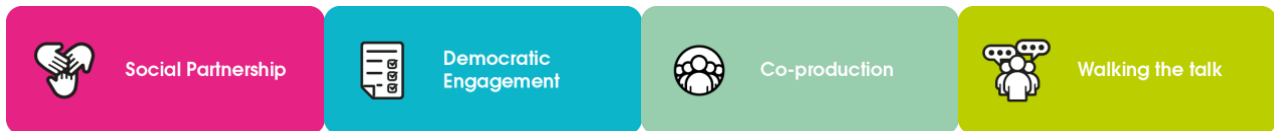




SOCIAL OUTCOMES



Oldham Council

One Year On – Delivering on Our Commitment to the Armed Forces Community

In 2025, Oldham Council shared its journey towards achieving the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award, demonstrating a strong and growing commitment to supporting those who serve or have served. One year on, that ambition has been realised. In 2026, Oldham Council proudly holds the ERS Gold Award, an achievement that reflects not only the dedication of the organisation but also the strength of the cooperative partnerships that define Oldham's approach to public service.

The Council's success is rooted in the principles of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network (CCIN): working collaboratively, empowering communities, and building long-term, mutually supportive relationships. Over the past year, Oldham has intensified its cooperative efforts across public, private, and voluntary sectors to create a more inclusive and responsive offer for veterans, serving personnel, reservists, and their families.

A major milestone in 2025 was the Veterans Wellbeing and Employment Event, delivered as part of a series of Armed Forces Week activities. Co-designed with local partners and hosted in Oldham, the event brought together employers, training providers, health services, housing teams, and community organisations. Its purpose was simple: a one-stop shop for veterans to find support and opportunities that matched their current needs, skills, ambitions, and lived experience. The event highlighted the often-untapped potential of the borough's veteran community and demonstrated how coordinated action can remove barriers and unlock pathways into meaningful work. Several attendees secured direct referrals into employment support and health and wellbeing programmes, illustrating the tangible impact of cooperative delivery.

Central to sustaining this momentum has been the continued development of the Oldham Armed Forces Network. Meeting regularly throughout the year, the Network has become a trusted and

proactive forum bringing together statutory services, charities, uniformed organisations, local businesses, and community groups. It provides a space where partners share resources, raise issues of importance, identify gaps, and act quickly to coordinate support. Topics have ranged from mental health provision and housing pathways to employment initiatives, Armed Forces Week planning, and relationship-building with local employers committed to becoming Veteran Friendly organisations. This approach ensures that Oldham's support offer is informed by a wide and diverse set of voices, including those with lived experience of service life.



Armed Forces Covenant Mayoral Business Reception on Armed Forces Week 2025

As part of both Armed Forces Week and Remembrance Sunday, Oldham Council funded a free breakfast offer for veterans across all cafés in Tommyfield Market. This gesture provided a warm, welcoming space for veterans to come together, share experiences, and feel recognised by their local community. The initiative was delivered in partnership with market traders, reflecting Oldham's cooperative approach and the borough's commitment to honouring those who have served. Dozens of veterans attended across both events, highlighting the value of simple, community-centred acts of appreciation that strengthen local relationships and reinforce Oldham's ongoing support for the Armed Forces community.

Achieving the Gold Award has strengthened Oldham Council's internal culture as well. The organisation has expanded its support for reservists, cadets, and adult cadet-force volunteers, with our newly improved HR policies aligned with Defence Employer Recognition Scheme standards and promoted veteran recruitment across the workforce. This ensures that reservists within our organisation are supported with 10 additional paid days of leave per year to undertake their annual training activities.

Oldham Council's Armed Forces work in 2026 stands as a testament to what is possible when an entire system—council, partners, businesses, and community groups—commits to cooperative values. Through shared purpose, practical collaboration, and continuous dialogue with the people

it aims to serve, Oldham continues to build a borough where veterans and their families can thrive.

Looking ahead, Oldham Council is continuing to deepen its commitment to honouring the history, diversity, and cultural heritage of the Armed Forces community. In 2026, the borough will host an exhibition for The Forgotten Army Project, shining a light on the contributions of South Asian servicemen and women during the First and Second World Wars. This work is especially meaningful in Oldham, where many local families have direct ancestral links to those who served across the Commonwealth. By amplifying these often-overlooked stories and collaborating with local community groups, schools, and veterans' organisations, the exhibition aims to enhance community pride, intergenerational connection, and greater understanding across Oldham's diverse communities. It reflects the Council's belief that commemoration must be inclusive, representative, and rooted in the people it serves.

Oldham is also actively shaping the future of support for veterans across Greater Manchester. The Council is contributing to the GM-wide implementation of the Live Well programme, which includes dedicated support elements and funding streams for the Armed Forces community. This programme will strengthen access to holistic wellbeing services, ensure clearer referral pathways, and help partners coordinate more efficiently across health, housing, employment, and community support. In addition, Oldham is a key participant in the GM trial of the Valour programme, a pioneering new model designed to deliver integrated, wrap-around support for veterans and their families. By testing and informing these innovative approaches, Oldham is ensuring that lived experience, local insight, and cooperative principles directly shape future provision, regionally and nationally.

For further information contact:

James Mulvaney

Policy Manager – Oldham Council

James.mulvaney@oldham.gov.uk | Oldham.gov.uk