

## **Appendix B Armed Forces Overview**

### **Background**

There are 22 military units in West Berkshire in 12 sites. These include 3 regular army units, 1 US Air Force unit, 7 reserve units and 10 cadet units (Combined Cadet Force (CCF), Army, Air Force and Sea Cadets).

In addition to the serving personnel and their families living and working within West Berkshire there are the veterans and their families.

At the last census there were a total of 1,325,353 people who had served in the military as a Regular or a Reservist in the UK, in the South East this was 245,235. The numbers across Berkshire are shown below:

<i>Council Area</i>	<i>Number of <b>Ex</b> Regular or Reservists living in the area</i>
<b>West Berkshire Council</b>	<b>4156</b>
<i>Royal Borough of Windsor &amp; Maidenhead</i>	<i>3443</i>
<i>Wokingham Borough Council</i>	<i>3440</i>
<i>Bracknell Forest Council</i>	<i>2939</i>
<i>Reading Borough Council</i>	<i>2711</i>
<i>Slough Borough Council</i>	<i>1058</i>

The greatest number of ex regular or reservists are therefore living in this area.

This does not account for the number of serving personnel who live in this area.

It can therefore be considered that West Berkshire has a considerable size of serving and veterans living and working in the area.

### **Legislation**

In 2021 the Armed Forces Act 2021 (AFA21) further enshrines the Armed Forces Covenant into legislation to help prevent service personal and veterans being disadvantaged when accessing public services.

The Act receive Royal Assent on 15 December 2021.

The Act introduced a duty to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant. These principles are:

- a. the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the armed forces.
- b. the principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for service people from membership, or former membership, of the armed forces.
- c. 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.

Having regard to the 'relevant function' for local authorities, as a 'specified body' under the act, this relates to a relevant housing, education or healthcare function.

[Guidance](#) was issued in November 2022 in relation to the legislation, by the Ministry of Defence. This guidance provides the background information and details in relation to 'removing disadvantages' for healthcare access, education and housing. These are set out in **Annex A** along with details in relation to this Councils compliance.

### ***Employers Recognition Scheme.***

The Defence Employers Recognition Scheme (ERS) is run by the Reserved Forces and Cadet Association (RFCA). The focus of this scheme is to maintain active engagement and relationships with employers to connect them with Defence. In so doing the South East (SE) RFCA informs employers about the activities we undertake and the valuable contributions made by Reservists, Adult Instructors and Cadets in the local area.

The ERS encourage employers to support defence and inspire other organisations to do the same.

The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations to pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

At the moment, West Berkshire Council has no award relating to this scheme. However, on signing the Covenant and on reviewing the criteria it is considered that the Council should be able to achieve a Bronze immediately and a Silver award by March 2025.

### ***Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust***

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust supports the Armed Forces Covenant by delivering funding programmes that create real change to Armed Forces communities across the UK. It is classified as a Non-Departmental Public Body, or NDPB, looking after the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, worth £10M each year.

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund has four broad funding themes now and in future years.

- a. Non-core healthcare services for veterans
- b. Removing barriers to family life
- c. Extra support, both in and after Service, for those that need help
- d. Measure to integrate military and civilian communities and allow the Armed Forces community to participate as citizens

To date West Berkshire has not made any bids to this trust therefore there is an opportunity subject to linking in with the above criteria and issues to be supported as a result. It may be however that a Berkshire wide bid would be beneficial.

### ***Royal County of Berkshire Civil Military Partnership Board. (RBCMPB)***

A Royal County of Berkshire Civil Military Partnership Board was developed and launched in June 2022.

At the launch the Terms of Reference and action plan were agreed.

The aim of the partnership is to bring about economies of scale, with shared action plans and joint initiatives, shared good practice, shared understanding of issues including raising areas of concern nationally. Working together on joint events such as Armed Forces Week, applying for joint MoD Covenant Grants, as well as wider but more focused support from the Military.

The RBCMPB is currently chaired and administered by Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

### ***Military Issues***

Whilst the numbers of veterans are known, what is not known are the issues relating to those veterans, current serving personnel or their families. This is not so easy to identify since there are many routes for support to be provided through regimental associations, military charities, welfare officers and of course the 'routine' health and Council services.

As a result, the need for any additional support is not clear. This is one of the aspirations of the RBCMPB and will be followed up and reported on to this board as necessary.