



Armed Forces Corporate Covenant

Guidance Notes - Ideas for Best Practice

What is a Corporate Covenant?

A Corporate Covenant is a voluntary statement of support for the Armed Forces Community¹ working for and using the services of a particular company, corporate entity or charitable organisation. It complements the Armed Forces Covenant, which sets out the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces. As part of this structure, there is also the Community Covenant, which was established to empower local authorities and communities to support members of the Armed Forces Community in their area and improve public understanding of issues that affect them.

The aim of the Corporate Covenant is to complement these existing elements and ensure that the Armed Forces Community face no disadvantage in their engagement with business. It encourages companies to develop a relationship with the members of the Armed Forces Community who work in their business or access their products or services. We already recognise and value the support employers provide to the Armed Forces Community and through this the contribution they make to the Nation's security. The Corporate Covenant aims to recognise this support formally.

¹ The Armed Forces Community is defined, for the purposes of the Armed Forces Covenant, as including all those towards whom the Nation has a moral obligation due to Service in HM Armed Forces ie Serving Regular and Reserve personnel, Veterans, and their families. Inclusion in the community is neither dependent on nor limited by strict criteria, nationality, or legal definitions, and it does not confer any legal rights.

Who can sign a Corporate Covenant?

Business, Charities and other private sector organisations

A Corporate Covenant can be adopted by a business or charitable organisation of any size and from any industry, whether you are an employer of a member of the Armed Forces community or simply wish to acknowledge publically your support for the Armed Forces.

Local Authorities

There is no requirement for a Local Authority to sign a Corporate Covenant. The Community Covenant is an all encompassing framework for harnessing Local authority support for the Armed Forces covering all elements of work, including such measures as the employment of Reserves or other members of the Armed Forces community. Local Authorities do not need to have signed a Corporate Covenant to be eligible for consideration for an MOD Employers Recognition Scheme Award.

We do understand however that some Local Authorities believe that signing a Corporate Covenant will complement their existing activities.

Local Authorities should not feel obliged to sign a Corporate Covenant, but if they wish to the MOD would support this activity.

Other Public Sector Bodies

Central Government Departments should not sign a Corporate Covenant. As part of the Central Government structure their organisation will already have adopted positive practices in support of the Armed Forces Covenant, for example, MOD or Department for Works and Pensions.

Other public organisations whose work is one step removed from Central Government control such as NHS Trusts, Police Forces or Fire Brigades are permitted to sign where they have specific pledges to make in support of the Armed Forces Covenant which lies within their delegated responsibility. There is no expectation that such groups should sign a Corporate Covenant but if they wish to the MOD would support them.

All Corporate Covenants are to be signed by a person in authority who can ensure that commitments are implemented and maintained. Depending on the size and structure of your organisation, this could mean the chief executive, chair or HR Director of a large multinational; the chief executive or chair of a medium-sized company; or the owner or manager of a small business. If you wish to have your pledge co-signed by a member of the Armed Forces, please contact the Covenant Team at the Ministry of Defence who will make the necessary arrangements.

How can the MOD and the Armed Forces Community support businesses?

The Armed Forces Community can contribute real value to a business, both as employees, who bring a wealth of skills and experience, and as customers. The Corporate Covenant scheme encourages the Armed Forces Community to do their bit to nurture this two-way relationship. It is important that Defence seeks to foster an open and honest relationship

with employers and that we ensure the needs of companies are considered alongside those of Defence and the Armed Forces Community.

We ask that members of the Armed Forces Community declare themselves as such and build an open relationship with their employer. To play its part, the MOD will continue to support business needs, including by providing training and support to those leaving the Armed Forces as they transition to employment in civilian life.

What should the Corporate Covenant include?

The starting point for any Corporate Covenant is deciding what measures your business can take forward, perhaps in consultation with employees or customers from the Armed Forces Community and setting these out in a Corporate Covenant pledge. A template can be downloaded from the Armed Forces Covenant webpage at www.gov.uk/the-armed-forces-covenant. This contains the core commitments (at 1.1 of pledge template) and a menu of potential additional commitments (at 2.1 of pledge template), from which you should select and customise to create your own Corporate Covenant. We are encouraging signatories to provide as much detail in their pledges as they feel they are able. For example, under '*promoting the fact that we are an armed forces-friendly organisation*' you could include '*by publicising our Corporate Covenant on our website and displaying the Corporate Covenant logo*'.

What the Corporate Covenant looks like may vary from organisation to organisation. Once signed, you may want to consider some practical steps you could take to fulfil your pledge. You will no doubt have ideas for initiatives of your own, but the following notes are intended to provide ideas of suggested best practice.

How can we promote the fact that we are an 'Armed Forces-friendly' organisation?

You may wish to:

- Publicise your Corporate Covenant commitments through your website or by displaying a poster in your business.
- Display the Corporate Covenant logo to show that members of the Armed Forces Community are welcome customers.
- Larger businesses may wish to support the creation of Armed Forces Community Groups and networks within their organisation.
- You may wish to honour Armed Forces Day as a business.

How can we support the employment of veterans?

You may wish to:

- Work with the Career Transition Partnership (www.ctp.org.uk), a high quality, no cost recruitment service for organisations seeking highly motivated and experienced veterans, who are leaving the Armed Forces.

- Always consider offering an interview to veterans, young and old, if they meet the selection criteria laid out in a job advert. This would not constitute the guarantee of a job, but rather the offer of an opportunity to prove themselves in an interview.
- Support the employment, where appropriate, of wounded, injured or sick veterans, perhaps by working with the Recovery Career Service (www.recoverycareerservices.org.uk) or through a guaranteed interview scheme.
- Recognise military skills and qualifications when interviewing for new positions.
- Hold briefing days specifically for those leaving the Armed Forces, as a way to raise awareness of the opportunities for employment in your business.

How can we strive to support the employment of Service spouses and partners?

You may wish to:

- Focus recruiting effort on the Armed Forces community, such as advertising through 'Service-friendly' recruitment agencies and Service charities.
- Always consider offering an interview to spouses/partners if they meet the selection criteria laid out in a job advert. This would not constitute the guarantee of a job, but rather the offer of an opportunity to prove themselves in an interview.
- If you have branches in multiple geographic areas, committing to attempt to find alternative employment within the business in another location, if they need to move to accompany their partner.

How can we endeavour to offer a degree of flexibility in granting leave for Service spouses and partners before, during and after a partner's deployment?

You may wish to:

- Look sympathetically on requests for holidays before, during or after a partner's overseas deployment, when the Service person has leave to spend time with their family.
- Consider whether special paid leave is appropriate for employees who are bereaved or whose loved ones are injured.

How can we seek to support our employees who choose to be members of the reserve forces, including by accommodating their training and deployment where possible?

You may wish to:

- Encourage any reservists in your business to participate in Uniform to Work Day.
- Accommodate your reservists' training commitments wherever possible. This is normally a number of weekends and a two-week training camp each year. You may simply choose to allow them to take normal leave for this two week camp - or perhaps consider offering additional unpaid or, where practicable, even paid leave.
- Accommodate mobilisation of your reservists if they are required to deploy. This would generally be for a six month deployed period as well as pre-deployment training and post deployment recuperation, although some may be shorter (such as the 2012 Olympics, which was for one month). Forces are structured to sustain one deployment every five years - if required - apart from the Royal Auxiliary Air Force which might entail one every three.

- In return, we expect that reservists declare themselves as such and Defence will seek to build an open relationship with employers, including giving good notice of when a reservist is needed for training or operations, in order to help employers plan ahead. We will aim to manage this to meet the reasonable requirements of the employer, the reservist and Defence.
- Defence will also seek to accredit reserve training, skills and experience with civilian qualifications and to provide advice to employers as required.
- Work with SaBRE (www.sabre.mod.uk) to find out more about how employing a Reserve can be mutually beneficial, and become a publicly supportive employer.

How can we offer support to our local cadet units, either in our local community or in local schools?

You may wish to:

- Encourage your employees to be cadet helpers or instructors.
- Make company facilities and premises available for the use of the cadets.
- Offer support or sponsorship, either in cash or kind, to local cadet units.
- Contact your local Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for more information on opportunities for sponsorship.

How can we aim to actively participate in Armed Forces Day?

You may wish to:

- Become an Armed Forces Day Corporate Partner and use the logo on bags, posters and websites, or even fly the Armed Forces Day flag.
- Hold an Armed Forces themed week in your store or office or support the events in your local community.
- Follow Armed Forces Day on Facebook or Twitter, post messages of support on social media sites and link to the Armed Forces Day website.

How can we offer a discount to members of the Armed Forces Community?

A number of organisations already offer discounts through the Defence Discount Service which is the only official discount service for the Armed Forces. It is free for businesses to appear on their website and offer members of the Armed Forces Community a discount. Members of the Defence Discount Service are issued with the Defence Privilege Card that can identify them as a member of the Armed Forces Community. We encourage businesses, large and small, to sign up via www.defencediscountservice.co.uk/ or by emailing corporate@defencediscountservice.co.uk. Businesses may choose to join this existing service or make their own local arrangements.

How will the Corporate Covenant tie in with other aspects of the Armed Forces Covenant or other MOD Schemes?

Other MOD schemes also seek to record and encourage the support of organisations for the Armed Forces, such as the Britain's Reservists and Employers (SaBRE) list of supportive employers or local Community Covenants, which are often led by local government. These run alongside the Corporate Covenant and you could therefore play an active part in these schemes at the same time. For example, as a result of your commitment to the Corporate Covenant you may choose to join in with your local

Community Covenant group in planning your local Armed Forces Day celebrations. The Covenant Team will be able to provide you with local Community Covenant contacts.

How will you monitor the Corporate Covenant Scheme?

Once you have signed your pledge document setting out what your Corporate Covenant seeks to achieve, we would like you to email a copy to the Covenant Team (corporatecovenant@rfca.mod.uk), so we can register your commitment and provide you with a letter giving permission for use of our logo for the next five years. The MOD reserves the right, in exceptional circumstances, not to register an organisation or to remove permission to use the Corporate Covenant logo.

Any questions or concerns should be addressed to the Covenant Team at corporatecovenant@rfca.mod.uk.