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Walking the talk

Telford & Wrekin Council

An Armed Forces Community

Telford & Wrekin Council has a clear and sustained commitment to supporting the Borough's Armed Forces community, which is embedded strategically, operationally and culturally across the organisation and is delivered with a wide range of local, regional and national partners.

In 2012, the Council was one of the first local authorities in the United Kingdom to sign the Armed Forces Community Covenant. Since that time, significant and sustained progress has been made in delivering on Covenant commitments, supported by the development of a strong, evolving infrastructure.

A key element of this infrastructure is the Armed Forces Covenant Partnership. Through the work undertaken by the Partnership, 163 organisations and businesses within the Borough have now signed the Armed Forces Covenant – one of the highest numbers of signatories in the West Midlands region. The Covenant is a pledge recognising that those who serve, or who have served, in the Armed Forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve.

Since 2019, the Council has delivered an annual Armed Forces Day celebration event for Armed Forces families and residents. The 2025 event marked the culmination of a week of celebrations during which the public was encouraged to show their support and appreciation. The event is delivered in partnership with local and national Armed Forces charities, Covenant signatories, and Defence Industry partners. Attendance at the most recent event was approximately 5,000, demonstrating strong, consistent support from partners and residents.

The Council holds the prestigious Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award, first achieved in 2020 and recently reaccredited for a further five years. This award reflects the Council's advocacy and leadership in supporting defence people issues across its workforce, partner organisations and service users.



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In 2021, the Council made a significant investment by appointing an Armed Forces Partnership Officer. This role operates at both strategic and operational levels, advising Council subject leads on all matters relating to the Covenant, handling referrals, and providing direct support to members of the Armed Forces community.

The Armed Forces Act 2021 established a legal obligation for local authorities to consider the principles of the Covenant when carrying out functions related to education, housing, and healthcare. Telford & Wrekin Council has gone further by committing to support the Armed Forces community in the broadest sense. This includes serving personnel, veterans, reservists, cadet forces, and family members of all these groups.



The Christopher Turley Armed Forces Community Hub Opening

In 2023, the Council approved a proposal to recognise Armed Forces service in the same manner as protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, as part of its commitment to reduce and eliminate disadvantage. This followed the establishment of the country's first Armed Forces High Street in Dawley, where all shops in the town centre signed the Armed Forces Covenant.

There remains a reluctance among some members of the Armed Forces community to ask for help. To address this, the Council continues to broaden outreach through partnership working. Over the past twelve months, outreach has expanded through closer multi-agency working. The Armed Forces Outreach programme now exceeds 55 hours per month. Provision includes three Armed Forces Community Cafés commissioned by the Council and delivered by Telford Mind, supported by Town and Parish Councils. Models for Heroes is supported through room hire funded by the Councillors' Pride Fund or Parish Councils, and promotes model-making as a therapeutic activity. Additional activities include Veterans' and Spouses' Craft and Sewing Groups,

Armed Forces Community Art Lessons, monthly Armed Forces Drop-In sessions and targeted support for Armed Forces and ex-Emergency Services personnel.



Armed Forces Community Hub soft opening

In addition, following extensive community consultation in early 2025, including fifteen face-to-face events and an online survey, the Christopher Turley Armed Forces Community Hub was launched in July 2025. Developed and funded with Great Dawley Town Council and Telford Mind, the Hub offers a welcoming space with tailored support and a robust engagement programme through events such as a Festive Breakfast, Quiz of the Year, Flippin', Fantastic Pancake morning and an Easter Eggtravaganza.

All of this is having a positive impact in the community, with regular attendees to these sessions commenting:

“Modelling can be a very isolating hobby. It was for me as I did it in isolation and although I love what it does, for me I was lonely. Sometimes we get involved outside of our modelling activities such as Smallwoods and we had a group day at Cosford which was excellent, we are already planning our next trip out as a group. This of course builds friendship and camaraderie, and I would count all who I have met in these endeavours friends for life. I have met some amazing people from within the Council without whose ongoing support in these difficult times, starting these groups would have been impossible. To sum up I would say that Models for Heroes saved my life at a time when I felt quite vulnerable and that it is an honour for me to give something back to the charity”

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