

Wilton Welcomes

Wilton and surrounding towns and villages showing gratitude to serving personnel, veterans and their dependants.

About the initiative

The concept of the scheme was the idea of local veteran's wife, Kerry Harvey, who explains her inspiration here

"My husband, Gavin, and I have lived in the local area for the past 10 years. Gavin was very seriously injured in Afghanistan in 2009, losing both his legs as well as a plethora of other injuries, we are very lucky in that the local community has always been extremely supportive of our situation which is one of the reasons we chose to settle with our two daughters in a village very local to Wilton. The idea for this scheme came about after holidaying in a small town that had a similar scheme in place, we went into several small cafes and were always offered a free coffee and a gift shop gave us a 10% discount with a lolly pop for our children. It made us feel appreciated and welcome in their little town and, of course, these were the businesses that we revisited frequently throughout the week of our stay. It was lovely to feel appreciated as a veteran's wife even when Gavin wasn't with me, it really made our stay stand out from others and we are already planning our next visit. To have a similar scheme locally, in such a huge military and ex-military community and with such an exciting project such as the Our Wilton Veterans accommodation, will really help to show a warm welcome to all those who are serving and have served. I feel privileged to be involved in launching the initiative."

The initiative is backed by Our Wilton and the Wilton and District Business Chamber, it is a community effort to show our gratitude and respect for serving personnel, veterans and their immediate families who live and visit our local town and surrounding villages. Launching in August 2016, we would like to welcome as many local businesses to join the scheme as possible. Living and working in close proximity to one of the biggest garrison communities in England we are in the ideal location to really show our thanks for all the work that they do by offering a small discount on services or goods or maybe an exclusive reward scheme, whatever you choose to do all that we ask is that it is in the spirit of the initiative and that you offer a very warm welcome. We are aware that an increasing number of service families are also choosing to settle in our area once they leave service and with Veterans' accommodation coming to the Our Wilton site we ask that you extend your Wilton Welcome to veterans as well as those currently serving.

What do I need to do?

It is really simple to join, all you need to do is decide what your business would like to offer, please do not think this has to be a large gesture, all we ask is a very small gesture of goodwill for example, a café may offer a free tea or coffee with other purchases or even a reward stamp scheme that is exclusively for the Wilton Welcomes scheme, local shops may like to offer a small discount or a discount when they make a purchase of a certain value and a business such as a salon may like to offer an upgraded service such as including a blow dry with a wash and cut or an exclusive price for the initiative. Whatever you decide to do, all we ask is that you offer it in the spirit it is intended; to show gratitude for service, past or present. Once you have decided what you would like to offer please request a joining form from admin@ourwilton.org.

Why should my business join the scheme?

It will cost you nothing to join, apart from the cost of a sticker or poster to display! We know that many local businesses offer discounts to serving personnel already, so by joining this initiative you will receive support and free advertising for doing so. From a business prospective, you are more likely to receive repeat business from those who benefit from the scheme and a local veteran, for example, is more likely to choose a business who recognises and offers a warm welcome in gratitude for his/her service over one that doesn't. The launch will be well publicised locally using our local media, social media and your details will be included on our webpage.

How will the military community know that we are members of the initiative?

We will be advertising the launch of Wilton Welcomes locally and forwarding the details to the local garrisons also. You will be able to purchase (at minimal cost) window stickers and posters with our logo featured to advertise your membership on your premises, your business details will also be featured on our page within the Our Wilton website. We can also provide you with a PDF logo to feature on your website to advertise your membership online and on your social media platforms.

How do I identify those eligible for Wilton Welcomes privileges?

Serving personnel should carry a military ID card so this can be used to identify those serving as eligible, veterans and dependants may be more difficult to identify and a degree of trust will be required. Some veterans may carry a veteran card or badge issued by Veterans UK which you can use and some dependants may have cards to show their membership to other organisations or a dependants ID card. We would hope that the community support the scheme in the spirit that it is intended and so abuse of the scheme will be very minimal, if a customer says that they are the partner of a soldier or veteran then

we hope that this would be a genuine claim and if in doubt then opening a general conversation about military life may help establish this. Of course, as you get to know the clients who regularly visit due to the scheme we would hope that ID would not be required and a warm welcome offered. We intend the scheme to be simple to run and its primary role to pay respect to those eligible so we would implore you to use common sense.

Does my business need to be based in Wilton to join?

Absolutely not! As long as you are based in one of the surrounding towns or villages you can join. We hope that the scheme will become well known in the whole of South Wiltshire. The name, Wilton Welcomes, came about as that is the town the idea for the scheme was born in but in no way limits the membership to Wilton businesses! If you would like to join but unsure whether you are eligible please do contact us, we will be very happy to hear from you!

For more information and for a joining form please contact Kerry on 07840382446 or admin@ourwilton.org