

# THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT



## **What is it?**

The Armed Forces Covenant sets out the key relationships between the Armed Forces, Government and the Nation. The Covenant defines the principles of removing disadvantage and allowing special provision in some circumstances in the access to public and commercial services. This has set a framework for policy making and delivery across Government and will improve the support available for the Armed Forces Community.

## **What does it actually mean for the Naval Service?**

There are a wide range of measures targeted at different groups with the Armed Forces Community. Some of these may help you now, some may help you tomorrow. As members of the Naval Service, we all need to have a basic understanding of the Covenant and its measures so that we can take full advantage of them when they are applicable to us.

The AFC is an enduring document which will develop over time. Your feedback is instrumental in this process.

The AFC is a Government priority; a quarterly ministerial meeting on the Covenant has been established. The Prime Minister has attended a number of these meetings.

## **Is the AFC a legal document?**

It is not a legal document, but it is referenced in the Armed Forces Act 2011 and the Secretary of State for Defence is legally required to report to Parliament on its progress annually.

## **There are over a hundred measures associated with the AFC, these are just a few of the current measures:**

- Council Tax Relief for qualifying deployments (Approximately £600 for a 6 month deployment) – DIB 2011/55.
- BFPO becoming a recognised postcode. The introduction of UK postcodes overseas to help Service people access online goods and build up a credit history–DIN2012DIN01-0103.

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- Priority status on the Government's First Buy scheme (affordable housing).
  - Fair access protocols included within the Schools Admissions Codes to ensure that Service Children are not disadvantaged in accessing school places.
  - £3m Support fund for schools with Service Children.
  - An extension and increase of the Pupil Premium scheme – DIB 2011/02.
  - £15m invested in prosthetic provision for injured Service personnel.
  - Ability for your family to retain their place on the NHS Waiting list if you move house.
  - Considerable improvements in Mental Healthcare including the launch of a wellbeing website.
  - Financial Support for service leavers to study at University.
  - Community Covenant Scheme – Local Authorities are being encouraged by the Government to set up a Community Covenant Scheme. The idea of this scheme is to encourage local communities to support the Service Community in their area and improve understanding and awareness amongst the public issues that affect the Armed Forces. Almost 100 covenants have been signed including Portsmouth, Plymouth, Somerset and Hampshire. Further information on each scheme can be found at [www.mod.uk/covenant](http://www.mod.uk/covenant).

## **What if I am being disadvantaged in accordance with the Covenant guidance?**

The first point of contact is your Divisional Officer in order to raise the issue through your chain of Command. Alternatively, a route open to both you and your family is to contact the Naval Families Federations (NFF).

### **Feedback**

The Defence Secretary has to present an annual report to Parliament summarising how the Government is supporting the Armed Forces, their families and veterans in key areas such as healthcare, housing and education – noting any disadvantage due to Service. This report is our opportunity for change and the evidence for this change will be gleaned from your feedback. This feedback will be collated from a variety of sources including the Command Warrant Officers' visits, PFS returns, NFF visits and website, FAMCAS and AFCAS results and most importantly via the chain of Command.

### **Further Information – One Stop Shop**

A one stop shop has been established and can be found at [www.mod.uk/covenant](http://www.mod.uk/covenant). Information on the AFC can also be found at:

- 2011DIB/39 The Armed Forces Covenant.
- RNTM 187/12.