

WCC Statement of Support for staff who are part of the

Armed Forces community

Introduction

WCC signed the [Armed Forces Covenant](#) in 2012 and has chaired the sub-regional Covenant partnership since then. WCC is a 'Forces Friendly' employer and recognises and values the commitment made by members of the Armed Forces community. This 'Statement of Support' pulls together a number of HR issues into one place to provide guidance on the support WCC provides.

The Armed Forces Community

Under the Armed Forces Covenant the Armed Forces community is defined as:

- Those serving in HM Armed Forces or Armed Forces Reserves. These are the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, the Royal Air Force and the Regular Army plus their constituent Reserves.
- Ex-Servicemen and women ('Veterans'); those who have served at least one day in HM Armed Forces whether as a Regular or as a Reservist or were part of the Merchant Marine under the command of the military at the time of a legally authorised operation. Eg. Falklands War, anti-piracy operations
- Their dependents including spouses, civil partners and children
- The Bereaved; the immediate family of Service Personnel and Ex-Service Personnel who have died, whether or not that death has any connection with Service

Whilst Cadet Force Adult Volunteers' (CFAV) do not come under the Armed Forces Covenant (as they have not served) they are recognised and valued as part of the wider Armed Forces 'family' and the Council recognises their contribution as such.

Reserve Service

WCC supports its staff to be Reservists through the following:

- Up to 10 days paid leave per annum (pro rata for part time staff) for employees serving in the Reserve Armed Forces for undertaking their annual training camp or other training specific to their Reserve role
- Support during any periods of mobilisation and the process of returning to work
- Access to support services through the Occupational Health provider

Members of staff who join the Reserve Forces should inform their manager, who will log the 'Secondary Employment' on the YourHR system. Paid/Unpaid leave for training should be requested and authorised via the YourHR system.

Mobilisation to/from Reserve service

When a call-up notice is issued, the employee is required by law to comply with it. Under the Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985, it is a criminal offence for an employer to terminate a Reservist's employment without their consent if the termination is due solely or mainly to their Reservist duties. Regardless of the length of the employee's period of military service, WCC is required to re-employ them once it has ended. This right applies for 6 months after the period of service. Re-employment should be to the same job, and on terms and conditions no less favourable than if the employee had not been called up.

If a member of staff is called up for Reserve Service they should immediately notify their Line Manager, who will seek advice from a Senior HR Advisor. Each call up will be dealt with on a case by case basis and both managers and employees can expect to be fully supported throughout this process. There are circumstances in which WCC can appeal against a call up with any possible decision made by the relevant Strategic Director.

Reservists who are mobilised will be provided with a 'Joining' date, which is the start of their Service. From this point WCC would not pay the employee and the employee will not accrue any leave, sick pay or pension benefits. In essence, their contract of employment will be 'frozen' until they return to employment with WCC within the agreed timescales.

Reservists who have been mobilised will receive support from their Line Manager and other colleagues with regards to:

- Preparation for mobilisation, including leave at short notice to spend time with family and friends
- The potential of buying back the pension 'lost' during the deployment, which would include the WCC contribution
- Encouragement to keep in contact at a social level with friends and colleagues from the workplace
- 'Keeping in Touch' days or events akin to those used in Maternity leave processes
- Flexible return to work process, including a 'Welcome Back' meeting, phased return or other reasonable adjustments depending upon the deployment experience
- Support to access Occupational Health services, if appropriate

- Additional support from their Line Manager and other colleagues to assist the re-settlement process and re-engagement with WCC work and colleagues

As part of a mobilisation and deployment an individual may experience physical or mental health injuries, which may continue or become evident after the return to work at WCC. In these circumstances the Reservist may access healthcare from Defence Medical Services, the NHS or Occupational Health. Further information is available on the [Support for Volunteer Reservists and their families](#) page of the WCC Covenant web pages.

Compassionate and Special Leave

Compassionate or special leave may be granted to allow employees to assist them in dealing with crises or difficulties in their personal lives.

Discretion as to the length of leave agreed and whether it should be paid or unpaid leave lies with Assistant Directors. In the context of the Armed Forces these situations may be for Reservists or spouses of Regular/Reserve Force personnel:

- Leave at short notice before mobilisation ie to spend time with family and prepare for mobilisation
- Post mobilisation leave
- Injury or death during Service, mobilisation or Reserve training

Cadet Force Adult Volunteers

WCC supports its staff to be CFAV's through the following:

- Up to 10 days paid leave per annum (pro rata for part time staff) for employees volunteering their time as Adult Cadet Instructors for undertaking their annual training camp or other training specific to their Adult Cadet Instructor role
- Paid/Unpaid leave for training should be requested and authorised via the YourHR system

Recruitment and Selection

WCC recognises the contribution that members of the Armed Forces community can make to its staff group in terms of the soft skills, attributes and values they bring to the organisation. As part of the Covenant commitment, Managers will give positive consideration to shortlisting (under a Guaranteed Interview Scheme) where the essential criteria for a post are met by external candidates:

- who are serving Armed Forces personnel during the 12 weeks prior to their discharge date from the Armed Forces;
- who are ex-Armed Forces personnel within 3 years of their discharge date or;

- where the Armed Forces were their last long-term substantive

The guidance for the Guaranteed Interview Scheme is here (insert link to doc when completed).

In addition the Council will publicise through recruitment materials (advertisements, job packs), highlighting that applications from ex-Armed Forces personnel and the spouses of currently serving personnel are particularly welcome and may meet the criteria for a guaranteed interview.

Spouses of serving Regular or Reserve Forces personnel

Spouses of serving Regular or Reserve Forces personnel may be required to adjust family arrangements following a posting or deployment of the Regular or Reserve serving person. This can place additional burdens upon the spouse/family and they may wish to consider the option of flexible working as a temporary or permanent measure. Any employee who has 26 weeks continuous service with Warwickshire County Council has the right to request flexible working, but this timescale could be waived for a Service spouse. The type and duration of flexible working requested will be viewed in terms of not disadvantaging the Service spouse in maintaining their employment with the Council.

Further information can be found in the [Family Friendly Working Guide](#) on the HR Maternity pages.