

Audience: All RAF Personnel

Date: 6 December 2012

THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT - ANNUAL REPORT

Today's publication of the first statutory Annual Report to Parliament on the Armed Forces Covenant represents a significant milestone as the Government seeks to remove the disadvantages faced by military personnel and their families in accessing public services and commercial products.

The Report is comprehensive and details progress against each of the main themes affecting the Service community and the commitments made by the Government. Importantly, it does not just reflect on what has been achieved, but highlights ongoing issues and identifies new commitments. I would draw your attention to 4 examples where we see a difference: the doubling of the operational allowance; the extension of the scope, and increase in the value, of the Service Pupil Premium; special measures related to Jobseeker's Allowance (which remove disadvantages faced by Reservists and spouses) and additional preference to Service leavers who have urgent social housing needs. Notwithstanding these examples I commend the whole Report to you along with the accompanying Defence Internal Brief.

It is recognised that there is a need to improve awareness of the Covenant, the improvements that have been made, and aspirations for the future, so I also encourage you to visit the MOD website www.mod.uk/covenant and the RAF's Community Support portal www.raf.mod.uk/community, both of which are excellent sources for more information on the Armed Forces and the Community Covenants.

I am pleased with what has been delivered so far but there remains much more to do and none of us should underestimate the challenges ahead; not least against the background of the financial constraints we currently face. However, the fact that progress on the Covenant will be reported to Parliament annually will ensure that the Government of the day is held to account. I urge you to play your part, by providing feedback via your Chain of Command, Continuous Attitude Surveys and the RAF Families Federation, reporting your experiences and those of your family. I also encourage you to identify yourself as a member of the Armed Forces when you are engaging with local organisations, so that they can determine how best to support you and your family in accordance with the Covenant's principles.

The Covenant is not just a concept; it is an obligation placed on the whole of society and enshrined in law. It includes the public and private sectors, voluntary and charitable bodies and individuals, all of whom are asked to recognise us, their Armed Forces, and offer respect, support and fair treatment. For our part we must continue to represent the very best in public duty and continue to support the communities in which we live, demonstrating the value of our contribution to the Country.



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