



SUPPORTING OUR ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY POLICY

Policy Sponsor - Chief People Officer



Proud to Support. Committed to Champion. Gold Standard in Our Commitment.

Proud holders of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award, Lincoln College Group is committed to championing the Armed Forces community and ensuring those who serve, have served, and their families are recognised, valued and supported.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

Lincoln College Group strives to treat all its members and visitors fairly and aims to eliminate all forms of unlawful discrimination. We are committed to creating an inclusive organisation in which employees, learners and members of our wider community are treated with fairness, dignity and respect.

The College recognises the contribution made by members of the Armed Forces Community (AFC) and is committed to ensuring that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly and are not disadvantaged because of their connection with the Armed Forces.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Lincoln College Group is proud to support the Armed Forces Community (AFC) and the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Armed Forces Covenant represents a promise that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, should be treated fairly and should not face disadvantage as a consequence of their Service.

- 1.2 The College's commitment extends across its role as:

- An employer
- An education and training provider
- A partner to employers and other organisations
- A member of the communities it serves.

- 1.3 Lincoln College Group recognises the skills, knowledge, experience and values that members of the Armed Forces community bring to the workplace, education and wider community.

- 1.4 The College has demonstrated its commitment through the Armed Forces Covenant and the Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS). As an ERS Gold Award holder, the College is committed not only to maintaining positive employment practices but also to acting as an advocate for the Armed Forces community and encouraging good practice amongst other organisations.

- 1.5 This policy brings together the College's existing commitments and practices and provides a framework for their continued delivery, monitoring and development.

- 1.6 This policy should be read alongside relevant College policies and procedures, including:

- Special Leave of Absence Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice
- Flexible Ways of Working Policy and Procedures
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Where detailed entitlements or procedures are contained within another College policy, that policy will continue to apply.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework setting out how Lincoln College Group supports the Armed Forces Community across its employment, education, training, partnership and community activities.

- 2.2 In particular, the policy aims to:

- Demonstrate the College's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant
- Support the recruitment and employment of veterans and Service leavers

- Develop recruitment initiatives and events specifically for the Armed Forces Community
- Support employees who are members of the Reserve Forces
- Support employees who volunteer as Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAVs)
- Provide additional paid leave for Reservists and CFAVs
- Provide a clear framework for supporting Reservists before, during and following mobilisation
- Recognise and support Armed Forces spouses, partners and families
- Support the Cadet movement
- Promote employment, education and training opportunities to the Armed Forces community
- Raise positive awareness of the Armed Forces across the College
- Advocate the Armed Forces Covenant and Employer Recognition Scheme to other organisations
- Develop an internal Armed Forces Staff Network and Armed Forces Champions
- Understand the Armed Forces community within the College's workforce
- Monitor and continually develop the College's support for the Armed Forces community.

2.3 For the purposes of this policy, the Armed Forces community may include:

- Regular Service personnel
- Reservists
- Service leavers
- Veterans
- Cadet Force Adult Volunteers
- Armed Forces spouses and partners (current and veterans)
- Bereaved Armed Forces families
- Dependents and family members
- Parents of current serving personnel
- Members of the Cadet community.

3. OUR ARMED FORCES COVENANT COMMITMENT

3.1 Lincoln College Group is committed to upholding the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.

3.2 The College will seek to ensure that members of the Armed Forces Community do not experience disadvantage as a consequence of their Service or connection with the Armed Forces.

3.3 The College will promote positive awareness of the Armed Forces Community and recognise the value of the skills, knowledge and experience acquired through military Service.

3.4 Our commitment is reflected in our:

- Recruitment and employment practices
- Support for Reservists and CFAVs
- Support for Armed Forces spouses, partners and families

- Mobilisation arrangements
- Education and training provision
- Targeted Armed Forces recruitment and engagement activity
- Cadet support
- Community engagement
- Partnership working
- Advocacy of the Armed Forces Covenant and Employer Recognition Scheme.

4. RECRUITMENT OF VETERANS, SERVICE LEAVERS AND THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY

4.1 Our Commitment

Lincoln College Group recognises that Service leavers, veterans, Reservists, military spouses and partners, and other members of the Armed Forces Community bring valuable skills, knowledge, experience and perspectives to the workplace.

The College is committed to being an Armed Forces-friendly employer and actively supporting members of the Armed Forces Community to access employment and career opportunities within Lincoln College Group.

Our approach goes beyond ensuring fair access to vacancies. The College proactively develops recruitment initiatives, events and engagement activities specifically designed to reach and support the Armed Forces Community.

4.2 Guaranteed Interviews

The College guarantees an interview to ex-Armed Forces personnel who meet the minimum shortlisting criteria for a vacancy.

There is no time limit following discharge within which a veteran may make use of this commitment.

4.3 Recruitment Process

The College's recruitment arrangements enable applicants to identify relevant current or previous Armed Forces experience.

Recruiting managers are made aware of the College's commitment to the Armed Forces Community and the guaranteed interview arrangements.

The College will seek to ensure that recruitment practices recognise the value and transferability of skills, qualifications, leadership experience and occupational expertise gained through military Service.

4.4 Armed Forces Recruitment Initiatives and Events

The College develops and participates in targeted recruitment initiatives and events specifically designed for members of the Armed Forces Community.

These activities are intended to:

- Raise awareness of employment and career opportunities within Lincoln College Group and Further Education
- Help individuals understand how military skills and experience can transfer into civilian roles
- Provide practical support with transition into civilian employment
- Increase awareness of different career pathways within the College
- Reduce potential barriers to accessing employment opportunities.

Activities may include:

- Dedicated Armed Forces recruitment and careers events
- Armed Forces-specific recruitment campaigns
- Attendance at Armed Forces careers, resettlement and employment events
- Recruitment activity delivered in partnership with Armed Forces and Defence organisations
- Opportunities for potential applicants to meet College employees and learn about careers within Further Education
- Advice on translating military skills, qualifications and experience into civilian employment
- CV, application and interview support
- Information about teaching, training, professional and support careers within the College
- Promotion of vacancies and career opportunities directly to Armed Forces Communities and networks
- Other targeted initiatives designed to support members of the Armed Forces Community into employment.

Where appropriate, the College will work with Armed Forces partners, employees with military experience and its own internal Armed Forces Community (Staff Network) and Armed Forces Champions to inform and support these activities.

4.5 Career Transition Partnership

The College engages with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) to support the recruitment of Service leavers, including advertising appropriate vacancies through relevant CTP recruitment channels.

The College will use its relationship with CTP to promote employment opportunities and, where appropriate, participate in recruitment, resettlement, careers and employer engagement activities aimed at Service leavers.

4.6 Forces Families Jobs

The College will maintain its engagement with Forces Families Jobs (FFJ) and use appropriate opportunities to promote employment within Lincoln College Group to members of the Armed Forces Community, including spouses and partners of serving personnel.

4.7 Work Experience and Civilian Work Attachments

The College supports opportunities for serving and ex-military personnel to gain first-hand experience of working within Further Education before making a career transition.

Where appropriate, this may include work experience placements and Civilian Work Attachments/Trial Attachments for eligible serving personnel.

Such opportunities may enable participants to:

- Experience the Further Education working environment
- Explore teaching, training and other College careers
- Understand how their military skills and experience transfer into Further Education
- Develop relevant civilian workplace experience
- Make informed decisions about future employment.

All placements will be managed in accordance with the College's relevant work experience, volunteering, safeguarding and safer recruitment arrangements.

4.8 Transition into Further Education

Lincoln College are keen for our students to benefit from the leadership and world-renowned expertise of our Armed Forces. In return we will support service leavers to retrain as Further Education teachers and make the transition to the classroom where they can share their expertise with the next generation.

Where appropriate, Service leavers interested in teaching and training careers will be supported and signposted towards suitable routes into Further Education, teacher training, mentoring and other available support.

The College will seek opportunities to explain routes into Further Education employment and help Service leavers understand how their existing occupational expertise, qualifications and experience may support their transition.

Service Leavers are given a reduced timetable in the first year, are allocated a Subject Specialist Mentor and a LTAP (Learning Teaching Advanced Practitioner), and experience high-quality learning practices whilst completing their fully-funded teacher training programme which is delivered flexibly.

5. RESERVISTS

5.1 Lincoln College Group recognises the important contribution made by members of the Volunteer Reserve Forces and the benefits that Reserve Service can bring to the individual, the Armed Forces and the College.

- 5.2 The College seeks to maintain a positive working environment in which employees feel able to identify themselves as Reservists and discuss their military commitments with their manager and People Services.

Employees are able to voluntarily record their Armed Forces connection through the Supporting Our Armed Forces Community section of SelectHR Employee Self Service.

5.3 Additional Paid Reservist Leave

Employees who are members of the Volunteer Reserve Forces will normally be granted up to two weeks (10 working days pro rata) additional paid leave per rolling 12-month period to undertake recognised Reserve Forces training and duties.

This leave is in addition to the employee's normal annual leave entitlement and will be paid at the employee's normal rate of pay.

- 5.4 Reservists should provide their line manager with as much notice as reasonably practicable of planned training commitments and, where requested, provide appropriate evidence.

Managers are expected to support requests wherever reasonably practicable, taking account of operational requirements and the College's commitment to supporting Reserve Service.

6. CADET FORCE ADULT VOLUNTEERS

- 6.1 Lincoln College Group recognises the valuable contribution made by Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAVs) in supporting the development, confidence and skills of young people and the wider Cadet movement.

6.2 Additional Paid CFAV Leave

Employees who are Cadet Force Adult Volunteers will be granted up to two weeks (10 working days pro rata) additional paid leave per rolling 12-month period to support their official Cadet Force volunteering commitments.

This leave is in addition to the employee's normal annual leave entitlement and will be paid at the employee's normal rate of pay.

- 6.3 Paid CFAV leave may be used for recognised Cadet Force activities, including:

- Annual camps
- Training
- Exercises
- Courses
- Other official Cadet Force duties.

- 6.4 Employees should provide their line manager with as much notice as reasonably practicable of planned Cadet Force commitments and, where requested, provide appropriate evidence.

Managers are expected to support requests wherever reasonably practicable, taking account of operational requirements and the College's commitment to supporting the Armed Forces and Cadet community.

- 6.5 Managers should, wherever reasonably practicable, support CFAVs in balancing their College responsibilities with their Cadet volunteering commitments, including consideration of reasonable flexibility around working arrangements.

7. RESERVIST MOBILISATION FRAMEWORK

7.1 Our Commitment

Lincoln College Group supports employees who are members of the Reserve Forces and recognises that they may be called upon to undertake a period of mobilisation.

The College will support Reservists before, during and following mobilisation and will seek to ensure that employees are not disadvantaged in their employment as a consequence of fulfilling their Reserve Forces commitments.

7.2 Notification of Mobilisation

An employee who receives notification of mobilisation should inform their line manager and People Services as soon as reasonably practicable and provide the relevant mobilisation documentation.

People Services will act as the central point of contact for advice and support concerning the employee's employment arrangements during mobilisation and their subsequent return to work.

7.3 Pre-Mobilisation Meeting

Where practicable, the employee, their line manager and a People Services Partner will meet before mobilisation.

People Services Partners will provide appropriate guidance on the arrangements associated with mobilisation and return to work.

The discussion should consider, as appropriate:

- Anticipated dates of mobilisation
- Work and handover arrangements
- Pay and pension implications
- Annual leave
- College property and equipment
- Temporary cover
- Contact during mobilisation
- Keeping-in-touch preferences
- Support available
- Arrangements for return to work.

7.4 Employment Arrangements During Mobilisation

Where an employee is mobilised as a member of the Reserve Forces, the College will maintain the employment relationship during the period of mobilisation and support the employee's subsequent return to College employment.

The College may use relevant administrative elements of its Career Break process to support and record the absence where appropriate. However, mobilisation is distinct from a voluntary career break and the employee will not be required to resign from their employment as a consequence of mobilisation. The employee's continuous service will be recognised.

The Reservist's substantive post will be retained during the period of mobilisation in accordance with applicable legislation and their rights relating to mobilisation and return to work.

Where cover is required to maintain effective service delivery, the College may recruit or appoint temporary cover for the anticipated period of absence. Any such arrangement will be made on the basis that it is providing temporary cover during the substantive postholder's mobilisation.

7.5 During Mobilisation

The College will maintain appropriate contact with the employee where the employee wishes this and operational circumstances permit.

The preferred frequency and method of contact should normally be agreed before mobilisation.

Contact may include significant College or team updates, relevant organisational developments and appropriate social communications.

There will be no expectation that an employee responds to routine College communications while undertaking operational military duties.

7.6 Return and Reintegration

People Services and the line manager will support the Reservist's return to College employment.

Where reasonably practicable, contact will be made before the anticipated return date to identify any practical arrangements or support requirements.

A return-to-work discussion will normally consider:

- Reintegration into the workplace and team
- Significant changes during the employee's absence
- Training or updating requirements
- Wellbeing
- Reasonable adjustments where appropriate
- Recognition of skills, knowledge and experience developed during mobilisation
- Any further support required.

Where temporary cover has been appointed, appropriate arrangements will be made to facilitate the substantive postholder's return.

7.7 Wellbeing

The College recognises that mobilisation and transition back into civilian employment may affect individuals differently.

Employees will be signposted to relevant College health and wellbeing support where appropriate.

8. ARMED FORCES SPOUSES, PARTNERS AND FAMILIES

8.1 Our Commitment

Lincoln College Group recognises that military Service can have a significant impact not only on serving personnel but also on their spouses, partners and families.

The College recognises the challenges that can arise from deployment, mobilisation, postings, relocation and periods of separation.

8.2 The College will seek to ensure that employees are not disadvantaged in their employment because their spouse or partner serves in the Armed Forces.

Employees are encouraged to discuss circumstances connected with their spouse or partner's military Service with their manager at an early stage so that appropriate options can be considered.

8.3 Career Breaks for Armed Forces Spouses and Partners

Lincoln College Group recognises that the career of an Armed Forces spouse or partner can be affected by the Service commitments of their spouse or partner.

The College supports employees who are the spouse or partner of a serving member of the Armed Forces through the use of career breaks, enabling employees to maintain their employment relationship with the College where their partner's military Service has required a significant period of relocation or separation.

Employees whose spouse or partner's Service commitments affect their ability to continue working for the College for a period may request a career break in accordance with the

College's Career Break Policy/process. The continuous service of staff requesting a career break under these circumstances will be recognised.

Requests associated with a spouse or partner's military Service will be considered positively and individually, taking account of:

- The nature and anticipated duration of the posting, deployment or relocation
- The employee's circumstances
- The requirements of their role
- Operational requirements
- The Career Break process.

Where a career break is agreed, arrangements for maintaining appropriate contact and anticipated return to employment will be discussed and recorded.

8.4 Other Support for Armed Forces Families

Not every situation will require a career break. Depending upon individual circumstances and relevant College policies, support may include consideration of:

- Flexible working
- Temporary changes to working arrangements
- Compassionate leave
- Dependents leave
- Annual leave
- Unpaid leave
- Other appropriate support.

Circumstances may include deployment, mobilisation, short-notice changes, postings, relocation, periods of separation, return from deployment, injury, serious illness, caring responsibilities and bereavement.

8.5 Returning Following a Career Break

Where an Armed Forces spouse or partner returns following an agreed career break, the College will support their transition back into the workplace in accordance with the Career Break process.

This may include an appropriate pre-return discussion, updating on significant changes, identification of training needs and support with reintegration into the workplace.

9. SUPPORTING THE CADET MOVEMENT

9.1 Lincoln College Group recognises the important role played by the Cadet Forces in developing the confidence, skills, employability and aspirations of young people.

9.2 The College will seek to develop an ongoing programme of engagement with local Cadet organisations through official Cadet Force channels, subject to appropriate approval, resources and safeguarding arrangements.

Activities may include:

- Careers information, advice and guidance
- Employability workshops
- CV and interview support
- Careers events
- Technical and vocational skills activities
- Curriculum demonstration
- Information about apprenticeships and Further Education
- Use of appropriate College facilities (classrooms, sports facilities in winter, use or reprographic etc.)

- Support for competitions and activities
- Other opportunities developing wider skills and progression.

9.3 The College will work with local Cadet organisations and its Defence Relationship Manager, where appropriate, to identify opportunities where the College's expertise, facilities and staff can make a meaningful contribution.

10 ARMED FORCES ADVOCACY AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

10.1 As an Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award holder, Lincoln College Group aims to be an exemplar of positive employment practice towards the Armed Forces community.

10.2 The College will use appropriate opportunities to advocate the Armed Forces Covenant and Employer Recognition Scheme to partner organisations, employers, suppliers, customers, education providers and other organisations within its networks.

10.3 Advocacy may include:

- Encouraging organisations to sign the Armed Forces Covenant
- Sharing the College's experience and good practice
- Promoting the Employer Recognition Scheme
- Mentoring or advising organisations seeking to progress through the ERS
- Sharing relevant Defence Relationship Management communications
- Promoting Armed Forces-friendly employment practice through employer and partnership networks.

10.4 People Services will maintain a proportionate record of significant Armed Forces Covenant and ERS advocacy activity, including organisations supported and, where known, resulting outcomes.

11. ARMED FORCES AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATIONS

11.1 The College will raise awareness of the Armed Forces Community and its commitments internally and externally.

11.2 This may include supporting and promoting:

- Armed Forces Week
- Armed Forces Day
- Reserves Day
- Remembrance activities
- Cadet activities
- Armed Forces recruitment initiatives and events
- Employer Recognition Scheme and Covenant activity;
- CTP and Forces Families Jobs opportunities
- Relevant Defence Relationship Management communications
- Internal events through You Matter – the Colleges employee health and wellbeing, and reward and recognition programme.

- 11.3 Managers will have access to appropriate information about the College's Armed Forces commitments, particularly those relating to Reservists, CFAVs, recruitment, families and mobilisation.

12. ARMED FORCES STAFF NETWORK AND CHAMPIONS

12.1 Armed Forces Staff Network

The Network provides a supportive and inclusive community for Reservists, veterans, Service leavers, CFAVs, military spouses and partners and other employees with an Armed Forces connection.

It provide opportunities for colleagues to connect, share experiences, provide peer support and contribute to the continued development of College policies, practices and activities.

12.2 Armed Forces Champions

College Armed Forces Champions will act as visible internal advocates and points of contact.

Champions will work alongside People Services and the Staff Network to:

- Support service leavers new to FE
- Promote the Armed Forces Covenant and ERS Gold commitments
- Champion the Armed Forces community
- Signpost employees to support
- Raise awareness of Reservist and CFAV provisions
- Promote events, campaigns and opportunities
- Support engagement with Armed Forces, Reserve and Cadet communities and
- Identify opportunities to strengthen College support.

12.3 Role of the Network

The Network may contribute to:

- Armed Forces events and communications
- Feedback on College policies and practices
- Peer support;
- Reservist mobilisation and reintegration support
- Mentoring of Service leavers and veterans
- Armed Forces recruitment initiatives and events
- Reserve and Cadet engagement
- Partnership opportunities and
- Wider Armed Forces community engagement.

13. UNDERSTANDING OUR ARMED FORCES WORKFORCE

13.1 Voluntary Employee Declaration

Employees are able to voluntarily record their connection to the Armed Forces community through the Supporting Our Armed Forces Community section of SelectHR Employee Self Service.

Employees are encouraged to keep this information up to date.

13.2 Subject to appropriate data protection arrangements information may be used to:

- Understand the size and composition of the College's Armed Forces community
- Identify trends
- Identify support needs
- Communicate relevant support and opportunities
- Support the Staff Network and Champions
- Inform recruitment and engagement activity and
- Evaluate delivery of Armed Forces Covenant and ERS commitments.

14. DEFENCE RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

14.1 The College will maintain an active relationship with its Defence Relationship Manager (DRM) and engage with Defence Relationship Management and the relevant Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association as appropriate.

14.2 This relationship will support the College to:

- Identify opportunities for Armed Forces engagement
- Maintain awareness of ERS requirements
- Share good practice
- Develop Reserve and Cadet partnerships
- Promote relevant events and campaigns and
- Continue delivering its Armed Forces Covenant commitments.

15. EDUCATION, TRAINING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

15.1 As an education and training provider, Lincoln College Group is particularly well placed to support members of the Armed Forces community in developing skills and progressing into civilian careers.

15.2 The College will seek opportunities to support Service personnel, Service leavers, veterans, Cadets and Armed Forces families through:

- Education and training
- Careers information, advice and guidance
- Apprenticeships
- Technical and vocational training
- Employment and employability support
- Work experience
- Transition into teaching and training careers
- Employer and community partnerships.

16. RESPONSIBILITIES

16.1 Group Leadership Team

The Group Leadership Team will champion the College's strategic commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and Employer Recognition Scheme and support the continued development of Lincoln College Group as an Armed Forces-friendly employer and education provider.

16.2 People Services

People Services will:

- Maintain this policy
- Advise employees and managers
- Support Reservists and CFAVs
- Coordinate mobilisation and return arrangements
- Support Armed Forces spouses and partners
- Lead and support Armed Forces recruitment initiatives
- Support CTP and FFJ engagement
- Monitor relevant workforce information
- Support the Staff Network and Champions
- Maintain evidence of significant Armed Forces activity and advocacy
- Support ERS revalidation.

16.3 Managers

Managers are expected to:

- Understand and support the College's Armed Forces commitments
- Support Reservists and CFAVs
- Respond positively and reasonably to military-related requests
- Contact People Services where an employee is mobilised
- Support mobilisation and return-to-work arrangements
- Consider the needs of Armed Forces spouses and partners
- Implement the guaranteed interview commitment
- Ensure employees are not treated unfavourably because of their Armed Forces status or connection.

17. MONITORING AND EVIDENCE

17.1 People Services will undertake an annual review of the College's support for the Armed Forces community and delivery against this policy.

Where available and appropriate, this may include:

- Reservists, veterans, CFAVs and military spouses/partners within the workforce
- Trends in voluntary SelectHR declarations
- Use of additional paid Reservist and CFAV leave

- Mobilisation cases and support provided
 - Career breaks and other support for Armed Forces spouses/partners
 - Armed Forces-specific recruitment campaigns, initiatives and events
 - Attendance and engagement at Armed Forces recruitment and resettlement events
 - Participation and outcomes from targeted Armed Forces recruitment activity
 - Applications, guaranteed interviews and appointments from veterans and Service leavers
 - CTP and Forces Families Jobs activity
 - Work experience and Civilian Work Attachments
 - Examples of Service leavers and veterans successfully transitioning into College employment
 - Cadet engagement
 - Armed Forces Staff Network and Champion activity
 - Armed Forces events and communications
 - AFC/ERS advocacy
 - Organisations supported to engage with the Covenant or ERS and resulting outcomes where known.
- 17.2 Evidence of significant activity and outcomes will be retained where appropriate to demonstrate impact and support future ERS revalidation.
- 17.3 The annual review will identify good practice, development opportunities and actions required to maintain and strengthen the College's Armed Forces commitments.

18. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND REVIEW

- 18.1 Lincoln College Group recognises that supporting the Armed Forces community is an ongoing commitment. The College will continue to identify opportunities to strengthen its support and respond to developments in Armed Forces Covenant and Employer Recognition Scheme good practice.
- 18.2 Feedback from employees, the Armed Forces Staff Network, Armed Forces Champions, managers, the Defence Relationship Manager and external Armed Forces partners will be used, where appropriate, to inform future development.
- 18.3 This policy will normally be reviewed every academic year, or sooner where required as a result of:
- Legislative change
 - Changes to Armed Forces Covenant or ERS requirements
 - Feedback from the Armed Forces community
 - Mobilisation experience
 - Changes to associated College policies
 - Findings from annual monitoring
 - Recommendations from the Defence Relationship Manager.
- 18.4 People Services will coordinate the review and ensure that relevant associated policies remain aligned with the commitments contained within this policy.