Attendance and representation at Armed Forces Champion Events.
- Charity fundraising events throughout the year.
- To support Town & Community Councils and Community Groups who wish to recognise Service Personnel within their community.

