



THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT ANNUAL REPORT 2018



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The Armed Forces Covenant
An Enduring Covenant Between

The People of the United Kingdom
Her Majesty's Government

– and –

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown
And their Families

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families.

They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.



ARMED FORCES

COVENANT

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FOREWORD

By the Rt. Hon. Gavin Williamson CBE MP, Secretary of State for Defence

In a year of such significance when we remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice in serving our country, I am proud to be able to present my second annual report to Parliament on our progress with delivering the Armed Forces Covenant. This is the seventh report since the Armed Forces Act 2011 came into force.

This year more than ever, we have a duty to take stock and consider the role of the Armed Forces in society today. Armistice 100 represents an opportunity to set out our long-term plans for serving personnel, families and Veterans, in the context of unconventional threats to our security and an unpredictable political climate.

The UK-wide *Strategy for Our Veterans* acknowledges that to support our living Veterans and empower them to prosper on their return to civilian life, is not only the right thing to do but to the great benefit of society. We cannot do this without first thinking about the experience of Service Personnel and their families, because today's recruits are tomorrow's Veterans. Preparation for the transition out of Service should be an integral part of Service life, involving the family, as well as the individual. It is this premise which has been the basis for the development of the MOD's Tri-Service Holistic Transition Policy.

The reputation of our Armed Forces and the esteem they are held in worldwide is unparalleled. The people who serve our country and the families that support them represent a cross-section of our society and are drawn from diverse backgrounds, with a myriad of experiences and skills. It is this diversity which makes us strong and our support for the Armed Forces unites us.

Similarly, the Armed Forces Covenant is delivered at all levels of society through collaboration across borders and political boundaries. This approach is necessary if we are to provide effective support and it is evident in the work of the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board, partnerships between NHS Trusts, and role modelling between local authorities and businesses in the public and private sectors.

I am pleased to see the continued push to increase awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant at all levels, because to capitalise on this universal support, service providers and the wider public need to understand the principles of the Covenant and the most effective ways in which they can offer support and build mutually beneficial partnerships with the Armed Forces community.

The Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board recognised this and made improving the way we measure Covenant delivery a top priority. We have made progress in the first year, reflected by the additional metrics in this year's report. The findings of the Map of Need project identifying levels of Service provision for families and Veterans across the UK, and the results of the survey on the public's perception of Veterans are already informing the development of policy. This work is continuing and we are considering where the gaps remain in our ability to measure outcomes. The period of consultation on the *Strategy for Our Veterans* will go some way to achieving this and help us to shape its implementation. Alongside this it is a priority of mine and my colleagues on the Ministerial Board to improve our knowledge of the issues faced by some children from Service Families and the impact not just on their educational attainment, but their general wellbeing.

I would like to thank those service providers and professionals in the public, private and charitable sectors who deliver support for and in partnership with the Armed Forces community on a daily basis, for their tireless efforts and their dedication. This benefits both the Armed Forces community and wider society and I will continue to lead the commitment to strengthen and deepen our Covenant.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'C. Jones', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.





INTRODUCTION

By the Rt. Hon. Tobias Ellwood MP, Minister for Defence People and Veterans

Since 2011 we have achieved a great deal under the Covenant to improve the Armed Forces community's access to public and private services and ensure they are treated fairly and suffer no disadvantage. As Minister for Defence People and Veterans I have the privilege to witness on a daily basis the deserved admiration society feels for those who serve our country, and increasingly an understanding of the value and skills that the Armed Forces community can offer to society in return.

I have been struck by the collegiate work of organisations of all sizes within central and local government as well as the private and charitable sectors. This collective effort is revolutionising the way services are provided across the Covenant space, focusing on multi-disciplinary, community-based provision which fits the needs of the individual. Examples of this approach can be seen in Veterans healthcare across the UK. In England the Complex Treatment Service, launched in April 2018 and following on from the Transition and Intervention Liaison Service last year, marks the final step in providing an integrated tiered approach to mental health treatment. Equally, the work of Veterans NHS Wales, the Veterans First Point Network Scotland and the newly formed Veterans Support Office in Northern Ireland demonstrate what can be achieved through collaboration.

Adopting an overarching view of need is increasingly common within the public sector. Local authorities with the largest Service populations are sharing their experience and acting as role models for those with less available resource. The Covenant Champions play a key role in assessing the needs of the Armed Forces community against local authority policies and service delivery. It is important that we continue to equip them with the tools and guidance to make the best use of their resources, and help further integrate military and civilian communities to the benefit of the Armed Forces and wider society.

The Armed Forces community is part of the fabric of our society. To appreciate this we need to look past the uniform to the Service person themselves; the family that supports them; and the rich context of the skills and experiences that they bring. To provide effective support, we need to recognise the contribution that spouses, partners and children of Service Personnel make, and reflect this in policy making, so that a stable family life supports our Service Personnel to thrive.

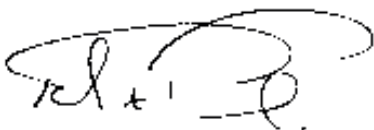
Where support is lacking, such as with provision for Veterans' mental health, this is usually down to lack of understanding rather than reluctance. At the MOD hosted European Ministerial conference on Veterans' mental health in June I agreed with my European colleagues, the importance of continuing to look after those who are vulnerable, while celebrating the large proportion of Veterans who prosper as civilians and promoting the skills they offer to wider society. This intent is captured within the cross-government communication strategy and I am pleased to see the steady progress being made in implementing the aims of the strategy. Addressing inaccurate public perceptions of Veterans and more broadly of life in the Armed Forces, will help us to improve the opportunities available to the Armed Forces community when transitioning back to civilian life.

An effective communication strategy is critical to conveying the Covenant message to both service providers and the Armed Forces community, as beneficiaries. The data shows an ongoing improvement but also underlines that we have a long way to go; the Covenant in Business report is a good example of this. While we celebrate the 3,000th signing by the Post Office, this should be tempered by the findings of this independent review, which reveal that only 28% of organisations surveyed were aware of the Covenant and just 8% were signatories.

In 2019 we will take forward the Covenant in Business recommendations of the review and alongside maturing data from the MOD's Measurement of Effect work, this will allow more considered engagement with industry. Recognising what effective support means for companies from different sectors and of varying size will ensure we can realise the potential of this sector.

The MOD will play a full and leading role in this. We are committed to better preparing our Service Personnel and their families for a return to civilian life, empowering them to make the best use of their leadership, innovation and ingenuity, developed through their time in the Services.

The 2018 report tells the story of an ever better understanding of how Covenant policy initiatives are translating into beneficial outcomes for our people. Our data is starting to reflect the importance we attach to the Armed Forces community and with better measurement we now have a better understanding of the issues our people face and the problems with resolving them. Our understanding is building a picture of how Service life creates issues for our people in a society which doesn't always recognise its specific exigencies. We will and want to continue to deliver meaningful and lasting change of our people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. + 1 - P.' with a large, sweeping flourish above the text.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Delivering Effective Support

Overview

In its first year, the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board, has focused on improving the measurement of Covenant delivery. Key departments and the Devolved Administrations have responded to this by including a number of new metrics which provide a more detailed picture of how Covenant policies are translating into outcomes for the Armed Forces community. Among other measures, these include access to healthcare services in England and Wales and further details on educational attainment and progress at different stages, providing a more nuanced view of the issues faced by the children of Service Personnel. The Board also commissioned the UK-wide Strategy for Our Veterans and committed to raising the profile of children of serving personnel to ensure that the issues they face as a result of their mobility are properly understood.

In April 2018, the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust became an independent charity, allowing much needed flexibility in its grant-giving programmes which will drive innovative schemes which create a legacy for the Armed Forces community and wider society.

Highlights of Covenant work supporting the Armed Forces community

Healthcare

Increasing awareness of and improving access to mental healthcare services and providing a range of services which fit the needs of the individual, continues to be a priority for Defence and wider society. On top of the £20 million a year already allocated, a further £2 million of additional funding has been committed for military mental health services over the next ten years. Moreover, the expansion of the mental health network, spanning all UK Defence establishments and now numbering 500 members will help broaden the discussion.

Following on from the Transition Intervention and Liaison Services last year, and completing the tiered approach to Veterans' mental healthcare, the Mental Health Complex Treatment Service, launched in April 2018, caters to the individual treatment needs of Veterans at the community level. The ability to track Veterans and to measure access to treatment and success rates will be improved with the introduction of a Veterans question in the new GP registration forms in England. The identification of Veterans to GPs will improve access to treatment that meets their needs, honouring a commitment from the 2017 report.

Education

To further help educational providers support the children of Service Personnel when they move schools, the Common Transfer File has been expanded to include contextual information on the children's background and experiences. In acknowledgment of the need to further assist local authorities in making long-term provision for the children of Service Personnel returning from Germany, the Defence Secretary announced the extension of the Educational Support Fund for a period of two years.

In recognition of the underrepresentation of the children of Service Personnel in higher education, the Office for Students has included this cohort in their new regulatory guidance stipulating the sector's duties to support progression into and through higher education.

Accommodation

More than £68 million was invested in improvement works to the Service Family Accommodation estate during 2017/18, funding an external wall insulation programme, the replacement of inefficient boilers, upgrading of heating systems, and the modernisation of kitchens and bathrooms.

The work to understand the condition of the Single Living Accommodation estate continues, providing better information to inform investment decisions. During the current financial year, MOD plans to deliver more than 1,200 new Single Living Accommodation bed-spaces across eight sites and, on current spending plans, more than 3,000 over the following three financial years.

To increase investment into the maintenance and upgrading of Service Family Accommodation, the MOD has initiated a project whereby short term vacant properties, with the agreement of the local chain of command, are sub-let to screened civilians. This project is planned to produce £8 million revenue to invest in Service Family Accommodation and a small proportion of this revenue (5%) will go directly to Heads of Establishment for investment in the local estate.

Family Life

In September 2018, the Defence Secretary announced a new scheme to support spousal employment, which aims to facilitate access to vocational training and development opportunities to support spouses and civil partners.

For Service Personnel and their families moving between administrations, 'Welcome To' packs have been created as informational guides to give additional housing support, advice and information about the differences of provision and access to services between administrations. The *Welcome to Scotland* pack (2018) and a *Welcome to Wales* pack (2016) have been published by the respective governments, with the *Welcome to England* pack being published on the Covenant website by the end of 2018.

The MOD published its first Defence domestic abuse strategy *No Defence for Abuse* in July 2018, which aims to reduce the prevalence and impact of domestic abuse and increase the safety and wellbeing of those affected.

Through-Life Support

The MOD will publish a new *Defence Holistic Transition Policy* which will be introduced in late 2018. Currently, support offered to Service Leavers focuses on employment, the new policy will expand its focus to support holistic and life changing processes such as resettlement, health and wellbeing, welfare, housing advice and financial information.

Building upon ongoing work to support Veterans, a UK-wide, cross-government Veterans Strategy was published on 14 November 2018 to set the right conditions, empower and support Veterans for the next 100 years. The principles founded within the Strategy are applicable across all sectors of life: public, private, charitable and individual.

Priorities for 2019

This Government is committed to the Covenant and will continue working with its partners in the Devolved Administrations and providers of local services, to identify disadvantage and, where possible, agree plans to mitigate this. We are equally committed to ensuring appropriate special consideration for those who have given the most, such as the injured and sick, those who care for them and their families, and the families of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. The principle of special consideration will be important when we consider what more support we can provide for War Widows and Widowers and more widely for the bereaved community as a whole.

Improving awareness of the Covenant among service providers across all sectors, as well as with the Armed Forces community as beneficiaries continues to be a priority for 2019 and beyond.

We recognise the challenges caused by mobility and the difficulties in relation to childcare and school admissions, particularly for those children requiring additional support and we are committed to improving our understanding of the causal nature of this relationship. While significant progress has been made to improve our ability to measure the delivery of the Covenant, we will continue to focus on improving the consistency of outcomes regionally and across the UK. As data matures, the work of the Service Children's Progression Alliance will improve our understanding of the relationship between mobility, attainment and general welfare for the children of Service Personnel.

The detailed output of MOD's Measurement of Effect work and the recommendations of the Covenant in Business review will help to determine what constitutes positive employment support to the Armed Forces, so that government can take a more strategic view of how we engage with industry.

Summary of Delivery in 2018

Governance

In April 2018, the independent Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust was created.

Healthcare

The new GP forms in England will include a specific question about whether a patient has served in the UK Armed Forces.

The General Medical Services Contract GP forms in Wales have been amended to include a question regarding the identification of Veterans.

NHS England launched the Veterans Mental Health Complex Treatment Service.

The Royal College of GPs and NHS England launched a pilot Veterans' awareness GP accreditation programme in the West Midlands area.

The Combat Stress 24-Hour Mental Health Helpline (0800 323 4444) for serving personnel and their families was launched on 25 February 2018.

The Department for Work and Pensions confirmed that Veterans applying for Personal Independence Payments or Employment Support Allowance can now find advice and signposts to a full range of support on gov.uk.

The Welsh Government has agreed funding to continue its Armed Forces Free Swimming Scheme until 2021, offering free swimming to Veterans and serving members of the Armed Forces.

The Scottish Veterans Commissioner's report: *Veterans' health and wellbeing: a distinctive Scottish approach* was published on 24 April 2018. The Scottish Government has now published its response to the report which sets out how the recommendations will be implemented.

The Scottish Government in partnership with NHS Scotland and Combat Stress is providing over £4 million until 2021 for the continued provision of specialised mental health services for Veterans living in Scotland.

Education

The MOD extended the Educational Support Fund for a period of two years.

The Department for Education introduced guidelines for schools on the use of Service Pupil Premium.

The Department for Education is providing an additional £2.8 million to support the local authority in making preparations for the return of school children to Wiltshire from Germany.

The Department for Education expanded the Common Transfer File to enable it to capture concerns about the child's responses to moving school, parental deployment and parental separation, and any other relevant matters.

The Office for Students has included reference to children of Service Personnel as an under-represented cohort.

Scotland's National Transitions Officer launched a Forces children's education website¹ which hosts resources for parents and educators.

¹ <https://forceschildrenseducation.org.uk/>

The Welsh Government introduced its 2018/19 Supporting Service Children in Wales Fund. 27 schools successfully secured full or partial funding totalling £250,000.

Accommodation

Included within the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, is a Duty to Refer, placed on the Secretary of State for Defence, members of the regular Armed Forces who are considered to be at risk of homelessness to the relevant authorities.

In Wales, Tŷ Ryan, an innovative self-build scheme for ex-Service Personnel has been developed.

The Scottish Government has revised its guide: *A Scottish housing guide for people leaving the Armed Forces and ex-Service Personnel* which is aimed at Service Leavers and Veterans.

Family Life

The Armed Forces (Flexible Working) Act 2018 became law on 8 February 2018.

The MOD has launched a scheme to support spousal employment which will facilitate access to vocational training and development opportunities.

On 6 July 2018, the MOD published its first Domestic Abuse Strategy, to tackle domestic abuse within the Armed Forces and defence civilian communities.

A new Scottish Veterans Commissioner took up post on 5 September 2018. The remit of the role has been expanded to include families.

In June, the Scottish Government published *Welcome to Scotland – a guide for Service Personnel and their families moving to Scotland*. Its aim is to provide practical advice on a range of topics.

Through-Life Support

In Northern Ireland, the Veterans Support Office was established in April 2018, with £300,000 allocated over five years to improve the capacity and capability of local authorities and other service providers to apply for Covenant Funding.

The Welsh Government has made good progress in the development of its Employment Pathway, which will clarify employment options available and services that can offer assistance.

The UK-wide *Strategy for our Veterans* has been published, which sets out the principles and aims needed to continue to meet the needs of the older Veterans and the wider Veteran Community over the next ten years.

The MOD will have launched a new *Defence Holistic Transition Policy* by the end of 2018.

Business and the Community

The Forces in Mind Trust commissioned review of the Covenant Business completed in November 2018.

In Scotland, key partner organisations in the Veterans Employability Strategic Group have finalised a Concordat as an enduring partnership arrangement to support Veterans and those transitioning from the Armed Forces into fulfilling civilian careers.

2018 Report Commitments

A summary of new commitments made in this report by various organisations

Healthcare

The Department for Health and Social Care, Public Health England and NHS England will develop Covenant awareness in alcohol misuse services for Veterans and feed into the 2019 Alcohol Strategy.

The Royal College of General Practitioners has confirmed plans for a national rollout of its GP Accreditation Programme over the next three years.

The Scottish Government has committed to provide £1.6 million through to 2020 in addition to investment by NHS Scotland to continue to fund the Veterans First Point Network, alongside £4.2 million until 2021 for the provision of a range of specialist and community-based services for Veterans resident in Scotland.

Education

The Department for Education will work with MOD, the Department for Health and Social Care and other stakeholders to consider how to improve the quality of data available on Service children's educational attainment and welfare.

The MOD is reviewing its assignment policy to consider whether greater flexibility can be afforded to families with children at critical stages of their education and those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability provision. Informed by this work and other attainment evidence, MOD and the Department for Education will be reviewing the provisions for Service children in the School Admissions Code.

Accommodation

Revenue from the lease of vacant properties will be invested back into maintenance and upgrading of Service Family Accommodation.

Family Life

The Department of Health and Social Care will focus on the mental health of Service Children as part of its agenda to improve the mental health of children and young people.

MOD will publish a Tri-Service Volunteering Strategy.

Through-Life Support

During 2018/19, the Welsh Government will undertake a major scoping exercise to identify where there may be gaps in support for its Veterans and their families. This will help target future support enabling Veterans and their families to contribute and integrate into the communities where they settle.

The Welsh Government will develop an Employers Toolkit to complement the Employment Pathway by providing clear guidance for ex-serving personnel and employers on the added benefits of employing Veterans.

Business and the Community

In 2019, the MOD will review the detailed output of its Measurement of Effect work. This will allow the Department to develop a set of key performance indicators for the Covenant in Business, helping determine what constitutes positive employment support to the Armed Forces community.

In 2019, the Community Action Group will focus on consistency of delivery by launching a self-assessment tool and e-learning package to assist local authorities in delivering the Covenant.

The Scottish Government has begun work to overcome the barriers experienced by spouses who qualified as teachers elsewhere in the UK, to allow them to teach in Scotland.



OBSERVATIONS

by external members of the Covenant Reference Group

Naval Families Federation, Army Families Federation, RAF Families Federation

The Armed Forces Covenant is now core business for the Service Families Federations and has become an intrinsic part of the lived experience for our Service Personnel and their families.

This year our work has centred on ensuring families have a clearer understanding of how the Covenant can help them, if needed, at key touchpoints in their lives such as when they start a family, buy a new home or are posted to a new area.

Many of the issues the Families Federations have championed and worked on over the past year have been recognised and presented in this report. We look forward to continuing our close collaboration with the MOD and government departments to ensure that together we can support and improve the lives of our Service families.

Healthcare

We applaud the significant achievement of ensuring all GPs now have the mechanism in place to record whether a patient is from a Service background. We would now like to see more focus given to families of serving personnel; for example, we are aware that there are 'read' codes available to identify Service family members on their medical records but are unsure of how many GP practices have taken up this option to date. We look forward to working with the NHS to highlight the importance of this to all GPs.

We welcome the delivery of the commitment to trial Mental Health Support Teams in schools as part of the Department for Education (DfE) and Department

for Health and Social Care (DHSC) Green Paper on transforming children and young people's mental health. The Naval Families Federation submitted their formal response to this Paper earlier this year, which highlighted that Service children had not previously been considered as a potentially vulnerable group, and this was identified as an area of concern. We are keen to continue consulting with the DHSC on this important issue to ensure Service children's specific needs are considered in the development of the programme and seek reassurances that the unique challenges that Service children may face are taken into consideration as future policy develops.

The Families Federations' representation on a number of key boards and groups has enabled us to support the work of the MOD and UK Health Departments to improve the health, wellbeing and healthcare of UK Armed Forces families before, during and after deployment.

We are concerned that FAMCAS 2018 data suggests that more families who moved whilst undergoing hospital treatment experienced difficulties in continuation of care this year compared to those in 2015 (**'60% of families who moved in 2015 whilst undergoing hospital treatment did not experience difficulties in comparison to 46% of families who moved in 2018 whilst undergoing hospital treatment did not experience difficulties'**²). The Families Federations seek a renewed focus in this area to ensure the continuation of treatment across the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), especially for those family members with complex medical needs who require multi-disciplinary support.

² Source: FAMCAS 2018 www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index

Access to dental services is an ongoing issue for families in certain locations – particularly our most remote stations and units. We are aware of a solution in one area but sadly this does not seem to be replicable in others, despite efforts from the AFC Partnership and the CCG. Evidence continues to indicate that the transfer of orthodontic treatment between practitioners also remains problematic and we encourage more effective tracking of this medical provision for Service families.

Education

There have been some significant achievements in education delivery for our Service children during this period.

The Federations have worked closely as board members and key stakeholders of SCISS (Service Children In State Schools) and SCiP Alliance (Service Children's Progression Alliance) and together, continue to deliver results to ensure that those working within education fully understand how best to support Service children. We welcomed the invitation to join the Scottish Service Children Strategy Group (SSCSG) this year and look forward to working with the Group and with the Royal Caledonian Education Trust as they develop their support to Service children in Scotland over the coming months.

The Directorate of Children and Young People (DCYP) guidance to schools on how to spend their Service Pupil Premium (SPP) funding continues to be used effectively in certain areas, but we have had a mixed response from parents who have raised the issue of how SPP is being used within their children's schools. Some schools require further support to ensure SPP is used to best effect. In particular we would like to see additional guidance and case studies of effective practice provided to schools with low numbers of Service pupils (noting these are the majority of schools receiving SPP) and from those schools supporting older children.

Schools have told us they continue to be challenged by funding constraints, so we were particularly heartened at the announcement of the continuation of the Education Support Fund (ESF) for the next two academic years. We look forward to learning more about how the fund is to be allocated to address difficulties caused by exceptional mobility and deployment.

We welcome the changes to the Common Transfer File (CTF) which now expands on the information captured on Service children; we request that this is further developed to include a 'pupil voice' section to enable tailored pastoral support to be put in place if required. We recognise that these changes have not assisted with Service pupils moving from the Welsh to the English education system and note that only 11 out of 22 Welsh local authorities currently ask whether a child is from a Service family on their admission form. We request that further work be undertaken to review how schools who are receiving Service children from the devolved administrations can be better supported.

There has been a distinct spike in school admissions issues being raised with the Families Federations over this period. Recent surveys undertaken by the Federations indicate that finding school places is a key source of anxiety for Service families. Working with the network of Armed Forces Covenant champions within local authorities has made it easier for us to engage directly with schools' admissions teams in order to work on a mutually acceptable solution, but we would like to see more research undertaken to determine why more families are now encountering problems and how this could be overcome.

In our Observations on the Annual Covenant Reports in 2016 and 2017, we requested changes to the Schools Admissions Code to create a fairer system for Service children who move frequently. We note that the MOD is reviewing its assignment policy to consider whether greater flexibility can be afforded to families who face particular challenges with school places and welcome the opportunity to support this review. Some families who have children with Special Educational Needs continue to face problems when they are posted, and we would look to work with the appropriate stakeholders to determine how this could be overcome.

Accommodation

Accommodation continues to be our most highly reported issue. Throughout the year the Families Federations have had continuing dialogue with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and Amey and whilst we acknowledge some aspects of their performance have progressed positively, our families wish to see a continued and sustained improvement following the problems encountered in previous years. FAMCAS 2018 reports that satisfaction

levels relating to maintenance/repair work of SFA/SSFA remain at the low levels reported in 2016 - we will seek assurances that the new maintenance contractor will be held to much higher standards and that families will see tangible improvements.

We are actively engaged with the MOD team who are developing Future Accommodation Model (FAM) policy and options and whilst we recognise the significant challenges to develop and deliver FAM, the concomitant effect that this uncertainty has on our people must be acknowledged. We will continue to represent our personnel and families as work progresses to ensure that their views are considered, particularly as each part of our Service community may have different opinions on future provision.

The Forces Help to Buy scheme has been a well-received initiative for many families and as such we would strongly endorse its extension past the current December 2018 deadline. If it is not planned to extend this service, we urge the MOD to consider replacing it with a similar scheme, especially as FAM will most likely encourage more home ownership amongst the Armed Forces community.

The Families Federations have highlighted concerns before regarding the poor condition of some of the Single Living Accommodation (SLA) stock which can often be exacerbated by Grade 1 and 4 being occupied by personnel on the same unit. We continue to receive negative reports and evidence on the condition of this part of the defence estate, including workplace infrastructure. We are keen to ensure, during this transient time for Service accommodation as a whole, that SLA occupants also see a marked and equitable improvement in their accommodation.

The Annual Covenant Report 2017 reported movement on the issue of divorced or separated spouses being recognised as having a local connection when applying for social housing. Following continued focus by the Army Families Federation this year, we understand that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will very shortly be consulting on new statutory guidance for local authorities to achieve this. This is a very positive step and we hope that this provision is swiftly implemented to prevent more vulnerable families being unfairly impacted.

Family Life

There have been some significant developments for families in Scotland with the creation of the 'Welcome to Scotland Guide for Service families' which should help arriving families settle quicker. There has also been investment (via Covenant Funding) in two charities to develop support to adult and young carers within the Service family – it would be useful to be able to identify more Armed Forces families in this situation to ensure they are receiving the assistance they may require.

Childcare, and the difficulties our families face in this area, has been discussed for at least two years with seemingly little progress. Access to good quality, affordable childcare is a key issue for many families, especially single parents and dual-serving families who face unique challenges. The investment in infrastructure mentioned in the report is welcome but has not improved the situation in all areas. It is becoming increasingly difficult to reassure our families that the subject is still receiving the attention it deserves. Whilst we note that this issue is mentioned again in this year's report and that the Service People Policy Group continues to work on this issue, we seek further clarification on the options being considered.

Our Foreign and Commonwealth (F&C) families face a significant number of additional challenges. The Families Federations have continued to highlight a number of issues, including the online visa application process, student finance and refunds for health surcharge payments, and we note progress on some of these issues in the last few months.

We are pleased to see that gaining exemption for dependents to attend a passport interview is included in the Table of Commitments and look forward to this being resolved by the end of the year. It is vital that clear information about visas, costs and the Minimum Income Requirement is provided for personnel and families before they join the Armed Forces and throughout their Service. It is disappointing that a significant number of F&C families are still waiting to be reimbursed for incorrectly charged fees and the remaining errors on the online visa application process still need to be addressed. We would like to see an additional commitment of support for this cohort of families; particularly as the recruitment of F&C personnel increases.

The Families Federations are committed to ensuring that spouses of our Service Personnel are able to access quality employment opportunities commensurate with their skills, qualifications and experience wherever possible. Earlier this year the Army Families Federation commissioned in-depth spousal employment research alongside Warwick Institute for Employment Research. We are delighted that the MOD has shown a commitment to the Families Federations' establishment of an employment platform and we look forward to developing the platform and working with policy makers and businesses who have signed up to the Covenant to improve the employment landscape for our military spouses.

Following the Families Federations' work with the MOD, the change to the College of Policing vetting guidance to prevent entitled family members failing the residency requirement for entry as a result of an overseas posting, is a welcome development. We request further work with other public sector organisations to adjust their vetting processes in the same way to ensure that spouses and partners are not disadvantaged.

Through-Life Support

The Families Federation tri-Service report on Families in Transition is due to be published in November 2018 and is the culmination of two years' work focussing on the experiences of and potential challenges faced by the whole family during transition. We anticipate that the report's recommendations will support the work being undertaken by the MOD on the Holistic Transition Policy and we look forward to seeing how both can be mutually implemented over the next twelve months.

We welcome the Higher Education Armed Forces Service Leavers' scheme and request this excellent initiative is more widely publicised to benefit a greater number of Service Personnel.

Business and the Community

We note the work being undertaken to support employment opportunities for the Armed Forces community within business, especially from Defence Relationship Management (DRM) Employer Recognition Scheme Gold and Silver award winners. There is much focus on the employment of Service Leavers and Veterans and on supporting Reservists in the workforce; we will champion our work in support of spouses amongst the corporate sector.

Our participation at Covenant partner conferences in areas such as Lincolnshire and Norfolk were particularly powerful and well attended this year, with defined action plans to ensure the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) is integral to policy and that the partnership has a clear direction of travel. There remains some diversity in the approach and delivery of the AFC across areas of the UK and we welcome further ways of ensuring that those local authorities who require additional assistance are given the guidance needed - particularly after the funded Covenant Project Officer appointments begin to reach the end of their term.

Conclusion

There have been some significant achievements this year to reduce disadvantage for our families through considerable efforts by many dedicated organisations. However, further work is needed in some areas to ensure the Armed Forces Covenant continues to be meaningful for personnel and families.

The Families Federations have been consulted regularly by the MOD and other government departments on matters affecting military families, and we are pleased that our knowledge and research is valued in this way.

Finally, we recognise the significant contribution that our families make towards the delivery of operational capability by the Armed Forces and know that much of what is achieved by those in uniform is possible because of the support that comes from their families.

Cobseo – The Confederation of Service Charities

The Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2018 provides a comprehensive summary of the increasing number of cross Government Covenant initiatives being instigated to support the Armed Forces and Veterans community, many in collaboration with the Service Charity Sector. Analysis of their outcomes is improving, too, and our comments here focus primarily on where more remains to be done.

Role of the Service Charities Sector

This year's Report comes against a backdrop of austerity with Cobseo Members reporting a reduction in provision, particularly at local government level. The already significant role played by the Service Charities Sector in supporting delivery of the Covenant is likely to grow. Scope remains to record the extent of that support more fully in the Report and it would be helpful for Ministers to highlight the contribution made by the Sector.

Sustainability of the Sector

Along with the rest of the Third Sector, Cobseo Members also face significant financial challenge in the years to come, just when there is both a growing expectation of charitable support and evidence of growing and increasingly complex need. Charities will need to work hard to sustain and, where possible, improve income and to cut costs at a time when regulatory costs are increasing and public trust is falling. Cobseo's strategic objectives, to promote the highest standards of governance across the Sector in order to retain the trust of the Nation and to support efficiency and rationalisation, are at the heart of this. It will also be increasingly important to ensure all Covenant initiatives, however delivered, are sustainable and lead to maximum impact as cost effectively as possible. Covenant reporting mechanisms will need not only to demonstrate how organisations rise successfully to the challenge and sustain impact, but also how lessons are learned from initiatives, which have limited or short-term impact.

The Veterans Strategy

Those Cobseo Members on the MOD Service Charities Partnership Board pressed for a Veterans Strategy, and its publication is timely. We look forward to engaging closely in the public consultation and contributing to its delivery in due

course, as the Strategy shapes and guides the support provided to Veterans and their families. Delivery of the Strategy will involve the continuing close collaboration of the Sector and Government.

Collaboration and Coordination

We welcome the wider engagement of Government Departments, Devolved Administrations, Local Authorities, and other organisations in Covenant delivery. The MCVB and CRG now provide cross-Government high level strategic direction, guidance, and oversight, but scope remains to improve coordination at an operational level and delivery at a local level. The FiMT study 'Our Community – Our Covenant' provides important pragmatic guidance on how progress can be made. The MOD suggestion that policy representatives attend Cobseo Clusters is a welcome step forward, too, but there is still work to be done through improved coordination to ensure the full engagement of Local Authorities and other key agencies with the MOD and the Service Charity Sector, both in planning and delivery.

Foreign & Commonwealth

The Report helpfully acknowledges the challenges faced by Foreign and Commonwealth serving personnel and their families and highlights the steps already taken to address them. Whilst these measures, which involve increased capacity to deal with problems around visas and potential policy changes, are welcome, they have yet to take effect. Foreign and Commonwealth serving personnel and their families are as of now not well supported. We will be monitoring the progress of the planned initiatives over the coming months. Less progress has been made, though, to tackle the wider issue of F&C personnel who have served in HM Forces and are now resident overseas. At a time of increasing recruitment in this area, recognising the value of F&C personnel and putting in place measures to ensure F&C serving personnel, Veterans, and their families are not disadvantaged and are treated equitably, is becoming a significant priority, which the Service Charity Sector is meeting with limited support from Government. Post-service support in particular will become increasingly important and will be seen as a significant recruitment incentive, mitigating the risk of recruiting and retention failure.

Comment by Chapter

Governance

Elsewhere in the Report, reference is made to the Veterans Strategy; it would be helpful to understand how reporting against the Strategy will be integrated with the Governance mechanisms for the Covenant.

Healthcare

The Report summarises well the growing range of healthcare initiatives, and Members report growing confidence in key elements for veterans, including the Veterans Trauma Network and The Veterans Covenant Health Alliance, and for serving personnel, including the MOD Fast Track pathway in Wales. The latter is of interest since, whilst primarily devised to increase deployability, there are benefits to the individual beyond operational output which might be rolled out more widely. Reporting overall, too, is more straightforward although the metrics (p30-32) refer mostly to access and waiting times. While these are important quantitative measures, they are not qualitative, and the one qualitative measure for serving personnel (Table 1) reports satisfaction levels at nearly 10% below the level reported by the general population. Additionally, as almost all secondary care comes from the NHS, it would be useful to gauge patient satisfaction across this area as well, and it would be good to see the outcome data on the services delivered by the various NHS organisations.

We would make two further points:

- The creation of the Defence National Recovery Centre at Stanford Hall following the relocation of Hedley Court, presents a national opportunity. Limited access for complex amputee Veterans, who the NHS cannot cope with will continue but eligibility is tight. It is not yet clear whether NHSE and/or regional NHS will commit to the enterprise but until they do, we understand there will be no assured access for Veterans or citizens to this state of the art facility. Veterans with attributable injuries are eligible for priority treatment but only within clinical need, and this could still mean significant wait and the possible underutilisation of this new facility. There is a great opportunity to lift rehabilitation to a level close to the excellent trauma surgery we have in the country.

- The Sector is stepping in more to relieve hardship and assist with the extra cost of disabled living; Blesma's cost in this regard have gone up 46% over the last 4 years. It is also taking longer for Local Authorities to act in the distribution of their statutory provision. Assessments for example are taking longer and the delay causes distress, so the Sector is stepping in here too.

Accommodation

The Report talks in positive terms about an 'improving delivery picture', acknowledges that the 'lived experience' is different, and refers to a range of measures to deliver improvement. Yet the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey quoted in the Report is clear, and 49% of serving personnel consider their experience unsatisfactory, which is a deeply worrying position. The satisfaction percentages in relation to maintenance are, it would seem, also at the lowest for at least 8 years with over 70% of those serving personnel surveyed reporting that they are dissatisfied. This is a shocking figure. The problem is one of underinvestment over many years and it would be helpful if the Report acknowledged this reality with greater openness and clarity.

The Report also contains limited coverage of Service Leavers and Veterans accommodation issues. The majority of Service Personnel move into civilian accommodation with relative ease when they leave but there is an important minority who do not, and further support is needed beyond the Help to Buy scheme, which is coming to an end. The recent Call to Action on Veterans' homelessness launched on behalf of the Cobseo Housing Cluster (<https://s22009.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/Call-to-Action.pdf>) highlighted Transition as one of the main reasons behind Veterans' homelessness. This is a theme we would wish to see covered in the forthcoming Veterans Strategy under the potential banner of the Housing Transition Partnership.

We also envisage that the proposed move away from SFA, the greater use of private rental, and the paucity of Social Housing, will lead to the Sector facing increasing numbers of requests for assistance from a minority of families occupying private rental accommodation, which is usually unfurnished.

Inquests and Judicial Engagement

The Report highlights that 90% of deaths in the Troubles in Northern Ireland were caused by terrorists, and states that Veterans should not be disproportionately investigated. It would be helpful to supply some comparative statistics to ensure that this is in fact the case. Anecdotal evidence would seem to indicate that Veterans are indeed being subjected to greater scrutiny.

Through-Life Support

Transition & Employment. We welcome the new Defence Holistic Transition Policy, which rightly recognises that transition is much wider than employment-based resettlement. We are keen to see this expanded to reflect the need to start transition early in a military career and continue for some time after discharge. We support the idea of other 'domains' of transition, but these now need to be fleshed out and the resources necessary will need to be identified for this to be effective. Currently the MOD and other Government Departments have very little in place to support this. We see value in the Defence Transition Services for those who need most help, but for this to be effective much of the Service needs to take place before discharge, not after. Focussing solely on Veterans' employment, there is little of substance in the Report, yet the level of demand on military charities continues to increase despite the overall positive employment figures. Research might usefully be put in place to establish the numbers and causes.

Financial Compensation. The issue of appeals being lodged with the Respondent organisation ie the MOD rather than direct with the Tribunal has been raised in Cobseo observations on previous reports. In all other cases appeals are lodged with the appropriate Tribunal, so called Direct Lodgement. The problem with the current process is that it can be perceived as lacking independence and objectivity. Since 1 January 2018 a trial has been running in Scotland and whilst there have been a few teething problems our understanding is that it has been working well. In last year's report it was stated that Direct Lodgement would be introduced in England and Wales subject to a slot being found in the MOJ reform programme. More recently we note that the time frame referred to is 2019/20. We would urge that the time frame is brought forward in order to confirm the independence of the process and address geographical disadvantage.

Support for the Vulnerable

Social Care. The Report carries little in respect of the Social care provision for Veterans, which encompasses a wide spectrum of services; support in one's own home for working age injured or disabled Veterans, respite care, through to residential care for older Veterans living with a range of health conditions. As an example, it is estimated that 40,000 Veterans will be living with dementia by 2020. In line with the wider population, Veterans are accessing residential care services later in life with increasingly complex care needs. Veterans regularly report difficulty in accessing high quality care in their local area; specialist provision in both the military and general social care sector is limited, and availability of statutory funding is under significant pressure. Many Veterans rely on charitable provision and support. It is becoming essential that Local Authorities ensure that the Veteran community can access appropriate services locally, especially when their disability or health needs can be directly attributed to their period of service.

Homelessness. We welcome the inclusion from 2018 of a Veterans box on the H-CLIC form, which means that Local Authorities have to ask the question. This is a significant step in enabling Local Authorities to meet their Covenant obligations and will also give the Sector much more consistent data around homelessness amongst the Veterans community in the UK.

The Royal British Legion

The Royal British Legion welcomes this year's Covenant Annual Report and the progress identified therein. We are particularly pleased to note, following the Legion's 'Count Them In' campaign, the further steps taken to securing a question in the next census on the Armed Forces community, including the positive recommendation by the National Records of Scotland. We look forward to similar progress in the rest of the UK.

Healthcare

We continue to be concerned about the implementation of the policy of priority treatment. Issues persist around lack of awareness and understanding, inconsistency of and inability to measure implementation, and a lack of clarity about the interpretation of the policy by government.

We are delighted to see a commitment to a cross-government strategy to tackle alcohol misuse in Veterans, which was a recommendation in the Legion's 2015 manifesto. The Legion maintains its view on the desirability of further research on the effective treatment of Gulf War Illnesses.

Education

We welcome the continuation of the Educational Support Fund and the recognition of the benefits it provides, and also welcome the progress on Service Pupil Premium (SPP) data being updated by schools more regularly than once a year. In Wales we continue to maintain that SPP should be available and that Service children should be identified via the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC). We noted with interest the report and recommendations by the Children's Commissioner for England on Service children's experiences, in particular the concern that it is still possible, where both parents are serving, for them to deploy at the same time.

Accommodation

We look forward to responding to the MHCLG consultation on the Legion's recommendation to remove the local connection test for divorced and separated spouses accessing housing support, and also hope that this move is replicated across the UK. We also welcome the new requirements under the Homelessness Reduction Act and would like to see a commitment to publish data on local authority recording of the number of Service Personnel and Veterans accessing homelessness services.

Family Life

The Legion is glad to have been able to play its part in highlighting the nature of loneliness and social isolation in the Armed Forces community and welcomes the reference to our research in the report. We would like to see progress on our recommendations for national and local government on this topic.

We also support the recommendations of the recent report on the needs of Commonwealth personnel and families and in particular addressing concerns on the Minimum Income Threshold and immigration costs.

Through-Life Support

The Legion notes the proposed new Defence Transition policy and looks forward to further details on its scope, services and timetable for introduction.

Whilst we welcome the tariff changes to the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, we were disappointed that a number of the recommendations made by the Quinquennial Review were rejected. We continue to maintain that military compensation for social care means tests should be disregarded in Northern Ireland, as is now the case in the rest of the UK. We note that military compensation will be disregarded under Universal Credit, but until that is fully rolled out, we would like to see a full disregard for War Pensioners claiming Employment Support Allowance.

Business and the community

We welcome the report analysing take-up of the Covenant by business and other non-governmental organisations. We would like to see the development of guidelines that such organisations can implement in order to support their delivery of these pledges.

We are glad to see the progress that many local authorities are making on Covenant pledges, although there is still considerable inconsistency in delivery. We look forward to the introduction of the self-assessment tool and evaluation of recent Covenant Local Grants.

The Legion was glad to play its part in this year's commemorative events, including delivery of RAF100 and the culmination of the First World War Centenary.





CHAPTER 1 – GOVERNANCE

Oversight and accountability

Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board

The 2017 report announced the creation of the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board, with the aim of providing strategic direction and driving delivery of Covenant priorities across Government. The Board's immediate priority was to improve the means of measuring how support is being provided to the Armed Forces community under the Covenant. The 2018 report goes some way towards addressing this with the inclusion of new metrics covering social housing, healthcare, education and employment. However, Government Departments and the Devolved Administrations continue to consider how to improve the quality and increase the number of ways in which we can measure the delivery of Covenant policy.

In April, the Ministerial Board commissioned the MOD to produce a cross-government Veterans Strategy to set the vision and principles for ensuring our Veterans are supported to continue to give their best to society.

The appointment of lead Ministers for Covenant and Veterans issues (Annex B) in Westminster and the Devolved Administrations³ has raised the profile of the Covenant across Government and helped to progress key areas of work such as how we can improve access to social housing for the Armed Forces community and provide further support to families with Service children applying for school places.

A cross-government approach

From this year onwards, in response to a recommendation by the Defence Select Committee, Departments contributing to the annual report will provide clearance of their input through their Ministers. This new requirement reinforces that the Covenant is a policy owned and delivered by the whole of Government, on behalf of the nation and that providing effective support to the Armed Forces community demands a collective effort.

Communication remains critical to the successful delivery of the Covenant, and it is a priority for HMG under the Government Communication Service campaign priority of 'a more caring society'. The MOD continues to chair the quarterly cross-government Covenant Communications Working Group which includes representation and input from the Service Charities, Families Federations and Devolved Administrations, to promote and collaborate on co-ordinated communications activity.

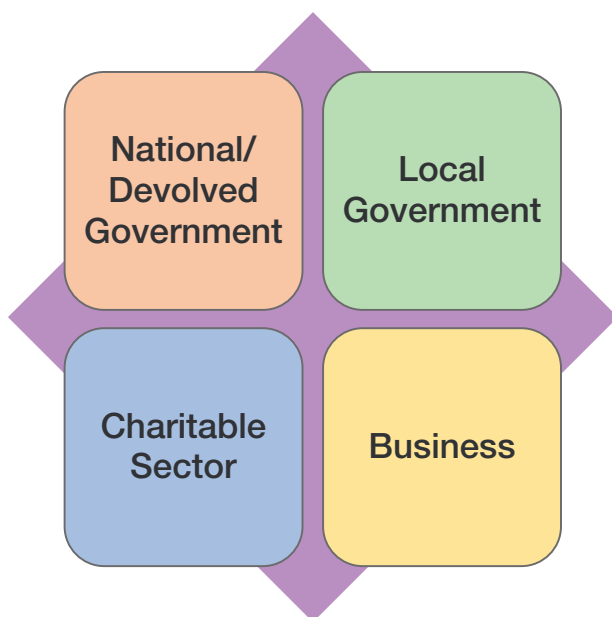
The 2017 refreshed Cross-Government Covenant Communications Strategy is being implemented by MOD and other key government departments and many significant milestones have been delivered or are in progress. The aim of the Strategy is to increase understanding and awareness of the Covenant across the whole of UK society, particularly among the Armed Forces community as beneficiaries. Implementation has included national and regional media coverage, social media, videos, blogs, intranet and internal publications to highlight Covenant signings, policy announcements and Ministerial visits.

³ The situation in NI has led to the delivery of the AFC being channelled through the VSO(NI) which engages, in tandem with the NIO, with communities and authorities across NI in a bespoke manner that optimises delivery of services to Veterans.

The Strategy is being evaluated using insight and evaluation of target audiences; Service Personnel, Veterans, families, commercial organisations, and the public. Data shows that awareness and understanding of the Covenant continues to gradually increase. The aim is to achieve a longer-term improvement in awareness and understanding. The MOD has also worked with YouGov and the Forces in Mind Trust to commission qualitative and quantitative research on public perceptions of Veterans and will use this insight to inform communications activity.

Partnering is the key to success

Below the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board, the Covenant Reference Group is the senior official-level meeting responsible for driving forward progress on Covenant commitments. The group has representation from central and local government, the Devolved Administrations and the Charitable Sector. At the working level, there are various groups which ensure that those providing services to the Armed Forces community are represented within the governance of the Covenant.



Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust

ARMED FORCES COVENANT FUND TRUST

Independent status

In April 2018, the Covenant Fund moved from the MOD to become an independent charity, the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. The Trust operates from small offices in London and has already launched two major programmes; and a new online application process to make it easier for organisations to apply for funding.

History of the Fund

During its first three years, the Covenant Fund has provided support to the whole of the Armed Forces community, through the provision of ambitious, large-scale projects that change the way we approach the provision of services down to small grants encouraging communities to get together. Figure 1 illustrates the spread of funding across the three years.

Research

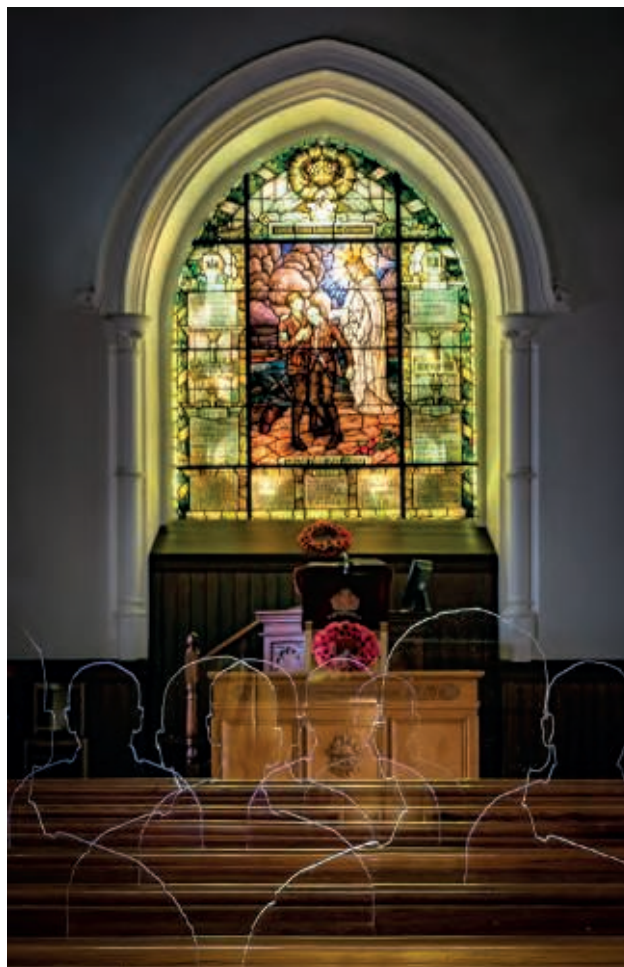
The University of Northumbria's Covenant-funded 'Map of Need' project is helping to build a full picture of the needs of the Armed Forces community (including families and Reservists). As new data-sets continue to be added and previous data is revisited, a more detailed, insightful picture emerges, showing the changing situation. The project is helping to better identify the emerging needs within the Armed Forces community to support the development of programmes under the £10 million per annum Covenant Fund and is already proving to be of wider use for Government and the Charitable Sector. For example, it is helping to identify the locations of Service Families with children, using pupil premium data.

Current programmes

The [Armistice and Armed Forces Communities](#) programme makes small awards to support the commemoration of the end of the First World War in 1918 by bringing communities together to think about the Armed Forces today as well as giving guidance on how to promote the Armed Forces Covenant. During 2018, over 2,600 awards were made to community groups, with further awards made in the run up to November 2018, helping to spread the Covenant message within communities across the nation.

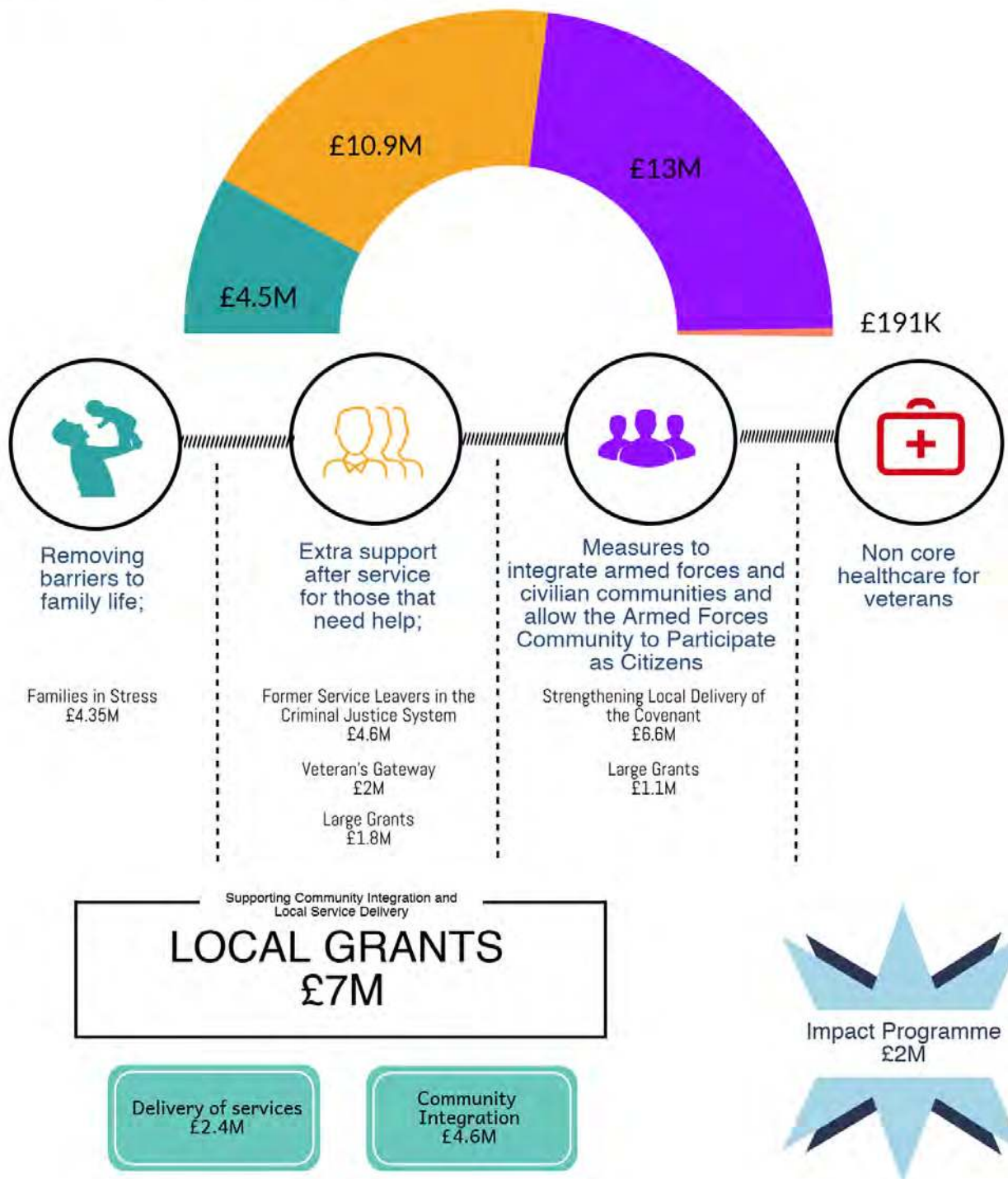
The [£4 million 'New Ways to Tackle Serious Stress in Veterans, Carers and Families'](#) programme will make a small number of large grants to enable new and better ways of supporting Veterans who are very unwell, and those who are supporting them.

The popular [Armed Forces Covenant Local Grants](#) programme has continued into its fourth year, making grants of up to £20,000 to support projects that either promote integration between Armed Forces and civilian communities, or help to bring Armed Forces Families and civilian families closer together. In the first three years of the Local Grants programme [430 grants worth £7 million](#) have been made to charities, schools and military bases for local projects; many of which support children and families. Of these, 32 grants worth £509,000 have been made to schools for projects that offer extra support where it is needed to children from Service Families.



Armed Forces Covenant Fund Grants: The First 3 Years

ARMED FORCES
COVENANT
FUND TRUST







CHAPTER 2 – HEALTHCARE

Healthcare across the UK

Achievements in the healthcare sector during 2018 show a common focus on improving the ‘lived experience’ for the individual and providing effective treatment options, regardless of the provider. This is being achieved through cross-organisational working, raising awareness of issues faced by the Armed Forces community and improving communication to Service Personnel, families and Veterans about the services available and how they vary between regions.

Consistency of standards

Care Quality Commission inspections

In May 2017, Defence Medical Services agreed with the Care Quality Commission a programme of inspections of Defence Medical Treatment Facilities. The Commission’s annual report on the Defence inspections for 2017/18 is available on its website.

The report highlights innovative practice and identifies positive characteristics at the heart of high-quality military healthcare services. Where shortfalls in care have been highlighted, Defence has committed to addressing them to ensure our patients are receiving effective and safe care. This has involved a follow-up inspection programme to ensure the necessary improvements have been delivered. The majority of units that have been re-inspected by the Commission, so far, have progressed to an overall grade of ‘Good’.

Regional variation in healthcare services

Noting the concerns raised by the Families Federations in the 2017 report regarding regional variation, healthcare professionals and local service providers continue to work closely to mitigate any disadvantage to the Armed Forces community. The MOD and UK Departments of Health Partnership Board is focused on delivering its obligations under the Covenant and improving the health and healthcare of the UK Armed Forces before, during and after deployment, and of their families and Veterans. The Board is co-chaired by the MOD’s Surgeon General and the Department of Health and Social Care’s Director of Acute Care with representatives from the Devolved Administrations and NHS England. The Board is in the process of taking steps to improve representation for each patient group: Serving, Veteran, and family member; in order to improve understanding of the effect of decisions made on the end user. To that effect, the Army Families Federation (representing all three service family organisations) is now a Board member and will attend future meetings. In addition, a representative from the Personnel Recovery Unit will attend the next meeting in November with a view to them acting as a serving personnel representative. Veteran representation has also been improved through the addition of the Chair of the Medical Advisory Committee to Cobseo.

A community approach

Working in partnership is as important at a local level as it is at national level. Jointly initiated by local healthcare delivery leaders, who recognised an opportunity to improve the way health and healthcare services were delivered in Catterick and surrounding area, the **Catterick Integrated Care Centre** concept is a good example of this. Based on a joint MOD and NHS development approach, providing for both the military and civilian community, it is driven by the need to renew the current condition of the military and civilian medical estate. The vision is to build a new centre in the heart of the community that provides healthcare services to the town but also provides the focal point for a community hub and the opportunity for the integration of additional services.

Following detailed stakeholder engagement, a location has been identified for the site in Catterick town centre and an Assessment Study is underway to develop building plans and designs for the centre.

Wider duty of care

The provision of healthcare to serving personnel covers a wide range of injuries and conditions, with varying impact to the Service person and their family. The **NHS England Armed Forces Patient and Public Participation and Involvement Group** recognises this. The group aims to gather the “lived patient experience” to inform and improve military and civilian health provision and identify areas in which Armed Forces patients and their families are impacted by their Service. Meetings are themed around different clinical conditions and are held around the country to allow patients and families to attend and tell their story. A representative from HQ Joint Medical Group Strategic Commissioning Team attends each meeting.

Specialist healthcare - Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre

Relocation to Stanford Hall

The most specialised types of treatment, such as that provided by the world-class rehabilitation service at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre, cannot be provided locally. Relocated from Headley Court, the new purpose-built facility at Stanford Hall Estate near Loughborough, offers treatment and rehabilitation to Service Personnel suffering from traumatic injuries sustained during Service. The new site, gifted to the nation by the Duke of Westminster, is close to both the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine and the University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, the main receiving hospital for UK military casualties. The proximity enables the joint provision of care that is required during the complex rehabilitation pathway.

Biomechanics

New equipment available at Stanford Hall includes a state-of-the-art Computer Assisted Rehabilitation Environment system. This system is the world's most advanced biomechanics lab incorporating a 360-degree Virtual Reality environment, and is the first of its kind in Europe. It will be used in the rehabilitation and therapy of personnel for a wide range of conditions, including brain and spinal injuries, neurological disorders and amputations.

Prosthetics

The Complex Prosthetic Assessment Clinic was introduced at Headley Court in 2016 for the small number of Veterans with particularly challenging prosthetic needs. All admissions to the clinic are on a case-by-case basis, following referral from NHS Disability Centres. Since its inception, the clinic has seen 40 individual patients, six of whom have subsequently been treated under the LIBOR-funded Direct Skeletal Fixation technique. This involves the insertion of a titanium implant into the bone, eliminating the need for traditional socket-based technology. As the prosthetic is anchored directly to the bone, it offers greater freedom from the limitations and complications commonly associated with socket-based prosthetic systems.



Computer Assisted Rehabilitation Environment system, Stanford Hall.

Supporting those with a significant illness

It is important to recognise that as well as the treatment of conditions associated with Service, as with the wider population, some within the Armed Forces community suffer from serious illness. The Defence Personnel with a Significant Illness project aims to best support the needs of those Service Personnel and their families, either diagnosed with a significant illness, or with caring responsibilities in the Service Family. The project looks to achieve this by producing policy and tools which support the chain of command and Service person to meet the needs of the person, family and Service. This informed and flexible approach seeks to aid the person diagnosed in their 'journey' from point of presentation, through diagnosis, treatment, recovery and back into worthwhile Service employment where achievable, while considering all aspects of health and wellbeing throughout. The policy will aim to provide management guidance, consistency and equity across Defence where due to the

infrequent nature of significant illness, the chain of command and management do not always know how to interact, manage and support those with a significant illness compared to those with physical injuries. While most employers are sympathetic, a reliance on compassion and good judgement is not enough and leads to inconsistent treatment.

The CanDiD Network has been established to connect and support Service Personnel, their dependants and Veterans up to seven years post transition diagnosed with, or caring for persons diagnosed with, a life-changing or life-limiting condition, impairment or disability. Supported by the Armed Forces Disability Champion, CanDiD aims to meet the needs of members, their families, and the Services, while driving inclusive behaviour and positive cultural change.

Mental Healthcare

Holistic mental health

The [Defence People Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) launched in 2017 seeks to address the needs of the whole of Defence People including Regulars and Reserves, Veterans, and Service Families. There are four overlapping areas of activity: Promote, Prevent, Detect and Treat. The Defence Medical Services is responsible for the Treat component of the strategy and has developed a Defence Mental Health Services Delivery Plan which will play a pivotal role in meeting this requirement. The delivery plan has four aims: to enhance recruitment; reduce reliance on temporary healthcare workers; make use of innovative clinical practice; and develop unified care pathways across the MOD's Departments of Community Mental Health.

£2 million of additional funding for military mental health services over the next ten years was announced this year, on top of the £20 million a year already committed which will be used to both deliver the plan and embed the improvements. Addressing suicide rates within Service Personnel, a four month Defence-focused review on suicide prevention highlighted 20 recommendations which the Department is taking forward. In September this year the MOD and the Samaritans jointly launched a pocket guide: *Suicide prevention and Peer Support within the Armed Forces*.

Reaching those in need

While the statistics indicate that the mental health of Service Personnel compares favourably with that of the general population, for some people, Service can lead to traumatic experiences which can have a lasting impact. The Combat Stress 24-Hour Mental Health Helpline (0800 323 4444) for serving personnel and their families was launched on 25 February 2018. During the first six months of operation the helpline received nearly 1,000 calls. This is an average of 38 calls per week or five calls per day.

Recognising that raising awareness and reducing the stigma around mental health is critical in improving access, the MOD continues to promote the helpline. Initiatives have included the use of posters and social media during Mental Health Awareness Week, the insertion of a message into Armed Forces pay slips, and the distribution of 90,000 wallet cards to nearly 400 UK defence establishments.

Changing cultural expectations

Understanding the pressures on Service Personnel, the cultural expectations of Service life and how these can manifest themselves is vital in supporting our people and has a direct positive impact on operational readiness. Recent analysis indicates that alcohol misuse may be one area where targeted intervention could have a positive impact. Defence Statistics reports that 61% of UK Regular Armed Forces personnel who completed AUDIT-C⁴, were potentially at increasing risk or above of alcohol-related harm. This was higher than the UK general population at 44%. Increasing risk is taken to mean three glasses of wine twice a week or four pints of beer on one occasion in a month. Gender comparisons of alcohol consumption at dangerous levels showed that 63% of male Service Personnel were at risk compared to 46% for females.

In response to these findings, in April the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board commissioned collaborative work to review the services and treatment available to the Armed Forces community for incidences of alcohol misuse. The Army have recently undertaken a pilot evidence-based conversation intervention initiative – the Military Alcohol Brief Intervention. The Department of Health and Social Care is in the process of developing a joint plan with Public Health England and NHS England, with cross-government support, to ensure 'Covenant-aware' rehabilitation services are available for alcohol misuse in Veterans.

⁴ Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT-C): A 3 question self-reported alcohol screening tool recommended for use by the WHO that can help identify individuals who may be at increased risk from their drinking habits

Healthcare in England

Partnership working

The MOD and NHS England have recently refreshed a National Partnership Agreement which sets out how they will work together to achieve the aim of ensuring safe and effective care which delivers value for money, improves health outcomes for the Armed Forces community, and supports the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Veterans mental health

Transition Intervention and Liaison Services

Launched in 2017, the NHS Veterans' Mental Health Transition Intervention and Liaison Service continues to be effective in treating Veterans' mental health. The service acts as a front door to a variety of healthcare experts and is available to Veterans and those serving personnel approaching the end of their time in the Armed Forces. During the first 15 months of the service, 3,514 referrals were received, with 74.3% deemed appropriate for an initial face-to-face assessment. More work is underway to meet access targets, which were intentionally challenging based on patient feedback, in order to demonstrate the commitment to providing a priority service to Veterans; the latest information shows that 86% of patients who attended a clinical appointment in June 2018 did so within 28 days of their referral. Of those assessed as to be seen within the service, 99.8% then attended a clinical appointment. In order to provide flexibility where needed, referrals to the service can be made by GPs, military charities, and via self-referral.

Complex Treatment Service

In April 2018, the NHS Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service was launched; the natural next step to the Transition Intervention and Liaison Service. Informed by the views of Veterans and their families, this is an enhanced local community-based service for Veterans who have military attributable complex mental health problems that have not been resolved earlier in the care or support pathway.

The service provides a range of intensive care and treatment that may include (but is not limited to) support for substance misuse, physical health, employment, accommodation, relationships

and finances, as well as occupational and trauma-focused therapies. Since the launch of Complex Treatment Service, 120 patients have been referred via the Transition Intervention and Liaison Service, with 94% being accepted. 400 appointments have been delivered to Veterans by a range of clinical psychologists, community psychiatric nurses, psychiatrists, and other staff.

Veterans Trauma Network

The Veterans Trauma Network continues to provide a vital service for Veterans requiring on-going NHS care due to medical problems arising from their time in uniform. 83 Veterans have been referred to the service as of August 2018. The referrals have ranged from complex injuries through to medical conditions. Many have chronic pain and mental health issues in addition to their medical problems. The network provides the full range of holistic care available in local services and any Veteran-bespoke mental health services, with a direct line to both the Transition Intervention and Liaison and Complex Treatment Services.

Clinical awareness and collaborative working

Learning and accreditation

The Royal College of GPs and NHS England pilot of Veterans' awareness GP accreditation programme has seen a successful uptake, with over 90 GP practices joining the pilot in the West Midlands area and another 47 expected.

E-learning Modules provided by Health Education England continue to be an effective method of improving clinical awareness among healthcare professionals, with almost 11,500 users registered overall, approximately 4,000 of which registered during 2018.

Work has begun with the Royal College of Psychiatrists to improve awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and it is hoped that, similar to the Royal College of General Practitioners, it will include learning modules on the Armed Forces community as part of their membership exam.

Furthermore, best practice guides for therapists providing talking therapies as part of the National Improved Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) Programme, will be updated.

Veterans Covenant Hospital Alliance

The Veterans Covenant Hospital Alliance (VCHA) has continued its own accreditation programme, working with NHS Improvement to bring together a group of acute NHS hospitals who showcase the best standard of care for Veterans and the Armed Forces community, in line with the commitments set out in the Armed Forces Covenant. The Alliance is

supporting a pilot group of 27 hospitals across the country seeking to become 'Veteran Aware', with eight of those hospitals ready or nearly ready for accreditation. Clinicians and managers from Alliance hospitals held a workshop this year to further develop the initiative ahead of a planned launch in November 2018.

VCHA Case Study: Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals

Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals serve a population of 420,000, employing 6,500 staff across four hospital sites. The Trust joined the Alliance Clinical and Management champions.

The Trust looked to set up a 'Veteran-friendly' working group, inviting the Chair of the Doncaster Commissioning Group, who is himself a Veteran, and the Doncaster Council Stronger Communities Manager. It became clear that there was a huge amount of work ongoing within primary care, community services and social care – supported by the various charities.

Since then, the Trust has signed the Armed Forces Covenant and now sits on the Doncaster Veteran Steering Group and is engaging with all partners on the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Trust is now:

- Reviewing employment policies to make them more Veteran friendly.
- Developing an e-learning package to increase the awareness of all staff.
- Working with partners to identify patients who are Veterans or Service Families.
- Agreeing a 'so what' document and sharing this with Veterans, partners and staff.
- Identifying the patient experience team as a single point of access for Veterans and training this team to be aware of issues, which might be particularly challenging for Veterans, while increasing their awareness of where to direct Veterans and their families to get the support they might need.
- Linking communication teams across the Trust, CCG and local authority to develop a Veteran's section on the Trust website.
- Nominating a GP lead, who will link with the Clinical Champion to identify any health specific opportunities or support.

A key lesson for acute hospitals is to review what is happening in the local community before setting off on a particular path in respect of Veterans' services. The focus should be on linking networks and signposting Veterans and their families to the appropriate services.

Healthcare in Scotland

Scottish Veterans Commissioner's report

*The Scottish Veterans Commissioner's report: Veterans' health and well-being: a distinctive Scottish approach*⁵ was published on 24 April 2018. The report provides an assessment of the current provision of health and social care for Veterans in Scotland and a vision and framework for the future. The Scottish Government published its response to that report: *Support for Veterans and the Armed Forces community: report 2018*⁶ on 25 September 2018.

Mental Health Strategy

The Scottish Government continues to take forward the actions set out in its 10-year Mental Health Strategy to ensure people can get the right help at the right time, expect recovery, and fully enjoy their rights, free from discrimination and stigma. Many of the key themes and commitments will impact positively on Veterans and their families. The Strategy also highlights Scottish Government support for the ethos of the Armed Forces Covenant, and the key aim that no one should suffer disadvantage as a result of military Service.

Veterans First Point Network

The Scottish Government continues to fund the Veterans First Point Network which offers a one-stop-shop for Veterans no matter their need. Over £1.6 million will be provided over the next two years to 2020 in addition to investment by NHS Scotland.

Specialist mental health services

The Scottish Government in partnership with NHS Scotland and Combat Stress continues to provide funding of £4.2 million until 2021 for the provision of a range of specialist and **community-based services** for Veterans resident in Scotland.

Healthcare in Wales

Together for Mental Health

The Welsh Government's mental health strategy 'Together for Mental Health' gives a commitment of continued support to Veterans' NHS Wales.

Since it was set up in 2010, Veterans' NHS Wales has received over 3,500 referrals to the service. It aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Veterans in Wales, with the secondary aim of developing sustainable, accessible and effective services that meet the needs of those with mental health and wellbeing issues living in Wales. The Welsh Government provides annual funding of £685,000, to help improve access for 50% more Veterans to expert opinions and psychological treatments.

Furthermore, £500,000 funding from Help for Heroes has been secured which will pay for **three full time Veteran therapists for three years**. These new posts will be targeted at health boards with the longest waiting lists. It also gives Veterans and those who refer them increased contact with the service, allowing a more rapid response, expediting the referral to assessment time.

Veterans' NHS Wales is leading research into **Modular Motion-assisted Memory Desensitisation and Reconsolidation**, which is investigating whether this 'virtual reality' therapy can reduce symptoms of PTSD in treatment resistant Veterans and whether it is acceptable to them. This therapy builds on traditional talking therapy by adding virtual reality techniques including Veterans' choice of music, photographs and walking on a treadmill. The focus of the study is on Veterans who have not responded to, or are unable to engage with, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guideline PTSD treatments that are currently available. The study completes in August 2019.

The **Welsh mental health charity, Hafal**, has concluded its Wales-wide Forces for Change programme. Hafal's report highlights the value of the partnership working between Veterans' NHS Wales and the Change Step peer mentor support. The General Medical Services GP forms have been amended to include a question regarding the

⁵ <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/veterans-health-wellbeing-distinctive-scottish-approach/>

⁶ <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-support-veterans-armed-forces-community-scotland-autumn-2018/>

identification of Veterans by GPs to enable access to healthcare priority treatment.

Priority healthcare

The MOD Fast-track Pathway in Wales provides secondary and specialist care, prioritising access to treatments for Service Personnel who are actively serving but are currently graded as medically not deployable. The Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee spent £77,000 to support the Fast Track in 2017/18.

The partnership between Veterans NHS Wales and peer mentoring and support service Change Step marked a successful year in its work to help Veterans access crucial mental health treatment and support. Funding has allowed the appointment of a fulltime psychology graduate research assistant to assist with the training and mentoring of embedded Change Step Peer Supporters in six health boards. The initial 12 months of the project attracted 72 referrals from across North Wales, with 96% of patients demonstrating an improvement in at least one area of their lives.

Over the last year and with the support of the Royal British Legion, Change Step also delivered immediate peer mentoring support to 123 Veterans either facing, or at risk of facing health, housing or other crises.

In all, Change Step received more than 400 referrals during the year to March 2018 with 62% of Veterans reporting mental health issues (an increase of more than half on the previous year), 35% reporting social isolation, and 19% reporting substance misuse. A total of 13% had experienced co-occurring mental health and substance misuse conditions.

Change Step continues its work to combat social isolation amongst older Veterans as part of the Royal British Legion Aged Veterans programme, and in the spring published a comprehensive care and support guide.

The Welsh Government's free swimming scheme for serving personnel and Veterans has been extended until 2021. Aimed at supporting health and wellbeing amongst the Armed Forces community the Welsh Local Government Association will continue to monitor uptake of the scheme. In 2017/18 8,977 swims were recorded.

Case Study Davey Roberts “What have you got to lose?”

Davey Roberts served as a Royal Air Force engineer for 16 years. On his return to civilian life Davey forged a new career at a large transportation organisation, and began foster caring with his new partner.

But shortly afterwards he became ill. The family were no longer able to foster, and Davey was placed on long-term leave from work. Financial pressure began to mount and he became depressed, negative and lethargic. Davey was plagued by the memory of an urgent call to recover the body of a pilot involved in a high-velocity crash.

Despite his initial resistance, with the support of his family Davey contacted Veterans NHS Wales and received a formal diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. He was connected with a Change Step peer mentor, himself a former Royal Air Force serviceman.

The two Veterans met and shared some common ground and, alongside Davey's therapist, began to work on his recovery. Davey's journey back to health required a lot of hard work, but with the



help of his partners he was able to recognise that his body had shut down and was in flight- and able to use the new therapeutic techniques he had learnt to address his condition.

Before receiving support from Change Step and Veterans NHS Wales, Davey was cynical about the process and reluctant to talk about the feelings and experiences troubling him. Now he has a simple message to any Veteran experiencing similar issues: “Just try it, what have you got to lose? What's the other option, stay where you are?”

Working Together to Reduce Harm is the Welsh Government's Substance Misuse Delivery Plan. The Plan looks at both mental and physical wellbeing, while tackling substance misuse. Area Planning Boards are responsible for commissioning and delivery of services. During 2016/17 308 Veterans received treatment and support.

Healthcare in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the needs of Service Personnel and their families are being well met by services local to military establishments, with full GP services available within each station. Specialised needs continue to be addressed by the Armed Forces Liaison Forum. The forum continues to support practical application of the informally-agreed Protocol aimed at ensuring equitable access to health and social care services by members of the Armed Forces, families and Veterans. It is attended by both service representatives and the Veterans Support Office and considers access and delivery issues. The only service identified as lacking is that of IVF treatment, which requires continued liaison with healthcare services in the UK. Treatment for the one case that has arisen was provided by services in the family's home area in England.

Rehabilitation services are delivered as part of the Regional Disablement Service at Musgrave park hospital where all prostheses and subsequent rehabilitation needs are assessed on the basis of clinical need. Veterans are able to access state-of-the art microprocessor limbs, although individuals are taken to England for bone-to-bone treatment. Substantial progress has been made in designing and developing the Regional Trauma Network for Northern Ireland which will offer high quality, accessible and effective trauma care to any individual whose level of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is causing significant impact to their lives.

The Veterans Support Office in tandem with other bodies, is developing programmes that will pay particular attention to mental health needs. In partnership with the Royal Irish Aftercare Service, the Office is engaged with Inspire, a not-for-profit organisation that delivers support for mental health, in order to develop an ambitious programme to identify and meet the needs of carers of Veterans' and their families. To date, the Veterans Support Office has successfully dealt with 20 individual cases of Veterans whose needs had not been addressed elsewhere. It continues to work on gaining traction for its role and services.

The Veterans' Support Office received an application for assistance from a Veteran who had served 22 years and had sustained a back injury in service which now required surgery. While the waiting list times are organised according to clinical need and his case was medically assessed as routine, the Veterans Support Office through the Department of Communities, arranged for an Outreach Officer to carry out a full and confidential Benefit Entitlement Check with the Veteran, who was also advised of other publicly-funded support such as health care travel costs. Occupational Therapy was also arranged for him and he was further referred for counselling to address depression caused by the constant pain. In this way, a full spectrum of support was made available to address his current symptoms while waiting for surgery.

Healthcare Metrics

Building evidence

To understand the healthcare needs of the Armed Forces community, accurate data is needed to allow clinicians to identify Service Personnel, Veterans and their families and to establish areas of need. From this year onwards the information collected on GP registration forms will include further details of Veterans, honouring a commitment from the 2017 report. Data collected from the available mental health services, the Transition Intervention and Liaison Services and the Complex Treatment Service, along with psychological therapy services, will help to establish this evidence base.

Defence Statistics has published local authority and clinical commissioning-group level information on Veterans aged 16-64 from the 2011 census data linkage study. The Department for Health and Social Care and NHS England are therefore working with the Local Government Association to refresh the joint strategic needs assessment to reflect this improved evidence base and inform the support provided to the Armed Forces community.

Current metrics

The metrics focus on the standard of Military Service-provided healthcare and UK Armed Forces families' access to healthcare, including continuation of treatment if moved, success of psychological services in treating Veterans, the new Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service and cancer waiting times for serving personnel.

The majority of Regular Service Personnel continued to be satisfied with the Service-provided healthcare received (medical treatment 2018: 76%, Table 1) and the majority of their families continued to be satisfied with their ability to access healthcare (GP access 2017: 98%, Table 2). A small number of families moved while they were undergoing treatment however, the majority were able to continue their treatment (GP access 2018: 95%, Table 3).

Table 1: UK regular Armed Forces Personnel satisfied with Service-provided medical treatment received over the past two years, estimated percentage

2009-2018

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Medical treatment	..	..	..	..	..	..	77	76	76	76
Dental treatment	84	85	87	86	85	86	87	86	86	87

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2018

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

- ¹ Only includes respondents who answered 'yes' to having received Service-provided medical or dental treatment over the past two years
- ² Excludes n/a responses
- .. represents data unavailable

Table 2: UK Armed Forces families able to access medical care in the past 12 months, 2012-2018

2012-2018

	2012	2013	2014 ⁴	2015	2016	2017	2018
GP (including nurse/midwife)	97	96	96	98	98	98	98
Dentist	88	89	90	91	90	90	90
Hospital or specialist services	..	..	..	98	96	97	97

Source: Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2014 and 2018

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

- ¹ 2012-2014 – excludes N/A
- ² 2015-2018 – Includes 'Yes, without difficulties' and 'Yes, but with some difficulties'; Excludes missing and 'No, I did not need to' responses
- ³ Responses are filtered for those who required access to dental treatment [GP: 94%, Dentist: 86% and Hospital: 64% for 2018]
- ⁴ Break in time series due to change in response options and population reported on
- .. represents data unavailable

Table 3: UK Armed Forces families able to continue medical treatment¹ following a move² in the past 12 months, 2012-2018

2012-2018

	2012	2013	2014 ⁶	2015	2016	2017	2018
GP (including nurse/midwife)	93	90	92	96	95	93	95
Dentist	79	70	74	75	82	81	82
Hospital or specialist services	..	..	..	91	90	85	84

Source: Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2014 and 2018

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

- ¹ Refers to whether spouses/dependants were able to continue treatment in new location if moved
- ² Includes: if moved for own reasons and; if due to Service
- ³ 2012-2014 – excludes N/A
- ⁴ 2015-2018 – Includes 'Yes, without difficulties' and 'Yes, but with some difficulties'; Excludes missing and 'No, I did not need to' responses
- ⁵ Respondents are filtered for those who moved in the last 12 months whilst undergoing treatment [GP: 12% Dental: 7% Hospital: 10% for 2018]
- ⁶ Break in time series due to change in population reported on
- .. represents data unavailable

Cancer data

UK Armed Forces personnel requiring cancer treatment receive care through the NHS. The assessed wait times for cancer were similar for three of the four measures illustrating no systematic disadvantage for UK Armed Forces personnel when compared to the rest of England (Table 4). However, for one measure, time to be seen when referred with breast symptoms (but where cancer was not initially suspected), a statistically significant

smaller proportion of UK Armed Forces personnel were seen within 14 days when compared to the rest of England. Cancer wait times are a priority for the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England: the Government has committed to introducing a 28-day standard by 2020 and committed an additional £300 million on diagnostics; a cancer dashboard has been introduced to improve accountability and ways to speed up the start of the pathway are being identified.

Table 4: UK Armed Forces personnel, wait times for cancer treatment in England, numbers and percentages

2017/18

		number	%
Two week wait for all cancers ¹	Service personnel	1,712	93.3
	England	265,910	94.1
	Target ⁴		93
Two week wait for symptomatic breast patients (where cancer was not initially suspected) ¹	Service personnel	256	87.1
	England	179,996	92.8
	Target ⁴		93
One month (31 day) diagnosis to first treatment wait for all cancers ²	Service personnel	81	96.4
	England	287,270	97.5
	Target ⁴		96
62-day wait for first treatment following an urgent GP referral for all cancers ³	Service personnel	25	83.3
	England	122,631	82.3
	Target ⁴		85

Source: Cancer Waiting Times Database (CWT-Db), NHS England

1. Patients seen within 14 days of referral
2. Patients treated within 31 days of the decision to treat date
3. Patients received a first definitive anti-cancer treatment within 62 days of the urgent referral date
4. Operational Standard expected level of performance based on case mix, clinical requirements, potential numbers of patients unfit for treatment or electing to delay treatment (patient choice)

England Mental Health (IAPT and TILS)

Improving access to psychological therapies (IAPT) was the first national mental health dataset to contain an indicator for UK Armed Forces Veterans or their dependants. IAPT focuses on the number of new referrals received, waiting times, referrals entering treatment and health outcomes following treatment. UK Armed Forces Veterans who were referred for psychological therapies in England were seen at least as quickly as the non-Veteran population, and for both six week and 18 week pathways waiting times were above the respective

targets (Table 5). A higher proportion of Veterans compared to non-Veterans entered and completed treatment (Table 6). The recovery rate for UK Armed Forces Veterans was at least as good as that for non-Veterans (Table 7), however, recovery rates continued to be below the 50% Government target. NHS England has instigated a number of initiatives to improve the recovery rates and have seen an increase since 2014/15. Initiatives include supporting the lowest performing Clinical Commissioning Groups and offering workshops to share best practice to all commissioners and providers.

Table 5: UK Armed Forces Veterans, IAPT¹ waiting times for referrals entering treatment¹, numbers and percentages²

2013/14-2017/18

Waiting times		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18	
		number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
6 weeks or less	Veteran	4,130	78.5	5,990	81.1	7,335	84.5	8,565	88.3	8,610	89.5
	non-veteran	265,910	73.6	356,050	77.1	430,560	82.0	482,400	87.3	480,890	89.0
	Target		75		75		75		75		75
18 weeks or less	Veteran	4,965	94.4	7,105	96.2	8,415	96.9	9,525	98.2	9,475	98.4
	non-veteran	336,080	93.1	438,255	94.9	505,400	96.2	541,660	98.0	533,930	98.8
	Target		95		95		95		95		95

Source: The data analysed was sourced from the National Commissioning Data Repository (NCDR). The NCDR is hosted by Arden & Gem CSU, operated by NHS England and the data is owned by NHS Digital.

- ¹ IAPT - Improving access to psychological therapies, NHS England
- ² For new referrals that completed a course of treatment in the year, the wait between referral received date and the first therapeutic assessment
- ³ Please note that the information presented contains compressed figures (rounded to the nearest five) in line with NHS Digital reporting.
- ^p The data provided by NHS England is provisional and may be subject to change when the final report is published in February. The data has not yet been reconciled back to the main IAPT data and so there may be small differences caused by definitions used in the data presented

Table 6: UK Armed Forces Veterans, IAPT¹ referrals entering treatment and completing treatment², numbers and percentages³

2013/14-2017/18

Outcome		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18	
		number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Referrals entered treatment	Veteran	12,795	79.7	12,310	79.4	15,265	80.2	15,775	78.8	16,675	79.7
	non-veteran	905,155	62.7	803,185	63.6	938,175	67.1	948,305	68.7	990,550	71.0
Referrals completed treatment	Veteran	5,255	33.0	7,380	47.6	8,680	45.6	9,695	48.4	9,620	46.0
	non-veteran	360,940	25.0	461,460	36.5	524,935	37.5	552,155	40.0	540,020	38.7

Source: The data analysed was sourced from the National Commissioning Data Repository (NCDR). The NCDR is hosted by Arden & Gem CSU, operated by NHS England and the data is owned by NHS Digital.

- ¹ IAPT - Improving access to psychological therapies, NHS England
- ² Please note that the information presented contains compressed figures (rounded to the nearest five) in line with NHS Digital reporting.
- ³ A referral has entered treatment if the patient attends one or more appointments. The majority of referrals end with the patient completing a course of treatment, however some patients decline treatment, are only treated once, are seen but not treated, or are discharged.
- ^p The data provided by NHS England is provisional and may be subject to change when the final report is published in February. The data has not yet been reconciled back to the main IAPT data and so there may be small differences caused by definitions used in the data presented.

Table 7: UK Armed Forces Veterans, IAPT¹ referrals showing reliable improvement², recovery³, and reliable recovery⁴, numbers and percentages⁵

2013/14-2017/18

Outcome		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18	
		number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
reliable improvement	Veteran	3,140	59.7	4,600	62.3	5,535	63.7	6,460	66.6	6,500	67.5
	non-veteran	214,695	59.4	280,445	60.7	325,845	62	359,800	65.1	359,570	66.5
referrals moved to recovery	Veteran	2,085	39.6	3,070	41.5	3,820	44.0	4,325	44.6	4,525	47.0
	non-veteran	140,635	38.9	186,065	40.3	221,015	42.1	247,635	44.8	250,175	46.3
	Target		50		50		50		50		50
referrals showing reliable recovery	Veteran	1,980	37.6	2,945	39.9	3,660	42.1	4,140	42.7	4,325	44.9
	non-veteran	133,920	37.1	177,340	38.4	210,345	40.0	235,765	42.6	237,905	44.0

Source: The data analysed was sourced from the National Commissioning Data Repository (NCDR). The NCDR is hosted by Arden & Gem CSU, operated by NHS England and the data is owned by NHS Digital.

- ¹ IAPT - Improving access to psychological therapies, NHS England
- ² Reliable improvement = if when discharged the patient's ADSM score has decreased by 4 or more, or their PHQ-9 score has decreased by 6 or more, and both have not deteriorated by the same number
- ³ Recovery = if the patient were at caseness on their first appointment and upon discharge have scored less than the threshold scores for ADSM and PHQ-9
- ⁴ Reliable recovery = a combination of the above, where a referral has both shown reliable improvement in ADSM and PHQ-9 assessment scores, and changed from caseness to not caseness between the first and last appointments.
- ⁵ Please note that the information presented contains compressed figures (rounded to the nearest five) in line with NHS Digital reporting.
- ^p The data provided by NHS England is provisional and may be subject to change when the final report is published in February. The data has not yet been reconciled back to the main IAPT data and so there may be small differences caused by definitions used in the data presented

In April 2017, NHS England launched the Transition, Intervention & Liaison Services as part of the NHS England Five Year Forward View. The service supports ex-Service personnel and those approaching discharge by providing a range of treatment from access to early support to therapeutic treatments for complex mental health difficulties and psychological trauma. Over 4,000 veterans have now been assessed via TIL service. In the design of the service referral to other agencies including to those who would be able to address

wider aspects such housing or financial concerns or to other mental health providers such as IAPT or Community Mental Health Trust was planned. 33 % of referrals are by self-referral with 28% by charities. Currently the wait times to be offered a face-to-face assessment and to receive treatment (14 and 28 days respectively) are outside the targets (Table 9). The targets are intentionally challenging and the continuing work to improve the access times has resulted in an improvement during 2018/19 (86%, attended treatment with 28 days, June-18).

Table 8: UK Armed Forces Veterans, TILS¹ referrals receiving assessment, treatment and discharging, numbers and percentages²

2017/18

	2017/18	
	number	%
Number of referrals	2,605	
Appropriate for assessment	1,972	75.7
Assessment attended ³	1,454	73.7
Of assessed, received treatment in TILS ^{4,5}	488	35.4

Source: NHS England

1. Transition, Intervention and Liaison Services
2. "Appropriate for assessment" data not available for all regions prior to Sept-17; figures are estimated for this time period
3. Face to face assessment
4. Seen in TILS service/clinical appointment
5. Note: Assessment may results in appropriate referrals to other external Mental Health services such as Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), Complex Treatment Service (CTS) or Community Mental Health Trust (CMHT)

Table 9: UK Armed Forces Veterans, TILS¹ waiting times² for assessment and treatment³, percentages

2017/18

		2017/18
		%
Face to face appointment	Offered in 14 days ⁴	58
	Attended in 14 days ⁵	42
Treatment	Offered in 28 days ⁴	51
	Attended in 28 days ⁵	45

Source: NHS England

1. Transition, Intervention and Liaison Services
2. Wait time from referral to assessment and from referral to treatment
3. Seen in TILS service / clinical appointment
4. Offered within 14 or 28 days target: 100%
5. Attended within 14 or 28 days target: 95%

Veterans NHS Wales

Veterans' NHS Wales is the first point of contact for Veterans residing in Wales, with a suspected service-related mental health problem. During 2016/17 the wait times for assessments were similar to the previous year with 30% receiving an assessment within four weeks. A significant component of the assessment wait times was the delay in the opt-in letter being returned. The wait times for treatment in 2016/17 (4 out of 5 in 32 weeks) were lower than the previous year (4 out of 5 in 24 weeks) and not within the Welsh Government Target of six months. To reduce wait times, Veterans' NHS Wales has received a grant from the charity Help for Heroes of £517,000 to increase psychological therapists. This has resulted in three staff employed to tackle the health boards with the longest waiting lists for therapy. In the first 12 months this additional capacity has resulted in waiting lists reducing significantly in most health boards.

Veterans NHS Wales continues to lobby for increased resource and funding to expand capacity from the Welsh Government and other funding sources. The organisation is currently taking part in a pilot with a Welsh peer mentoring charity Change Step, which has been funded by Help for Heroes to embed a peer mentor into each health board to work alongside the Veteran therapists, with a focus on resolving social issues prior to commencing out-patient psychological therapy. Therapists are also taking part in the first Forces in Mind Trust-funded randomised controlled trial in the UK, with Cardiff University. Testing a novel Dutch psychological therapy, 3MDR (motion assisted, multi-modular, memory desensitisation reprocessing therapy), with 42 treatment resistant Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Veterans residing in Wales. Veterans NHS Wales is also a key stakeholder in a Forces in Mind Trust Veterans gambling study with Swansea University.

Table 10: UK Armed Forces Veterans, VNHSW¹ referrals receiving an assessment and treatment, numbers and percentages

2010/11-2016/17

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Number of referrals	191	205	329	390	542	607	633
% referrals receive assessment ²					60-70	73	57
% referrals receive treatment ²					30-50	58	39

Source: Veteran NHS Wales Annual reports: 2010-2012 to 2016-2017

(<https://www.veteranswales.co.uk/resources.html>)

¹ Veteran NHS Wales

² Estimated percentage based on the outcome of referrals received in the first half of year

Table 11: UK Armed Forces Veterans, VNHSW¹ waiting times for assessment and treatment, percentages

2015/16-2016/17

		2015/16 %	2016/17 %
Referral to assessment ²	4 weeks or less	29	30
	10 weeks or less	80	80
Assessment to treatment ³	4 weeks or less	28	19
	24 weeks or less	80	..

Source: Veteran NHS Wales Annual reports: 2010-2012 to 2016-2017

(<https://www.veteranswales.co.uk/resources.html>)

¹ Veteran NHS Wales

² 28 day (4 week) target for Primary Care Services

³ Welsh Government target: 6 month (24 week) target

.. Represents data unavailable

Table 12: UK Armed Forces Veterans, VNHSW¹ reliable improvement^{2,3}, percentages 2017/18

	2015/16 %	2016/17 %
Reliable improvement	88	74

Source: Veteran NHS Wales Annual reports: 2010-2012 to 2016-2017

(<https://www.veteranswales.co.uk/resources.html>)

^{1.} Veteran NHS Wales

^{2.} Demonstrated reliable improvement on at least one disorder specific scale

^{3.} Pre and post therapy measure available for: 48 veterans in 2015/16 and 31 veterans in 2016/17



CHAPTER 3 – EDUCATION

Education observations from last year's report

In last year's report the Families Federations once again emphasised the level of queries they receive regarding the school admissions process in relation to posting notices. The MOD is undertaking a review of its assignment policy which is summarised below. Meanwhile, discussions are continuing with the Department for Education to understand whether there is any opportunity to provide further support under the School Admissions Code.

Education across the UK

Support is being provided to Service Children across the UK by way of the Covenant Fund and Educational Support Fund initiatives helping to integrate Service children and families into new educational settings and providing time and resources which allow schools to better understand the context and welfare needs of each individual child. While the evidence base is improving, more needs to be done to understand the casual relationship between the mobility of Service life, educational attainment and general welfare. The work of the Service Children's Progression Alliance engaging educational providers and stakeholders at the local level, alongside support from central Government is informing this.

Understanding the needs of Service children

Service Children's Progression ALLIANCE

The [Service Children's Progression Alliance \(SCiP\)](#) has already established practitioner Hubs in in York, London and Scotland, en route to achieving comprehensive UK-wide coverage in 2019. The SCiP Alliance Hubs bring together local partners, including schools, colleges, universities, local authorities and charities, to address the specific needs of Service children in the local context. Through the Hubs, conferences and events, the Alliance is now working with hundreds of professionals in the education sector, for many of whom working with Service children is a new experience. Universities and partners are investing new resources to improve Service children's outcomes. In March 2018, the Alliance also carried out the first independent UK-wide stakeholder consultation of its kind, which identified strong common themes for education professionals despite their diverse contexts, and provided encouraging endorsement of the Alliance's role in developing a robust evidence base to inform national strategy, practice and policy development.

The Alliance has enabled the development of key policy and new resource, including new UCAS guidance to help Service children and their parents make the most of their experiences in university applications. As a result, the Office for Students has published new higher education regulatory guidance that is driving up standards by clearly articulating the sector's duties to support Service children's progression into and through higher education.

In the research field, the Alliance launched a briefing series, which translates existing and new research, and new analyses of national datasets, into practicable advice for practitioners and other stakeholders. The Alliance has also engaged academics in the UK and international settings, bringing fresh expertise and resources to bear on research priorities. In particular, the research team has championed tailored approaches to understanding and addressing the unique complexity of Service children's lives, and highlighted the risk of Service children's needs being hidden in traditional targeting methods, where the Alliance is concurrently working to provide new solutions.

Relocating schools – supporting Service children

In the 2016 and 2017 annual reports the Families Federations raised concerns around families having difficulty with the school admissions process. The MOD is reviewing its assignment policy to consider whether greater flexibility can be afforded to families with children at critical stages of their education and those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability provision. An initial review of the data indicates that policy changes implemented in 2015 are beginning to have a positive effect on notice periods. Informed by this work and other attainment evidence, MOD and the Department for Education will be reviewing the provisions for Service children in the School Admissions Code.

Covenant Fund Trust case studies - making connections

Covenant Fund case study: Cornbank Primary School in Midlothian

Cornbank Primary School in Midlothian, Scotland received funding to create a new space with a focus on helping children from serving and civilian families to come together through sport. They received £20,000 to develop better sports facilities as through sport and games; social and communication skills are developed. Organised activity both in and after school can have a supportive effect on Armed Forces children as it can be particularly difficult to integrate into a community school where long term friendships have already been forged. The new space enables a greater range of activities to be offered, not only to children at the school, but to wider schools in the area attended by children from Armed Forces families.

Covenant Fund Case Study: Llantwit Major School, South Wales

In Wales; Llantwit Major School received £18,600 for a project to enhance community integration by providing team building, leadership and educational support opportunities for pupils from serving families, giving opportunities for the children to develop skills and confidence. The project involves several local schools and has supported the development of relationships between Armed Forces pupils and other children within the schools because it provided informal experiences to facilitate this socialisation and removed barriers to integration through all age groups.

Covenant Fund case study: Early years learning at Army Welfare Service Tern Hill

The **Little Warriors project** is a partnership between the “Hive” (local arts based organisation) and Army Welfare Services following identification of needs to enhance the Early Years provision in the isolated location of Tern Hill, Shropshire. The project received £19,950 of Covenant funding and has been delivered through AWS Parents and Toddlers group sessions throughout 2018 including 58 workshops, 12 training sessions, one fun day and two tea parties.

The project delivers creative workshops that can help the reintegration of parents who have recently returned from long-term deployment and are spending considerable time away. It aims to attract new participants from the community through the variety of activities on offer. The workshops allow parents and children to form joint experiences and memories while rebuilding and nurturing relationships as well as developing children’s creativity and social skills. It promotes mutual support and family wellbeing by building family resilience and encouraging bonding time for families during unsettling times due to parental absence and transiency.

As well as supporting family cohesion, the wide range of activities that the project supports, encourages the development of new friendships and the use of new learning processes for under-fives run by experienced artists including pottery workshops, music and movement, storytelling and sensory play.



Educational Support Fund

In light of the ongoing drawdown from Germany and to provide time for the educational authorities across the UK to bring in longer-term provision for Service children as necessary, the Secretary of State for Defence announced the extension of the Educational Support Fund in July 2018. This will be on a limited

basis and consists of £3 million in 2018/19 and £2 million in 2019/20. The Fund is open to publicly funded schools, Academies and Free Schools in the UK attended by Service children whose parents are subject to exceptional mobility and/or deployment. Applications from local authorities in support of these schools can also be accepted.

ESF Case Study: Northern Schools Federation

The funding awarded to The Northern Schools Federation was used to enable the development of a ‘communication station’ which all Service children of the federation; juniors and infants, can access. It is extremely important for children, whose parents have been deployed, to maintain positive and regular links with their serving parent.

The impact of the fund on the school has been significant and has enabled provision of the extra resources and activities to support the emotional wellbeing of the children by providing them with a breadth of opportunities and experiences that could not have been provided from the school budget. The initiative has enabled the children to become more confident learners and raised their aspirations.

We have a fantastic “hub” at our school now in the form of our log cabin and our commando style trim trail which is situated directly in front of the cabin. The cabin is filled three times a week with our Service children when they attend their lunchtime “KIT” (Keeping in Touch) Club. We have to run three sessions as so many children attend and we have had to split the sessions into KS1, KS2 and Foundation! Around 30 children attend each session. At KIT Club the children play games and take part in art activities. There is always the opportunity to make a card, write a letter or draw a picture for a loved one working away or deployed.

“The MOD Support Fund has been invaluable to our Service children and their parents.”

LIBOR childcare infrastructure improvements

Recognising the impact that mobility can have on a child's education and the importance of putting in place appropriate infrastructure to minimise this, in autumn 2013 the then Chancellor announced that up to £20 million of LIBOR fines would be provided to MOD in support of infrastructure improvements to childcare settings on the Defence Estate. A total of 40 bids were successful and in late December 2018 the final setting will complete its refurbishment. The settings benefitting from this work were located throughout the UK and in Cyprus and in total set to provide improved accessibility and availability for over 3,000 Service children now and in the future.

Education in England

Local Authority Working Group

In England, the Local Authority Working Group continues its work to improve awareness regarding the needs of Service children. The second meeting of this group was held with the 14 local authorities in February 2018, with discussions focusing on the exaggerated impact that the requirement for mobility can have on [provision for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disability \(SEND\)](#). For these children, a stable environment is critical to their outcomes and if relocation is unavoidable, it is important that Educational Health Care Plans can be transferred and supportive educational environments replicated at their new locations. The group is also considering the data priorities around Service children so that support can be targeted more effectively to other vulnerable cohorts.

Sharing information on Service children

In collaboration between the Department for Education and the MOD's Directorate for Children and Young People changes were implemented to the [Common Transfer File](#) from September 2018. The File is the means by which state schools in England and local authorities transfer pupil data when a pupil moves from one school to another.

A 'Service Child' section has been added to the File which asks additional questions based around a child's response to moving school, parental deployment and parental separation due to extended training periods or other forms of duty. A free text box has also been added in which a school can include details about any concerns, gaps in education, strengths of the child, etc.

When a school receives a Common Transfer File with the Service Child flag indicator set to 'Yes', an alert is now raised asking that a) the appropriate member of staff be informed of the identity of the Service child joining the school and b) where the concerns section in the 'Service Child' section of the File has not been completed, that the appropriate member of staff be informed and advised to contact the school sending the information for clarification.

These GDPR-compliant developments are designed to help schools manage the transfer of Service children between schools and ensure a greater continuity of education and pastoral support.

British Forces return from Germany

During 2019, a number of Field Army Units will return from Germany to Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, as part of the final phase of the Army Basing Programme that commenced in 2013. It is estimated that this will result in more than 1,100 additional pupils joining primary and secondary schools in Wiltshire from September 2019. Given the exceptional nature of the situation, the Department for Education is providing an additional £2.8 million as a one-off non-repayable grant to help the local authority absorb the rise in pupil numbers without impacting negatively on the budgets of all other schools in the area.

Service Pupil Premium

Since 2011, the Department for Education has provided additional funding to schools through the Service Pupil Premium. This is intended to help schools improve the educational outcomes and wider wellbeing of pupils from Service Families – recognising that children of Service Personnel can face particular challenges arising from having to relocate frequently, and/or the effects of parental absence due to being on training, exercise or operational duty. State-funded schools attended by Service children and those who have had this status at any point in the last six years continue to be allocated the premium at the rate of £300 per annum for every eligible pupil. In the 2018/19 Financial Year, nearly £23 million will be allocated to schools and will benefit over 76,000 current and former Service children in over 10,000 primary and secondary schools.

The Department for Education and MOD are continuing to identify and showcase evidence of good practice by schools in use of the Service Pupil Premium, building on the examples of best practice published by MOD in January 2017. The following case studies illustrate how the premium is being used productively by schools across the country and with different contexts:

Service Pupil Premium – A case study of best practice

Greenfylde Church of England First School in Ilminster in southwest Somerset, is located near two military bases, Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton and Royal Marines Norton Manor Camp near Taunton. It caters for a diverse range of pupils, with some of the children's parents deployed, others serving locally and those who have left the Armed Forces and are still eligible for the Service Pupil Premium.

The school combines a proportion of its Service Pupil Premium allocation with its 'disadvantaged' Pupil Premium funding to help reduce class sizes in Reception Year through employing additional staff. This makes it easier for pupils starting at the school to have a member of teaching staff in the classroom who they can talk to, which can be particularly beneficial for Service children.

Two of the school's teaching assistants are also emotional literacy support assistants, who are currently working with Service children as a group – providing games, art therapy, crafts and other activities as a means of giving pupils the opportunity to talk to adults about their experiences and any worries they may have. (The group includes other pupils who share some of the same experiences as Service children – such as those with a parent in the merchant navy, who face some of the same challenges as Service children do around parental absence.)

The school is mindful of particular times during which Service children might need to draw on additional support – for example, in the run-up to and during periods of deployment, especially if these coincide with Christmas.

The flexible approach to the use of funding involves the whole school and benefits a wider group of pupils at the same time as implementing more bespoke interventions that aim to develop self-esteem and confidence (particularly through arts provision). There is a particular focus on ensuring pupils are involved in activities in support of the local community – this can be especially valuable for Service children, who may be new to the area.

Greenfylde works to make sure that teachers and other school staff know which pupils qualify for Service Pupil Premium and 'disadvantaged' Pupil Premium funding and that they understand the context behind this. Records of individual pupils and their progress and outcomes are monitored tightly, as well as attendance levels, what they have been doing within and outside the curriculum and how they learn best. The school pays particular attention where Service children are also part of another vulnerable pupil group – for example, if they have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Care Leavers Covenant

The MOD has made a commitment to the Department for Education Care Leavers Covenant which was announced in October during National Care Leavers week. As part of this commitment, the Department will produce a protocol and guide for young people from care joining the Armed Forces which details both the role of the local authority and the Armed Forces. The responsibilities outlined in the document will cover law, policy and best practice to support Care Leavers; as well as ensuring specialist welfare services are responsive towards care leavers' individual needs. In carrying out these obligations, local authorities and military representatives will be expected to apply the principles of the Covenant to ensure Care Leavers joining the Armed Forces continue to receive advice and services from the responsible local authority in accordance with statutory guidance for Care Leavers.

Education metrics (Children from Service Families)

This year the Department for Education has provided statistics showing how, in 2016/17, Service children and non-Service children in state schools in England performed across key progress and attainment measures, and their distribution across schools according to Ofsted rating. Figures are also provided to show how Service children and non-Service children's attainment at the end of primary school and at age 16 varies according to the number of times they have moved school during each educational phase.

As in previous years, the average performance of Service children as a group is on a par with or better than that of non-Service children who are not eligible for free school meals, across all key pupil progress and attainment measures. The average attainment of Service children at the end of key stage 2 and at

the end of key stage 4 is lower among those who move schools on multiple occasions than it is among those who are more static – but as before, Service children do better than non-Service children who make the same number of school moves, indicating that Service children tend to be more resilient to the impacts of mobility on academic achievement.

Nationally, Service children are nearly as likely as non-Service children to attend schools rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding, but are less likely to attend Outstanding schools. This is the same pattern as noted in the 2016 Covenant annual report – although the proportion of Service and non-Service children in schools rated by Ofsted as 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate' has fallen since 2016. It is important that we improve the data available on Service children so that we develop a more contextual understanding of the impact of mobility on attainment and general welfare.

Table 13: Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2} meeting the expected standard in phonic decoding at the end of year 1, numbers and percentages

2013-2017

	Service Children					Non-Service and Non-FSM children				
	Number of eligible pupils	Percentage of year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard of phonic decoding ³	% of year 1 pupils not meeting the expected standard of phonic decoding	% absent	% disapplied	Number of eligible pupils	Percentage of year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard of phonic decoding ³	% of year 1 pupils not meeting the expected standard of phonic decoding	% absent	% disapplied
2013	5,039	72	27	0	1	485,559	73	26	0	1
2014	5,330	77	22	0	1	514,930	77	21	0	1
2015	5,444	80	19	0	1	521,841	80	19	0	1
2016	5,900	83	16	0	1	549,157	83	16	0	1
2017	6,078	84	15	0	1	562,470	84	15	0	1

Source: National Pupil Database

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/phonics-screening-check-and-key-stage-1-assessments-england-2017>

- Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England and pupils who had a valid phonics record in the phonics screening check and excluding pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools
- Excludes pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM). This comparison was chosen to be similar to the service child cohort
- The mark for the phonics screening check can be between 0 and 40. If a pupil's mark is at or above the threshold mark of 32, they are considered to have met the expected standard.

Table 14a: Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2} achieving level 2 and above and reaching the expected standard³ at the end of Key Stage 1, percentages 2013-2017

	Service Children								Non-service and Non-FSM Children							
	Percentage achieving level 2 or above				Percentage reaching the expected standard ³				Percentage achieving level 2 or above				Percentage reaching the expected standard			
	Reading	Writing	Maths	Science	Reading	Writing	Maths	Science	Reading	Writing	Maths	Science	Reading	Writing	Maths	Science
2013	92	88	94	94	-	-	-	-	91	88	93	92	-	-	-	-
2014	93	90	95	95	-	-	-	-	92	89	94	93	-	-	-	-
2015	94	91	96	95	-	-	-	-	92	90	94	93	-	-	-	-
2016 ⁴	-	-	-	-	78	69	75	86	-	-	-	-	77	68	76	84
2017 ⁴	-	-	-	-	80	72	78	87	-	-	-	-	78	71	78	85

Source: National Pupil Database

Table 14b: Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2} achieving level 3 and above and working at greater depth at the end of Key Stage 1, percentages 2013-2017

	Service Children							Non-service and Non-FSM Children						
	Percentage achieving level 3 or above				Percentage working at greater depth within the expected standard			Percentage achieving level 3 or above				Percentage working at greater depth within the expected standard		
	Reading	Writing	Maths	Science	Reading	Writing	Maths	Reading	Writing	Maths	Science	Reading	Writing	Maths
2013	33	16	24	25	-	-	-	33	17	26	25	-	-	-
2014	37	18	28	27	-	-	-	34	18	27	25	-	-	-
2015	37	19	28	27	-	-	-	35	20	29	26	-	-	-
2016 ⁴	-	-	-	-	27	14	18	-	-	-	-	26	15	19
2017 ⁴	-	-	-	-	29	17	22	-	-	-	-	27	17	22

Source: National Pupil Database

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/phonics-screening-check-and-key-stage-1-assessments-england-2017>

1. Includes eligible pupils at the end of key stage 1 in state-funded schools in England and excluding pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools
2. Excludes pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM). This comparison was chosen to be similar to the service child cohort
3. Includes pupils working at the expected standard and pupils working at greater depth within the expected standard.
4. Due to changes in national curriculum assessments, the expected and higher standards in 2016 and 2017 are not comparable with previous years

Table 15a: Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2} achieving level 4 and above and reaching the expected standard³ at the end of Key Stage 2, percentages

2013-2017

	Percentage achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths			Percentage reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and maths ³	
	2013	2014	2015	2016 ⁵	2017 ⁵
Service children	78.6	79.9	82.3	56.7	63.9
Non-Service and Non-FSM Children	78.7	81.6	82.7	56.7	64.4

Source: National Pupil Database

Table 15b: Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2} achieving level 5 and above and working at greater depth⁴ at the end of Key Stage 2, percentages

2013-2017

	Percentage achieving level 5 or above in reading, writing and maths			Percentage achieving level 5 or above in reading, writing and maths ⁴	
	2013	2014	2015	2016 ⁵	2017 ⁵
Service children	22.7	24.1	24.5	6	8.5
Non-Service and Non-FSM Children	23.8	26.3	26.7	6.1	9.7

Source: National Pupil Database

Table 15c: Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2}, Progress Score at the end of Key Stage 2, score

2016-2017

	2016						2017					
	Reading			Writing			Reading			Writing		
	Progress Score	Confidence interval		Progress Score	Confidence interval		Progress Score	Confidence interval		Progress Score	Confidence interval	
Service children	0.3	(0.1 - 0.5)		0	(-0.2 - 0.2)		0.3	(0.1 - 0.5)		0	(-0.2 - 0.2)	
Non-Service and Non-FSM Children	0.1	(0.1 - 0.1)		0	(0 - 0)		0.2	(0.1 - 0.2)		0.1	(0.1 - 0.1)	
										-0.5	(-0.6 - -0.3)	
										0.2	(0.1 - 0.2)	

Source: National Pupil Database

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-2-2017-revised>

1. Includes eligible pupils at the end of key stage 2 in state-funded schools in England and excluding pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools
2. Excludes pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM). This comparison was chosen to be similar to the service child cohort
3. Includes those pupils who reached the expected standard in all of reading, writing and mathematics. The expected standard in reading and mathematics is a scaled score of 100 or above. Pupils who reach the expected standard in writing, have a teacher assessment of 'working at the expected standard' (EXS) or 'working at greater depth within the expected standard' (GDS).
4. Includes those pupils who reached a higher standard in all of reading, writing and mathematics. A higher standard is a scaled score of 110 or more in reading and mathematics and pupils assessed as working at greater depth within the expected standard (GDS) in writing.
5. Due to changes in national curriculum assessments, the expected and higher standards in 2016 and 2017 are not comparable with previous years

Table 16: Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2} reaching the threshold in English and maths at the end of Key Stage 4, percentage

2013-2017

	Percentage of pupils achieving A*-C in both English and mathematics GCSEs				Percentage of pupils achieving a pass in English and mathematics GCSEs - grades 9 - 4 ^{3,5}	Percentage of pupils achieving a pass in English and mathematics GCSEs - grades 9 - 5 ^{3,4}
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	
Service children	64.4	62.8	65	69.6	68.7	45
Non-Service and Non-FSM Children	65.3	62.7	63	66.7	67.5	45.9

Source: National Pupil Database

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2016-to-2017>

- ¹. Includes pupils at the end of key stage 4 in state-funded schools in England and excluding pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools
- ². Excludes pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM). This comparison was chosen to be similar to the service child cohort
- ³. New GCSEs in English and mathematics were taught from September 2015 with the first examinations taking place in Summer 2017. New GCSEs in other subjects were phased in for first teaching from September 2016, continued into 2017 and a very small number in 2018. To ensure all students benefit from the reformed qualifications, only the new GCSEs will be included in the secondary performance tables as they are introduced. (For 2017, this included only reformed GCSEs in English and mathematics). As part of these reforms, a new grading system was introduced from 2017 to replace the A* to G system with a new 9 to 1 scale for new reformed GCSEs.
- ⁴. From 2017, headline threshold attainment measures use a grade 5 for reformed English and mathematics and the previous headline measure of 'percentage achieving A*-C in English and mathematics GCSEs' is now 'the proportion of pupils achieving a pass in English and mathematics at grade 5 or above'.
- ⁵. The 9-4 pass shows pupils who achieved a grade 4 or above in English and mathematics, and is provided alongside the headline measure for transparency and comparability.

Table 17: Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2} in English Baccalaureate, numbers and percentage

2013-2017

	Service Children				Non-Service and Non-FSM Children			
	Number of pupils at the end of key stage 4	Percentage of pupils entered for all Ebacc components	Percentage of pupils who achieved Ebacc for all components (grades A*-C/9-4 pass) ^{3, 5}	Percentage of pupils who achieved all Ebacc components (grades 9-5 pass in English and maths) ^{3, 4}	Number of pupils at the end of key stage 4	Percentage of pupils entered for all Ebacc components	Percentage of pupils who achieved Ebacc for all components (grades A*-C/9-4 pass) ^{3, 5}	Percentage of pupils who achieved all Ebacc components (grades 9-5 pass in English and maths) ^{3, 4}
2013	3,095	39.3	24.1	-	483,024	38.5	25.2	-
2014	3,304	41.4	25.5	-	474,442	41.7	26.6	-
2015	3,486	42.5	24.9	-	473,312	41.5	26.6	-
2016	3,662	42.2	25.7	-	463,801	42.3	27	-
2017	3,773	38	22.4	20	453,777	40.6	25.9	23.3

Source: National Pupil Database

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2016-to-2017>

- ¹. Includes pupils at the end of key stage 4 in state-funded schools in England and excluding pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools
- ². Excludes pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM). This comparison was chosen to be similar to the service child cohort
- ³. New GCSEs in English and mathematics were taught from September 2015 with the first examinations taking place in Summer 2017. New GCSEs in other subjects were phased in for first teaching from September 2016, continued into 2017 and a very small number in 2018. To ensure all students benefit from the reformed qualifications, only the new GCSEs will be included in the secondary performance tables as they are introduced. (For 2017, this included only reformed GCSEs in English and mathematics). As part of these reforms, a new grading system was introduced from 2017 to replace the A* to G system with a new 9 to 1 scale for new reformed GCSEs.
- ⁴. From 2017, headline threshold attainment measures use a grade 5 for reformed English and mathematics and the previous headline measure of 'percentage achieving A*-C in English and mathematics GCSEs' is now 'the proportion of pupils achieving a pass in English and mathematics at grade 5 or above'.
- ⁵. The 9-4 pass shows pupils who achieved a grade 4 or above in English and mathematics, and is provided alongside the headline measure for transparency and comparability.

Table 18: Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2} attainment 8 and progress 8 at end of Key Stage 4, score

2016-2017

	2016		2017	
	Average Attainment 8 score per pupil ³	Average Progress 8 score ⁴	Average Attainment 8 score per pupil ³	Average Progress 8 score ⁴
Service children	52.4	0.1	47.8	0.03
Non-Service and Non-FSM Children	51.6	0.04	48.1	0.04

Source: National Pupil Database

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2016-to-2017>

1. Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record and eligible pupils at the end of key stage 4
2. Excludes pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM). This comparison was chosen to be similar to the service child cohort
3. Attainment 8 measures the achievement of a pupil across 8 qualifications including mathematics (double weighted) and English (double weighted), 3 further qualifications that count in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) measure and 3 further qualifications that can be GCSE qualifications (including EBacc subjects) or any other non-GCSE qualifications on the DfE approved list. Each individual grade a pupil achieves is assigned a point score, which is then used to calculate a pupil's Attainment 8 score
4. Progress 8 was introduced in 2016 (and 2015 for schools that chose to opt in early). It aims to capture the progress a pupil makes from the end of primary school to the end of secondary school. It is a type of value added measure, which means that pupils' results are compared to the actual achievements of other pupils with similar prior attainment.

Table 19: Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2} Key Stage 2 educational attainment by number of school moves³, percentage

2013-2017

		Number of school moves			
		1	2	3	4+
Number of schools attended	Service children	34.9	37.9	19.9	7.3
	Non FSM and Non Service children	63.2	30.7	5.4	0.8
Percentage achieving expected standard ⁴	Service children	68.5	62.2	63.0	53.8
	Non FSM and Non Service children	66.5	62.4	55.2	47.1

Source: National Pupil Database

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-2-2017-revised>

1. Includes eligible pupils at the end of key stage 2 in state-funded schools in England and excluding pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools
2. Excludes pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM). This comparison was chosen to be similar to the service child cohort
3. These figures count a pupil as moving school when the school they attend closes and opens under a new school identifier, for example when a school converts to an academy. Therefore, a 'school move' cannot be attributed solely to pupil moving to a new location/school. This should be considered when interpreting these statistics, although the impact of school type changes on the pupil mobility figures is believed to be small.
4. Includes those pupils who reached the expected standard in all of reading, writing and mathematics. The expected standard in reading and mathematics is a scaled score of 100 or above. The expected standard in writing is a teacher assessment of 'working at the expected standard' (EXS) or 'working at greater depth within the expected standard' (GDS).

Table 20: Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2} Key Stage 4 educational attainment by number of school moves³, percentage

2013-2017

		Number of school moves			
		1	2	3	4+
Number of schools attended	Service children	71.2	24.4	4.2	0.0
	Non FSM and Non Service children	82.5	16.0	1.4	0.0
Percentage achieving a pass in English and mathematics GCSE grades 9-54	Service children	48.4	38.3	27.8	20.0
	Non FSM and Non Service children	48.1	36.6	23.2	16.2

Source: National Pupil Database

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/revised-gcse-and-equivalent-results-in-england-2016-to-2017>

1. Includes eligible pupils at the end of key stage 2 in state-funded schools in England and excluding pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools
2. Excludes pupils who are eligible for free school meals (FSM). This comparison was chosen to be similar to the service child cohort
3. These figures count a pupil as moving school when the school they attend closes and opens under a new school identifier, for example when a school converts to an academy. Therefore, a 'school move' cannot be attributed solely to pupil moving to a new location/school. This should be considered when interpreting these statistics, although the impact of school type changes on the pupil mobility figures is believed to be small.
4. New GCSEs in English and mathematics were taught from September 2015 with the first examinations taking place in Summer 2017. New GCSEs in other subjects were phased in for first teaching from September 2016, continued into 2017 and a very small number in 2018. To ensure all students benefit from the reformed qualifications, only the new GCSEs will be included in the secondary performance tables as they are introduced. (For 2017, this included only reformed GCSEs in English and Mathematics). As part of these reforms, a new grading system was introduced from 2017 to replace the A* to G system with a new 9 to 1 scale for new reformed GCSEs. From 2017, headline threshold attainment measures use a grade 5 for reformed English and mathematics and the previous headline measure of 'percentage achieving A*-C in English and mathematics GCSEs' is now 'the proportion of pupils achieving a pass in English and mathematics at grade 5 or above'.

Table 21: Ofsted rating of schools attended by Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2}, by region, percentage

August 2018

		Ofsted rating			
		1 (Outstanding)	2 (Good)	3 (Requires Improvement)	4 (Inadequate)
England	Service children	18.9	66	12.9	2.1
	Non FSM and Non Service children	23.3	62.2	11.7	2.8
East Midlands	Service children	30	60	9	1
	Non FSM and Non Service children	20	63	14	4
East of England	Service children	16	67	12	5
	Non FSM and Non Service children	20	67	11	3
London	Service children	36	56	7	0
	Non FSM and Non Service children	34	58	6	1
North East	Service children	24	59	14	2
	Non FSM and Non Service children	25	56	16	4
North West	Service children	23	63	13	2
	Non FSM and Non Service children	23	60	14	3
South East	Service children	16	73	10	1
	Non FSM and Non Service children	23	66	10	1
South West	Service children	16	64	17	3
	Non FSM and Non Service children	21	62	13	4
West Midlands	Service children	12	74	13	1
	Non FSM and Non Service children	20	64	12	4
Yorkshire and The Humber	Service children	23	60	15	2
	Non FSM and Non Service children	20	60	16	4

Source: Ofsted August 2018

Education in Scotland

Support for Service children

Scotland continues to recognise the value that Service Personnel, Veterans and their families bring to its communities. The Scottish Government chairs the [Scottish Service Children Strategy Group](#)⁷. This stakeholder group provides a Scotland-wide perspective in identifying and addressing the challenges that children from Armed Forces families may face.

Since the last report, the group has expanded to ensure that, in addition to long-standing Army representation, both the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force are represented on the group. The Group continues to work to raise awareness of the potential needs of these children and their families. Not least to ensure a legacy from the MOD's Educational Support Fund, Scotland's National Transitions Officer, a role supported by the Fund, launched a forces children's education website⁸ earlier this year. The website hosts resources for a range of audiences, including teachers and parents. These resources draw on the experience of practitioners, including those involved in delivering ESF projects, families, and children and young people themselves.

The suite of resources which help mitigate issues which families and their children experience when moving between different education systems has been enhanced this year. For example, the Strategy Group has also been working closely with stakeholders on guidance for teachers, local authorities and parents on supporting early stages transitions between different education systems.

We published the revised Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice which through specific references to Armed Forces children, promotes their potential need for, and entitlement to, additional support.

Further and Higher Education and professional development

The Scottish Government, along with the Scottish Funding Council, is engaging with stakeholders to explore the barriers to further and higher education which may exist for children of military families.

Aside from work to support children, there has also been some successful work to overcome barriers experienced by spouses who qualified as teachers in the rest of the UK, to allow them to teach in Scotland.

Education in Wales

Education support for Service children

The Welsh Government recognises the particular challenges faced by the children of Service Personnel. A bespoke Welsh fund directed towards the educational support of these children has been launched. Through its [Supporting Service Children in Wales Fund](#) the Cabinet Secretary for Education awarded 27 schools with full or partial funding totalling £250,000 for this financial year. The fund is being administered by the Supporting Service Children in Education Project hosted by the Welsh Local Government Association and has been very well received. It will provide schools with funding for projects to support Service children from September 2018.

Additional learning needs

[Supporting Service Children in Education \(SSCE\) Cymru](#) conducts and commissions research into areas of Service children's experiences in education. Research commissioned in June 2018 will look to explore the 'experiences of Service Families with children with Additional Learning Needs in education Wales'. Through consideration of the challenges these families face, assessments will be made which allow the implementation of appropriate measures of support. The review will also consider the potential impacts the new Additional Learning Needs Code of Practice may have for children of Service Families living and moving to Wales.

⁷ The SSCSG = Scottish Service Children Strategy Group is a SG chaired group which includes representation from the MOD's Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP), Ministry of Defence in Scotland, the voluntary sector (RCET- Royal Caledonian Education Trust), Education Scotland, and ADES including its Transitions Officer whose role is specifically to look at the transition of children and young people from Service families.

⁸ <https://forceschildrenseducation.org.uk/>

The identification and tracking of Service children is essential to delivering effective support. In Wales the data collected via the Pupil Level Annual Schools Census are subject to regulations. Changes to these regulations must be considered alongside any other changes in data collection that will be needed as part of the wider education reform programme. Work continues on how best to identify and collect education data on Service children in Wales.

The Welsh Government Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, received Royal Assent on 24th January 2018. The Act makes provision for a new statutory framework for supporting children, including the children of Service Personnel with additional learning needs. The new Additional Learning Needs system is expected to be implemented over a three-year period from September 2020, and will make provision for children and young people who require extra support with their learning, including, where appropriate, Service children.

Also in development is the new Additional **Learning Needs Code**, which will include specific guidance relating to the children of Service Personnel. The draft Code is expected to be made available for public consultation during the autumn term.

Education in Northern Ireland

The needs of children of Service Personnel in Northern Ireland are overseen by staff in HQ 38 (Irish) Brigade. Bespoke arrangements are in place that successfully deliver current needs. More widely the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (Northern Ireland) act as a pan-Northern Ireland interface with the educational sector on behalf of MOD. All Service children continue to be found places in local schools. Department of Education statistics show that Service children's GCSE, AS2 and AS level results are aligned with those of other children across Northern Ireland.

In-Service education metrics

While Veterans' employment levels are on a par with (or better than) national averages, the percentage of Regular Service Personnel satisfied with the opportunities to gain civilian accreditation and opportunities for personal development has remained consistently low with only 47% satisfied with civilian accreditation opportunities and 55% satisfied with personnel development opportunities in 2018 (Tables 22 & 23).



The MOD is focused on developing a culture of personal development in which personnel are continually encouraged to optimise their contribution to military capability and prepare them for employment thereafter. In support of building a culture of personal development, a Professional

and Personal Development Plan will be created and implemented in late 2020. In addition, the MOD is the UK's largest provider of apprenticeships and invests significantly in schemes which support elective education, such as learning credits and the Army Skills offer.

Table 22: UK Armed Forces personnel satisfied with opportunities to gain civilian accreditation¹, estimated percentage

2009 – 2018

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Satisfied	45	50	51	46	43	42	47	48	46	47

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2018

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

¹ Relates only to Service training courses and not training received prior to leaving the Services (Resettlement training)

² Minor wording change in 2011

Table 23: UK Armed Forces personnel satisfied with opportunities for personal development, estimated percentage

2007 – 2018

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Satisfied	49	56	57	54	52	52	57	57	54	55

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2018

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

¹ Minor wording change in 2011

Table 24: UK Armed Forces personnel who used Career Transition Partnership and were employed within 6 months of leaving the Armed Forces, estimated percentage

2010/11 – 2016/17

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15 ²	2015/16 ³	2016/17
Employment rate	85	85	83	83	85	80	82

Source: ADAPT (Career Transition Partnership ex-Service personnel employment outcomes)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/career-transition-partnership-ex-service-personnel-employment-outcomes-statistics-index>

¹ 2010/11-2014/15 - Estimated from a 20% sample of those who used billable Career Transition Partnership services

² Break in time series. Service leavers prior to 1 October 2015 who used the CTP Future Horizons programme were excluded from analysis. Since 1 October 2015 all Service leavers who have used a billable CTP service have been included.

³ Break in time series. The 2016/17 FY is the first year in which all Service leavers who used a billable CTP service have been followed up. This coupled with methodology changes has resulted in comparisons with previous years invalid.

⁴ Minor wording change in 2011



CHAPTER 4 – ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation observations from last year's report

In their observations from 2017, the Families Federations reiterated concerns around the standard of Single Living Accommodation. The MOD continues to acknowledge the scale of the issue and is committed to improving the lived experience for Armed Forces personnel, as reflected by the prioritisation of investment in this element of the estate, described in more detail below. Plans to implement a Single Living Accommodation Management Information System are being taken forward as part of the MOD's work to refine and simplify governance arrangements for accommodation. The project is expected to be delivered in late 2019 and is already generating better quality data which is helping to provide the Department with a clearer picture of the estate.

The Federations also reiterated their desire to work closely with the Future Accommodation Model Policy Team, to ensure the views of families are accurately reflected. The MOD values the input received so far from Service Personnel and families representatives, and will continue to work closely with them on the implementation of the Future Accommodation Model.

Accommodation across the UK

Service Family Accommodation

Raising living standards

Providing decent living standards and quality customer service is essential to maintaining the stability of family life and therefore, the morale on the front line. The MOD recognises there is further work to be done to support Service Personnel and their families.

The Department is committed to improving the condition and standard of the Service Family Accommodation estate. During 2017/18, more than £68 million was invested in improvement works. The focus was on reducing incidences of damp and mould and improving 'hard to heat' properties through an extensive External Wall Insulation programme. In addition, and in line with occupant wishes, inefficient boilers and heating systems were replaced, and kitchens and bathrooms modernised. In the current financial year, some £80 million of funding is in place to deliver similar improvements.

This investment means that the MOD continues to meet its Covenant commitment to allocate only those properties that, at the point of occupation, meet or exceed the [UK Decent Homes Standard](#). More than 95% of UK Service Family Accommodation is now at that level (85% at DH+). In addition, more than 99% meets statutory and mandatory safety requirements.

Contractual performance

The liquidation of Carillion plc earlier this year did not impact on the delivery of the [National Housing Prime contract](#). The terms of the Joint Venture meant that Amey Defence Services seamlessly took responsibility for the full suite of outsourced accommodation services. However, prior to the liquidation, a reduction in CarillionAmey's response maintenance performance in the South East was

apparent, caused by the adoption of a delivery model that had been successfully rolled-out in other regions but that did not initially achieve the expected level and consistency of performance in the South East. Joint steps taken by the MOD's Defence Infrastructure Organisation and CarillionAmey stabilised the position and provided a platform to allow response repair performance across the UK to move back above target.

The overall improvement in delivery performance is beginning to be reflected in levels of customer satisfaction. The 2018 Armed Forces Continuous Attitudes Survey recorded a five percentage point increase in Service Personnel's satisfaction levels (from 46% in 2017 to 51%) with the overall standard of Service Family Accommodation while Service Families' satisfaction levels remained stable at 57%. Moreover, the independent DIO survey recorded a four percentage points increase (to 62%) over a similar rolling 12-month period.

However, satisfaction with the quality of maintenance and response times remains low and the MOD recognises that for many Service Families, the 'lived experience' continues to be at odds with an improving delivery picture. The Department is working hard to change that by proactively pursuing a range of measures to improve service delivery and customer service, which we are confident will result in increased satisfaction rates via customer engagement fora and routine surveys.

Improvements to the estate

As part of the Army Basing Programme, Service families are offered high-standard and energy-efficient homes, thanks to the completion of 322 new three and four bedroom Service Family Accommodation properties at the Ashdown Estate in Tidworth, Wiltshire, at a cost of £73 million.

Additionally, Service Personnel and their families at Brize Norton (162 houses), Plymouth (152 houses) and Hullavington (94 houses) are benefitting from sustainably warmer homes and lower energy bills, after the MOD completed £13 million worth of significant improvement works. External wall insulation was used to make the houses more energy efficient. The insulation, which was required due to the nature of the construction of the properties, has also improved the overall appearance of the homes.

A £5 million refurbishment programme of accommodation at Royal Navy Air Station Culdrose also led to 67 properties being improved. All the homes received external wall insulation, new roofs, windows and doors, porch refurbishment, new bathrooms and boilers. The regeneration was particularly challenging due to the narrowness of the roads, and the irregular sizes and shapes of the properties requiring bespoke elements of the External Wall Insulation.

Elsewhere on the wider Armed Forces estate **1,100 new bathrooms and 500 new boilers** were fitted in the last year.

Extensive refurbishment works costing £1.5 million have been completed at Bannachra Drive in Helensburgh. The upgrade works were carried out by Amey and contractor Bells Ltd and included the fitting of new roofs, windows and doors, as well as new boilers, external wall insulation and rendering of the buildings. Work was undertaken to replace fencing and gates and rain water goods, with chimneys on the properties also removed and garage roofs replaced.

Moreover, MOD has access to 279 good quality properties under an accommodation PFI in Moray which is due to end in September 2019. Future capability growth at RAF Lossiemouth with the arrival of the P-8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft and Typhoon growth, has changed demand and led to MOD issuing a notice to purchase these good quality properties from the contractor to ensure continued access to them beyond 2019.

Managing the estate

Obtaining best value from the Defence estate and providing good quality accommodation for the Armed Forces community, requires efficient asset management. Where properties are empty and there is a long-term, but no short-term, requirement for them, MOD has initiated a project whereby short-term vacant properties, with the agreement of the local Chain of Command, are sub-let to screened civilians on a short-term tenancy agreement. The overarching principle is that Service Personnel will not be disadvantaged by this project. Approximately **3,000 properties over 100 sites have been identified to be marketed to civilian occupants**. The planned £8 million revenue will be invested back into maintenance and upgrading of Service Family Accommodation, less a small proportion (5%) which will go directly to Heads of Establishment for investment in the local estate.

Planning for the future

In the longer term, work continues to develop a new, customer-focused, affordable, housing contract; this is now expected to be implemented in April 2021. Following widespread consultation, a new contracting model will be adopted, separating Service Family Accommodation repair and maintenance into four regional contracts. These contracts will be supported by a national management contract that will provide a single point of contact for all customer service requests associated with the provision and occupation of Service Family Accommodation. This approach is more closely aligned to industry norms, with a focus on competition and incentivisation to improve performance and customer satisfaction levels.

Rebasing from Germany

In preparation for the return of remaining Service Families from British Forces Germany, more than **300 new three and four bedroom homes were built at Ashdown Estate in Tidworth**, Wiltshire, and handed over by the developer in February 2018. In addition, in November 2017, the Department signed a £250 million contract to deliver a mixture of 917 homes to support the future increased requirement at Larkhill, Ludgershall and Bulford. Good progress is being made to establish enabling infrastructure across the three sites.

Single Living Accommodation

The MOD continues to prioritise investment in delivering additional grade 1 Single Living Accommodation for Service Personnel across the country. During the current financial year, the Department plans to deliver **more than 1,200 new Single Living Accommodation bed-spaces across eight sites** and, on current spending plans, more than 3,000 over the following three financial years. Looking further ahead more than 15,000 new bed-spaces and a significant upgrade programme are due to be delivered at our enduring sites over the next 10-15 years through the Defence Estate Optimisation Programme.

This all follows more than 50,000 new and upgraded Single Living Accommodation bed-spaces delivered over the last 15 years, including some 23,000 new

bed-spaces at 52 locations under the Single Living Accommodation Modernisation Project at a cost of more than £1.2 billion.

To ensure future investment is targeted appropriately, work continues to fully validate the condition of all Single Living Accommodation across the Defence estate in the UK.

Getting on the property ladder

Forces Help To Buy, introduced in April 2014, helps Service Personnel get on or stay on the property ladder by borrowing up to 50% of their annual salary (up to a maximum of £25,000) to purchase their first property. Since its introduction, the scheme has helped around 16,100 Service Personnel purchase their own property at a total cost of £242 million (an average of £15,000 per claim). Work is ongoing to consider how to take this policy forward and details will be confirmed later this year.

Options for the modern Service Family

The mobile nature of Service life can be disruptive for Service Personnel and their families, and providing accommodation options is one way of easing the impact. The **Future Accommodation Model** is looking at how MOD can modernise and improve the provision of accommodation, making it fairer and more flexible, while keeping it affordable for the Department. The Model proposes to provide Service Personnel with greater choice of accommodation options including renting in the private sector and support to home ownership.

A pilot is being developed to allow the MOD to test this new approach to accommodation and understand how it affects Service Personnel and their families. Feedback from the pilot, which is expected to roll out next year, will inform a future decision on whether to implement the Future Accommodation Model across the UK.

Until more information about the pilot is available, Service Personnel should continue to use current accommodation policy.⁹

⁹ JSP 464: Tri-Service Accommodation Regulations Volume 1: Service Family Accommodation (SFA) and Substitute Service Family Accommodation - UK and Overseas.

Accommodation in England

Starter Homes

The Government is engaging with stakeholders through the Starter Homes Technical Working Group on the detail of the starter homes at present in advance of laying the regulations before Parliament. Starter homes would be sold at a minimum 20% discount to eligible first-time buyers and targeted to those who would otherwise be priced out of the housing market. The intention is to exempt injured Service Personnel and those whose spouse or partner has died in Service from the age restriction and letting restrictions that apply to eligibility for starter homes. Provision for the exemptions for Service Personnel are included in the draft regulations which define the starter homes scheme.

Access to social housing

The 2017 Armed Forces Covenant Report announced the intention to consult on new statutory guidance for local authorities to ensure that divorced and separated spouses and civil partners of Service Personnel are not disadvantaged by local connection requirements when applying for social housing. The scope of this work has now been expanded to consider consolidating and updating all existing statutory allocations guidance in relation to members of the Armed Forces so that relevant information is more easily accessible.

Accommodation metrics

The 2018 metrics demonstrate an improvement in satisfaction with Service accommodation (Table 25) which is likely to be due to the investment into improving conditions such as modernising boilers, kitchens and bathrooms. The MOD is continuing to invest in accommodation improvements.

Table 25: UK Armed Forces personnel and families satisfied with the standard of Service accommodation, estimated percentage

2009 – 2018

		2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
UK Armed Forces personnel	Service Family Accommodation	..	..	..	56	57	60	57	50	46	51
	Single Living Accommodation	46	50	..	55	56	56	58	55	50	49
Service families	Service Family Accommodation	..	..	..	..	..	..	63	53	57	57

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2018 and Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) 2018

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

1. AFCAS: Service Family Accommodation: minor wording change 2013 and 2015
 2. AFCAS: Single Living Accommodation: minor wording change 2012, 2013 and 2015; comparative analysis has indicated that a change to the wording of the response options in 2011 has resulted in some respondents ticking 'SFA - inside the base/camp' when they should have ticked 'SLA of any type'. Therefore, no reliable figures can be given for 2011
 3. AFCAS: Excludes n/a and 'don't know'
 4. AFCAS: Relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Single Living Accommodation
 5. FAMCAS: Responses are filtered for those respondents who live in Service family accommodation or substitute service family accommodation, and answered the questions, and did not answer 'Don't know'. [59% in 2018]
 6. FAMCAS: Comparisons with years prior to 2015 are not possible. This question was introduced in 2015 to bring it in line with AFCAS.
 7. FAMCAS: Only relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Service Family Accommodation.
 8. FAMCAS: The figure presented for service families satisfaction during 2017 was reported incorrectly as 67% in the 2017 Covenant report. This has now been corrected to 57%.
- .. represents data unavailable

Table 26: UK Armed Forces personnel and families satisfied with response to maintenance request (Service accommodation), estimated percentage

2011 – 2018

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
UK Armed Forces personnel	43	42	41	41	40	34	29	29
Service families	..	..	..	..	45	32	34	35

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2018 and Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) 2018

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

1. AFCAS: New questions in 2011
 2. AFCAS: Minor wording change in 2012, 2013 and 2015
 3. AFCAS: Excludes n/a and 'don't know'
 4. FAMCAS: Responses are filtered for those respondents who live in Service family accommodation or substitute service family accommodation, and answered the questions, and did not answer 'Don't know'. [58% in 2018]
 5. FAMCAS: Comparisons with years prior to 2015 are not possible. This question was introduced in 2015 to bring it in line with AFCAS
 6. FAMCAS: Only relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Service Family Accommodation
- .. represents data unavailable

Table 27: UK Armed Forces personnel and families satisfied with quality of maintenance service (Service accommodation), estimated percentage

2011 – 2018

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
UK Armed Forces personnel	42	39	40	39	40	33	29	28
Service families	..	..	..	..	42	29	29	30

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2018 and Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) 2018

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

1. AFCAS: New questions in 2011
 2. AFCAS: Minor wording change in 2012, 2013 and 2015
 3. AFCAS: Excludes n/a and 'don't know'
 4. FAMCAS: Responses are filtered for those respondents who live in Service family accommodation or substitute service family accommodation, and answered the questions, and did not answer 'Don't know'. [58% in 2018]
 5. FAMCAS: Comparisons with years prior to 2015 are not possible. This questions was introduced in 2015 to bring it in line with AFCAS
 6. FAMCAS: Only relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Service Family Accommodation
- .. represents data unavailable

Table 28: UK Armed Forces personnel and families satisfied with value for money of Service accommodation, estimated percentage

2009 – 2018

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
UK Armed Forces personnel	60	63	65	67	68	67	67	61	60	58
Service families	..	..	..	..	..	..	75	64	70	68

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2018 and Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) 2018

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

1. AFCAS: Minor wording change in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015
 2. AFCAS: N/A and Don't know option added in 2011
 3. AFCAS: Excludes n/a and 'don't know'
 4. FAMCAS: Responses are filtered for those respondents who live in Service family accommodation or substitute service family accommodation, and answered the questions, and did not answer 'Don't know'. [59% in 2017]
 5. FAMCAS: Comparisons with years prior to 2015 are not possible. This questions was introduced in 2015 to bring it in line with AFCAS
 6. FAMCAS: Only relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Service Family Accommodation
- .. represents data unavailable

Social housing

In 2016/17 the percentage of Veterans, who had recently left the Armed Forces and been allocated a social housing letting after living in the local authority for five years or less was substantially higher than the non-Veteran population (Table 29). Recent leavers are those who left within the past five years. In addition, the under 65 UK Service population (including Veterans) waited less time for allocation of social housing compared to under 65 non-Service population (Table 30). This data enables the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to monitor the package of measures introduced

in 2012 to ensure the Armed Forces community has the same access to social housing and is not disadvantaged by the requirement for mobility while in Service. The package includes: ensuring Veterans with urgent housing needs and Service Personnel with serious illness or disability are always given high priority for social housing; encouraging councils to take account of the needs of the Armed Forces community when framing their allocation policies, and introducing regulations to ensure councils do not disqualify Service Personnel or those who have recently left the Services because they do not meet a local connection test.

Table 29: New social housing lettings to UK Armed Forces veterans¹ and non-veterans in England, length of time in local authority prior to new social housing letting, number and estimated percentage

2016/17

Length of time in Local Authority prior to allocation	UK Armed Forces veteran population				non-veteran population	
	Left within the past five years		Left more than five years ago		number	%
	number	%	number	%		
New to Local Authority	130	17.3	570	13.4	16,570	9.7
Less than 1 year	50	6.9	190	4.5	9,400	5.4
1-2 years	55	7.2	180	4.3	8,610	5.0
2-5 years	105	13.7	380	9.0	17,560	10.1
More than 5 years	420	55.0	2,910	68.8	121,570	69.9
Total	760	100.0	4,230	100.0	173,710	100.0

Source: CORE Social Housing Lettings 2016/17, MHCLG

¹. Has previously served in the UK Armed Forces

². Sample is presented at household level

Table 30: UK Service population¹ and non-Service population in England, length of time on waiting list for current social housing/accommodation, estimated percentage

2016/17

Length of time on waiting list prior to allocation	Service population and families		Non-service population and families	
	Under 65	65 and over	Under 65	65 and over
Less than 6 months	68.1	67.1	52.3	59.6
6 months - 1 year	17.5	9.3	17.1	9.6
1-2 years	7.2	u	10.0	11.3
2-3 years	u	7.4	7.3	7.4
3-5 years	3.8	u	5.0	7.5
More than 5 years	3.4	9.1	8.2	4.6
Total	100	100	100.0	100.0
Sample size ²	185	74	3,807	333

Source: English Housing Survey 2016-17, full household survey

¹. Has served or were currently serving in the Armed Forces

². Sample is presented at individual rather than household level

³. Excludes those at address for 10 years or more

^u indicates sample size too small for reliable estimate

Table 31: UK Service population¹ and non-Service population in England, satisfaction with social housing², estimated percentage

2016/17

Satisfaction with social housing	Service population and families		Non-service population and families	
	Under 65	65 and over	Under 65	65 and over
Satisfied	77.1	93.9	75.8	90.4
Sample size ³	282	224	5,672	1,009

Source: English Housing Survey 2016-17, full household survey

¹. Has served or were currently serving in the Armed Forces

². For all social renters

³. Sample is presented at individual rather than household level

Accommodation in Scotland

Access to housing advice

The Scottish Government has revised its guide: [A Scottish housing guide for people in the Armed Forces and ex-Service Personnel](#) which is aimed at Service Leavers and Veterans. The revised guide will reflect the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's recommendation to improve its content and visual impact.

In addition, the Scottish Government's practice guidance on social housing allocations is being revised and will be re-launched by the end of 2018, providing advice on meeting the needs of Service Leavers and Veterans, including advice on local connection. The Scottish Government has also improved its online content on housing information, in line with the Commissioner's report.

Since 2010 SSAFA, in partnership with Glasgow City Council, has assisted members of the Armed Forces community who live or work in Glasgow through the holistic service [Glasgow's Helping Heroes](#). Around half of the clients supported by the service each year have some housing need, from rent arrears to homelessness or inaccessible properties. The team, including an experienced Housing Adviser, work to navigate the dozens of local registered social landlords and balance clients, hopes and expectations with what is available and achievable. Glasgow's Helping Heroes has recently started a Tenancy Sustainment Programme to ensure that once a client finds a suitable home they are equipped to maintain their tenancy for the long term.

Additional housing support

The agents appointed to administer the Open Market Shared Equity Scheme on behalf of the Scottish Government carry out targeted marketing in order to promote the scheme to priority access groups such as members of the Armed Forces and Veterans. In the last few months this has included advertising the scheme in nationwide publications including Pathfinder Resettlement Magazine (Armed Forces) and the Royal Regiment of Scotland Journal 2018. At an Armed Forces Day event on 1 July 2018 the agents provided information and leaflets for attendees. Ongoing engagement is also carried out with local authorities to promote the scheme using case studies, posters, and promotional material.

Information about buying or renting property in Scotland has also been included in [Welcome to Scotland: a guide for Service Personnel and their families moving to Scotland](#).¹⁰

¹⁰<https://www.gov.scot/publications/welcome-scotland-guide-service-personnel-families-moving-scotland/pages/9/>

Accommodation in Wales

Wrexham self-build

First Choice Housing in partnership with Wrexham Local Authority was successful in being awarded £2.26 million to provide accommodation for Veterans in Wrexham funded with LIBOR funding under the £40 million Veterans Accommodation Fund.

Tŷ Ryan, an innovative self-build scheme for Veterans has been developed thanks to a successful partnership between Wrexham County Council, the MOD, First Choice, Community Self-Build Agency and Williams Homes Ltd. Completed in Spring 2018, Ty Ryan, has enabled Veterans to participate in the construction of their own homes, acquiring a range of skills and qualifications in the process which may aid their future employment opportunities.

The development features 10 two-bed apartments, six one-bed apartments and an individually designed ground floor wheelchair accessible apartment, providing an accessible kitchen and bathroom. Affordability was paramount and the rent was set in line with local housing allowance levels, enabling Veterans to access high-quality low-cost accommodation which is genuinely affordable.

The scheme has brought together a group of individuals with common experiences, needs and purpose and has helped create a strong community ethos and sense of belonging.

It has directly led to the full employment of six tenants, with one undertaking a training scheme and two enrolled in college courses. The stability provided by the scheme has also put three tenants back in contact with estranged family members.



Stephen was formerly a resident at Ty Dewr after serving for 12 years in the Armed Forces Royal Regiment Fusiliers as an anti-tank gunner and latterly a photographer.

After leaving the Army Stephen lived in Connah's Quay running a sculpting business. Following the breakdown of his marriage Stephen found himself homeless and lived in a number of temporary accommodation properties for several years. Stephen was then offered a place at Ty Dewr in Wrexham, a supported housing scheme for ex-Armed Forces personnel.

Stephen was invited to take part in the self-build scheme for Ty Ryan, 16 apartments solely for people with military backgrounds and connections. Stephen successfully saw the project through to the end and now has a one bedroom apartment which he helped to the build.

Having a permanent home has made a huge difference to Stephen and he now has his personal belongings with him and has established himself in a safe and secure home. Stephen is now studying sculpting at university and has recently been offered a position on a photography and filming course. He has also been invited to teach at College Glyndwr University.

Stephen said *"it's great for my wellbeing having my own home and my life is now much more focused and settled. I am now able to make plans for the future."*



Accommodation in Northern Ireland

The needs of ex-Servicemen and women and their families are monitored by the Veterans Support Office which liaises with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as required. Special arrangements are in place to meet the housing needs of the garrison in Northern Ireland. A military housing liaison officer within HQ 38 (Irish) Brigade addresses any issues that require the help of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, including those involving transition to civilian life.



CHAPTER 5 – INQUESTS AND JUDICIAL ENGAGEMENT

The Directorate of Judicial Engagement is formed of four main areas; Defence Inquests Unit (combining Tri-Service Inquests and Historic Northern Ireland Inquests), Historic Investigations (Iraq and Afghanistan), and Northern Ireland Claims.

Inquests: The Defence Inquests Unit

The Defence Inquests Unit is the MOD single point of contact for UK Coroners investigating the deaths of Service Personnel, Veterans and MOD civilians where an Inquest¹¹ has been called. The Unit is responsible for ensuring that all material relevant to inquests (e.g. personal file, medical records, career history) have been provided to UK Coroners. It also provides briefings and support to both former and current serving personnel and MOD civilians who are called as witnesses. Since the last report there have been 53 Non-operational and four operational (3 non-combat, 1 combat) deaths (of which 32 Inquests have been held), plus nine Northern Ireland legacy inquests involving the deaths of a number of civilians during Operation Banner.

The Defence Inquests Unit is integral to ensuring that the Department meets its moral obligations to support any Veteran or Service person involved in inquest proceedings. Experienced members of the Unit provide practical guidance and advice alongside access to an established support network of experts who deliver legal and pastoral support. This includes experienced Senior Council (QCs), mental health experts and access to welfare support provided through organisations such as the Army Regimental Association network. Each case is reviewed to ensure that the Department provides the necessary

legal and pastoral support tailored to the nature of the process under way:

- For legacy inquests in Northern Ireland this includes legal representation by the Crown Solicitor's Office and instructing Counsel who act on behalf of the Department and any Veteran called to be a witness.

Fatal accident inquiries -Scots Law

It has always been possible for a discretionary fatal accident inquiry to be held into a Military Service death in Scotland. For any such death occurring on or after 15 June 2017 it became mandatory for there to be a fatal accident inquiry. This puts Service Personnel in the same position as civilian employees.

This change follows the Inquiries into Fatal Accidents and Sudden Deaths etc. (Scotland) Act 2016 (Consequential Provisions and Modifications) Order 2016. This is an Order under section 104 of the Scotland Act 1998 which was promoted by the Scottish Government and made by the Secretary of State for Scotland. It does not have retrospective effect and came into effect alongside the wider commencement of the 2016 Act.

The Scottish Government had promoted an earlier change in the law, enacted in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, so that deaths in the course of military service abroad can lead to a fatal accident inquiry. To date no such fatal accident inquiries have been held.

¹¹An inquest is an inquiry held into sudden, unexpected or unnatural deaths to find out who the deceased was, when, and where they died and by what means the deceased came by his or her death, and the required information to register the death with the registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages

Criminal cases

In criminal cases, in connection with Northern Ireland, Iraq or Afghanistan, independent legal advice and representation will be provided at departmental expense. This will be provided irrespective of length of service, at no cost to the individual, and continue for as long as is necessary.

Iraq & Afghanistan investigations

The Department has a duty of care towards Service Personnel and Veterans who took part in these conflicts. This extends to supporting them when they face allegations arising from their Service. Those interviewed as potential suspects in relation to incidents in Iraq and Afghanistan are entitled to free legal assistance. Commanding Officers play a key role in ensuring that personnel receive the support they need, therefore any Veteran being investigated is assigned a Commanding Officer to help them obtain appropriate pastoral support.

Northern Ireland

The MOD continues to work closely with the Northern Ireland Office to ensure that proposals to respond to the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland do not unfairly focus on members of the security forces. The proposed legacy institutions arising from the Stormont House Agreement would be under legal obligations to be balanced, proportionate, transparent, fair and equitable to make sure Veterans are not unfairly treated or disproportionately investigated. The Northern Ireland Office launched a public consultation exercise on the creation of these institutions on 11 May 2018 and has since worked with MOD to encourage the Veteran community to engage with the consultation, including through utilising the Army's network of Regimental Associations. The MOD will work closely with the Northern Ireland Office following the conclusion of the consultation on 5 October 2018 to ensure that the position of Veterans is an integral consideration when considering the Government's response.

Legal protections

There is a growing strength of feeling within Parliament and elsewhere that our Service Personnel and Veterans should be afforded greater legal protection from prosecutions related to historical operations than they currently receive. The Secretary of State for Defence is very supportive of this view and has established a dedicated team under Chief of Defence People to examine how this increased protection could be provided.





CHAPTER 6 – FAMILY LIFE

Family life observations from last year's report

The Families Federations asked that the UK Government give higher priority to the need to addressing the challenges faced by some Foreign and Commonwealth families. The MOD and the Home Office are leading a project which is considering various options for providing support to these families. This is discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

The Families Federations also identified concerns raised by families moving between administrations, citing the potential disadvantages they incur and the difficulties they face understanding how to access services and support. In July, the Defence Secretary announced that financial mitigation payments will be made to those negatively impacted for tax year 2018/19 by Scottish income tax being higher than the rest of the UK. A single financial mitigation payment will be made retrospectively, in 2019, after the tax year has concluded, and its value will be based upon taxable income earned through military service.

Following the Welsh Government's publication of their Welcome to Wales¹² document in 2016, the Scottish Government has this year published Welcome to Scotland and a Welcome to England guide will be published on the Covenant Website by the end of 2018. These documents are intended to provide advice to serving personnel and their families moving between the administrations, to explain how the provision of and access to services differs.

Achievements this year

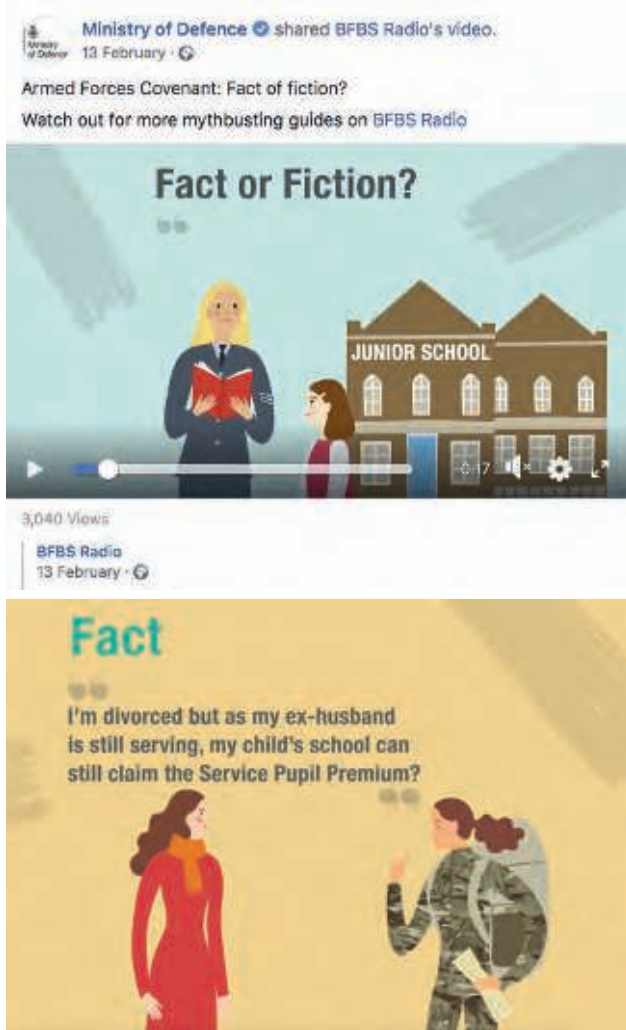
Communicating the Covenant

Understanding of the Covenant remains a barrier to Service Families accessing available support. The MOD collaborates with the British Forces Broadcasting Service on communications activity on the Covenant and worked with them to produce a series of [Fact or Fiction videos](#) to promote understanding, awareness and debunk some common myths about what the Covenant delivers for the Armed Forces community.

Communication within the Services has focussed on informing staff about what the Armed Forces Covenant is and how it can support them and their family. As part of the [Communications Strategy](#), a new internal communications plan has been introduced that helps to explain Covenant policies in relation to housing, education and finance. This information is being communicated across several channels, including single Service intranets and social media. Additionally, the Royal Navy has produced a video about the Covenant that is being distributed internally and externally, and the Army will deliver key Covenant messages directly to every Army unit at least once every two years by Chief of the General Staff's Briefing Team.

The support provided to Army Covenant Champions will be refreshed along with a review of best practice. The Army has also issued a comprehensive new guide to the Covenant and its place within the Transition process. The Royal Air Force has assigned a new lead for the Covenant role and instructed its Covenant team to conduct a review of the process of communicating with Covenant Champions. This will ensure policy is current and relevant and

¹² <https://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/commsafety/160915-welcome-to-wales-armed-forces-en.pdf>



enable tailored messaging to the Royal Air Force community. All three Services' Covenant leads work closely with the central Covenant team.

Families Strategy

Service Families Working group

The MOD is also looking at alternative, more direct ways of communicating with Service Families. In March this year the Service **Families Working Group** was established which draws together policy leads from across MOD, the single Services, heads of the single Service HIVE information service, and representatives from the three Families Federations. The group plays an important role in overseeing implementation of the Families Strategy and has worked together to produce a refreshed Action Plan for 2018 – 2020 setting out tangible activity to enable implementation of the principles of the Strategy. It reports into the Service Welfare Steering Group and Defence People and Training Board, providing an opportunity for representatives of Service Families to

escalate matters to the most senior decision makers in Defence. The Working Group also provides an opportunity for other parts of MOD, such as the Future Accommodation Model team to talk through their policies and programmes and collectively consider the welfare needs of Service Families.

Partner employment

While 76% of Service spouses are employed, which is broadly comparable to the UK employment rate for women, 68% feel negative about the impact of Service life on their career. Recognising that mobility can cause difficulty with career progression the MOD has included the employment of spouses and civil partners of Service Personnel as one of seven priority areas of activity within the Families Strategy includes, and it has remained a high priority this year. During the summer, Anglia Ruskin University and Forces in Mind Trust published an informative evaluation of our Spousal Employment Support trial that ended in October 2017. The evaluation set out the benefits of the trial to the spouses who took part, with some particularly useful findings on how the trial increased both confidence and a sense of feeling valued by Defence. This evaluation, coupled with other valuable pieces of research, such as the Warwick University study commissioned by the Army Families Federation, has helped determine the next steps for partner employment.

On 30 September 2018, the Defence Secretary announced a **new scheme to support spousal employment**. Building on the outcomes of the Spousal Employment Support evaluation and taking account of the barriers identified through responses to the Families Continuous Attitudes Survey and the Army Families Federation's research, the scheme will facilitate access to vocational training and development opportunities, helping them to further enhance their skills and employability. The **Partner Employment Steering Group** will continue to oversee efforts in this area, as well as working with Defence Relationship Management to explore what more employers can do to support Service spouses and partners to achieve rewarding and lasting employment.

Adoption into Service Families

The **SSAFA Adoption Service** plays a vital role in helping serving families who wish to adopt by challenging misconceptions and a lack of understanding about the suitability of potential adopters within the military community. Many of those who approach SSAFA have been rejected by

their local adoption agencies because of concerns about the impact of deployment on family life, or outdated perceptions of what life is like in the military today. The Department for Education continues to address this by working with local authorities through its [Military Adoption Champion project](#), to challenge the discrimination faced by military families.

SSAFA's adoption service social workers can assess, train and support would be adopters from a position of understanding of the challenges and inherent strengths of the military community; and since 2016 has placed 40 children with military families, including children identified by local authorities as being harder to place, having additional needs, or being part of a sibling group.

Flexible Service

The [Armed Forces \(Flexible Working\) Act 2018](#), became law on 8 February 2018. Parliament has provided a legal mandate to introduce changes which will allow Regular Service Personnel to apply to serve part-time and/or restrict the amount of time they are separated from their home base for a temporary period.

While the granting of Flexible Service must be balanced with the need to maintain operational effectiveness, the amended Terms of Service regulations will also ensure that all Regular serving personnel will be able to apply for Flexible Service on a voluntary basis. They also place overall limits on the amount of time personnel can serve flexibly, (a maximum of four years in every 12). Personnel will be able to apply to serve part-time (they can reduce their commitment by 20% or 40%), or to restrict their separation from the home base to no more than 35 days each calendar year, or they can apply for both.

In parallel to final policy changes, other relevant regulations have been amended to make sure they're Flexible Service ready, IT systems have been updated, guidance material issued, and communications activity is underway.

Flexible Service represents a modernising step for the Armed Forces that will give our people more choice and control over their careers, thereby taking into account the needs of Service Families, with a positive long-term impact on recruitment and retention.

Search Flexible Service on gov.uk for more information.

Spousal employment and support event 2018 case study from Richmond Jobcentre Plus Partnership Team: Catterick Garrison,

To support and help partners of Service Personnel and their families into employment, Jobcentre Plus (part of Department for Work and Pensions) has worked with Catterick Garrison (North Yorkshire) to collaboratively run Spousal Employment and Support Events twice a year at Catterick Garrison.

As a result of effective partnership working between the local Jobcentre Plus office, Richmond and Catterick Garrison, two successful events were held in May and September, offering support to the 416 people attending. The Department for Work and Pensions provided staff to support the events and arranged for 20 employers with 80 current vacancies and 23 support providers to attend the 2nd May event and excelled in increasing the number of employers in attendance at the 26th September event to 34 employers with over 250 current vacancies on offer. Furthermore all the employers fed back that they would like to attend the next event scheduled for Spring 2019. The Department widely advertised the event to their Service community customers and MOD co-ordinated the military support for the event and advertisements to units and spouses.

The events gave employers and providers the opportunity to network, share information and see where they could work together for the Armed Forces community. Department for Work and Pensions staff were available to provide benefit and employment advice helping people with Universal Credit applications and job applications.

There are a variety of benefits in helping spouses and partners to gain employment such as; additional family income, building their own personal pension provision for later life, promoting mental wellbeing and developing and maintaining an active link with civilian life. Together they all have a part to play in retaining Service Personnel by reducing pressure for them to leave early.

The mobility of Service life

In the 2018 Families continuous attitudes survey, half of Service Families reported feeling disadvantaged in regard to family life; with just one in ten feeling advantaged. Service life is rewarding and offers unique experiences, however families who follow the Service person to new postings have to contend with significant upheaval which can impact on many aspects of their life. Devolution means that decisions regarding the availability of services are made at the local level, on the basis of local priorities and funding, but this can lead to confusion when moving between regions and administrations.

Overseas supportability

The [Medical Supportability Working Group](#) is creating some specific information for families on healthcare provision overseas and what they are required to do before accepting assignment to an overseas location. The Families Federations (AFF) are represented on this working group.

NHS dental services

Dental care is one example which has been regularly raised by the Families Federations. The NHS commissions and provides NHS dental services for Service Families and ensures that they are at no disadvantage compared with the population where they live. Understandably, Service Families moving from one area where they are able to access an NHS dentist, to another where there is no availability, may feel disadvantaged due to their serving partner's posting. NHS patients no longer register with a dentist, but register for a course of treatment and local capacity is determined by the availability of funding and the local priorities set.

All parties will continue to work together to improve services and the NHS in England is working to improve access generally and has produced a guide for orthodontic treatment specifically for Armed Forces families. The MOD will also look to extend their consideration of family issues on posting to include dental care. The MOD intends to learn lessons from the work it did with residents at RAF Valley, (and with assistance from the Families Federations and other stakeholders), where it was successful in making the case for increases in provision by sharing planning, facilities and resources with the local NHS.

Childcare

Variation in the cost of childcare provision across the UK can lead to significant financial pressures. While it appears that Service families are at no more of a financial disadvantage than their civilian peers in local areas, the mobility and unpredictability of Service life makes planning for these additional costs more difficult. There is a broad range of government support available to families, which Service Families are able to access, but the MOD is considering how more targeted support can be provided to families in greatest financial difficulty, especially for those where both parents may be serving.

In October, a paper was submitted to the Service People Policy Group offering a range of options for addressing this issue. The paper recommended addressing the variation in the cost of childcare by focusing on mitigation in high-cost areas. The MOD Remuneration Team has been asked to report on the feasibility and implications of this option during February of 2019. Ahead of this date, MOD's Directorate for Children and Young People is continuing to develop advice and guidance on the governance of childcare provision operating from the Defence Estate. This will be consolidated within coherent centralised MOD policy.

The Service People Policy Group also noted that improvements could be made to the collection of data about children of Service Personnel, highlighting the need to simplify the process for registering children on the HR system. There are also plans to include additional questions in Armed Forces attitudes surveys to gather more detailed information about families' childcare needs, thereby providing critical evidence of any childcare supply gaps or emerging issues.

Aside from the availability of local services, frequent moves impact the stability of family life in various ways. The Children's Commissioner's report into life as a Service child provided some interesting insight into the experiences of these children. Improving understanding of the impact of Service life on the children of Service Personnel is a priority for this Government. Reference to Service children as part of the Department for Health and Social Care and Department for Education's joint [consultation on the provision of mental health support in state schools](#), is an example of this. The MOD and Families Federations are working with both departments to ensure that the needs of Service

children are considered in the development of guidance for the new mental health support teams, and forging greater links between these new teams and the local military community.

The Crofton Hammond Infant School recognised the impact that relocation can have on families and sought funding from the Covenant Fund's local grants programme.

Advice and Peer Support – case study: Crofton Hammond Infant School in Stubbington, Hampshire

30% of the school's pupils come from Service Families. They support families dealing with separation and homecomings through their trained Family Liaison Officer as well as providing drop-in sessions for children with a parent on deployment where they can write letters and talk about any worries they might have. The demand for this service made it harder to find a space in school. With a £20,000 grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Local Grants programme they were able to add a Cabin in the school grounds.

The Cabin has made a real difference, offering weekly support sessions for any child with a parent away on deployment, and it's been particularly helpful for the children to realise that they are not the only ones who have a parent away. Some of them were unaware that their dads were on the same ship – and equally the dads didn't know their children were at the same school. The weekly drop-in is used to promote joint working between schools to better support service families.

Pompey's Military Kids

Service children from schools in Portsmouth are getting to enjoy days out on the Boleh yacht. The recently-restored Boleh has been supporting the Pompey's Military Kids schools cluster group after Henry Middleton, of the Boleh Trust, heard about them through Portsmouth City Council, an Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award winner.

Pompey's Military Kids is a joint initiative set up by Portsmouth City Council and the Naval Families Federation, working with representatives from various schools across the city. The Cluster Group supports Service children in a number of different ways and local schools now share good ideas and best practice through collaborative working. The Group also organises events and activities which bring Service children together, to encourage them to interact, make new friends and support each other.

The first pupils to sail on Boleh were from Years 7 to 10 at Mayfield School, one of them being 15-year-old Ruby Hughes who said *"I really enjoyed it. It was the first time I have been on a ship like that – usually I've just been on board ships where my Dad worked. Steering was the best part; we went up to the end of the harbour and I steered it most of the way up. It was hard work – you have to fight against the wind, but I got the hang of it"*

Accompanying the group was Ben Currier, Head of Languages at Mayfield, and himself a Service child. *"My Dad is Navy,"* said Ben. *"He was in the Falklands – he used to be a Leading Chef, and he's now retired. He deployed a lot and during my childhood he wasn't about too often, so I feel an affinity for these pupils. It was amazing today and the kids have really enjoyed themselves."*

Five other schools have had the opportunity to sail on Boleh since the Mayfield students enjoyed their trip and thanks to a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, the Trust will continue to offer the sailing experiences to PMK schools throughout the 2019 sailing season.



Families with additional needs and disabilities

For families with additional needs where support networks and local care arrangements are so important, the impact of relocation can be profound.

The [Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum \(FANDF\)](#)¹³ is a non-publicly funded MOD group supported by SSAFA, to keep Service Families with dependants who have disabilities and/or additional needs in touch with issues that affect them both inside and outside Service life.

The FANDF aims to ensure that issues raised by its members are addressed with the appropriate authorities, that they are listened to and that action is taken to meet their needs.

The MOD-hosted conference recognises the importance of giving Service Families with disabilities and/or additional needs a voice and enables the wider FANDF Forum to put their concerns directly to those who advise Ministers on MOD policies that affect their lives. The Rt. Hon. Earl Howe PC, Minister of State for Defence, opened the conference in June this year. Welfare representatives from each of the single Services also took part in a panel discussion, allowing families to raise concerns directly with policy makers.

Feedback from families was positive about the support and understanding they received. Many were reassured *“that I am not the only person with a disabled child in the forces”* and provided with the *“confidence that I am not alone, there are other families on the same journey.”* They feel that the conference *“empowered [them] with the knowledge that we have the support required.”* The families welcomed the opportunity to share experience, gain support and, most importantly, engage directly with those responsible for the policies which affect them.

Understanding the strain that Service Families with additional needs and/or disabilities can face, SSAFA also provides the Short Breaks Service which provides the opportunity for these families to spend quality time together, try new activities and challenge themselves.

Armed Forces carers

Those with caring commitments can experience a similar upheaval. The [NHS England’s ‘Commitment to Carers’ Programme](#) is supporting efforts to improve the identification of carers within the Armed Forces community. This reflects the principle of no disadvantage as a consequence of Service. NHS England will continue to jointly raise awareness of the health-related aspects of support for carers in the Armed Forces and will make sure this work reaches relevant stakeholders. The Armed Forces ‘Commitment to Carers’ event, held in November 2018 brought together key stakeholders, including carers, to learn of progress and achievement delivered through cross-Government and Charitable Sector work.

The MOD and NHS England are delivering support to Armed Forces carers, particularly through the MOD Armed Forces Families Strategy and work regarding safeguarding. The findings of The Children’s Society Report *Young Carers in Armed Forces Evidencing the Need Sept 2017* highlights the needs of children in Armed Forces Families with caring responsibilities for a family member aligned with Covenant priorities and endorsed action. The commitment to the Covenant considers adult, young adult and young carers, and acknowledges the need to best support a community that often does not have access to broader familial support.

Loneliness and social isolation within the Armed Forces community

The Royal British Legion conducted research into social isolation amongst the Service community, and presented their findings to the Service Families Working Group in June. The research, conducted via surveys and interviews, identified common risk factors for social isolation and loneliness to include transition from military to civilian life, regular moves, deployment, military culture, a propensity towards self-sufficiency, a reluctance among military personnel to be perceived as showing weakness, homesickness on entry and loss of identity on exit. Furthermore, it was considered that barriers to accepting support included the perceived stigma of being a ‘welfare case’, a fear of losing out on a promotion or worries about being perceived as ‘mad’. Since the meeting, the MOD has met with

¹³ 20180925 FANDF IG/MC FANDF Conference 11 June 2018

the Royal British Legion team to consider how the research findings can be translated into practical, tangible interventions.

Tackling the causes of loneliness and social isolation is a national priority for the [Welsh Government](#). During 2018 it will publish for consultation a [cross-government strategy on loneliness and isolation](#), with a final strategy published by March 2019.

Military charities will be consulted on the Strategy to ensure inclusion of the Armed Forces community and the Welsh Government will work with the Service Families Federations to determine what support can be offered to Service Personnel and their families.

The [Scottish Government](#) is developing an ambitious strategy to tackle social isolation and loneliness, which is focused on community empowerment and everyone playing their part. The strategy, [A Connected Scotland](#)¹⁴, takes a whole population approach however it recognises that particular groups of people, like Veterans, may be at increased risk of social isolation and loneliness. The consultation for the draft strategy closed at the end of April 2018 and the final strategy will be published before the end of 2018.

In July, SSAFA published *The Nation's Duty – challenging society's disservice to a new generation of veterans* which highlighted that a growing number of younger Veterans are feeling increasingly isolated from society. It is clear from SSAFA's research that there are several areas where the issue of loneliness and isolation can be addressed, and the charity welcomes the opportunity to act on the findings of its research with the Ministry of Defence

Coping with bereavement

Bereaved children

In England, the Department for Education continues to fund the [Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme](#), which is administered by MOD and provides Higher, Further and Technical Education Scholarships for the children of Service Personnel whose death has been attributed to Service since 1990. The scholarships enable a bereaved young person to remain in Further or Technical Education for up to three years, and will contribute toward the cost of tuition and maintenance for initial undergraduate courses or higher level technical education programmes in the UK.

[In Wales, the Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme](#) has continued to give the children of those who have died in the service of their country a head start in life by providing a scholarship. In Financial Year 2017/18, the Welsh Government contributed a total of £45,925 supporting students on this scheme.

¹⁴<https://www.gov.scot/publications/connected-scotland-tackling-social-isolation-loneliness-building-stronger-communities/>

Families in stress

Serving families are supported through larger grants under the [Families in Stress](#) programme, which aims to offer support for families going through a particularly difficult period. In 2018 £2,537,728 was awarded to 14 projects.

Case Study: Home Start Kennet and

Home-Start South Wiltshire received a grant of £90,000 under round 1 to provide support to Armed Forces Families with young children. By the end of their first year, they had provided individual, in-the-home support for 27 military families; and the families felt that they had been supported in a range of ways including being supported to manage mental health needs, managing difficult behaviour or feeling less isolated, with one parent stating: *'I felt the service was my lifeline in a time of great need.'*

A mother was struggling to meet the competing demands of her new baby and other young children (one with special educational needs). The woman's husband was serving away from home. She was carefully matched with a Home-Start volunteer with a social care background, who provided both emotional and practical support to the family, while they settled into new routines. By the end of Home-Start involvement, The woman felt she was coping much better and her husband was due to return home.



The Families In Stress programme helps families in difficult circumstances. In 2018, under round 2 of the programme Aurora New Dawn received a grant of £150,000, for a project to provide specialist, high-quality support and advocacy to victims of domestic abuse and related violence where the victim or alleged perpetrator is a serving member of the Armed Forces. The project provides pro-active support which takes into account the specific issues facing Armed Forces personnel and their families.

Domestic Abuse Strategy

In July MOD published the first Defence domestic abuse strategy [No Defence For Abuse](#). The Strategy, which builds on existing support and initiatives, aims to reduce the prevalence and impact of domestic abuse and increase the safety and wellbeing of all those affected. This Strategy, which sits alongside the Armed Forces Families' Strategy and Defence People Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and is written for all Defence people (including civil servants and Veterans), aims to establish a more robust evidence base, rework existing policy and further awareness and training. Funding was allocated this year, as part of the Strategy, to enable an independent review of the Service Police response to domestic abuse to take place; the review concluded in the Summer and its findings are now being implemented across the three Services. Specialist training is also being provided in partnership with the charity Mankind to support Army Welfare staff to respond effectively to male victims of domestic abuse; work continues to develop and define a domestic abuse military specialism in order for targeted support to be offered via the National Domestic Violence helpline; and the team continues to engage with development of the Government's Domestic Violence and Abuse Bill.

SSAFA runs a refuge at [Gildea House](#) for women and children of serving personnel, and Veterans, who find themselves the victim of domestic abuse or relationship breakdowns. In particular, SSAFA is the only charity that can accommodate and support the families of Foreign and Commonwealth serving personnel, who lack residency rights and have no recourse to public funds.

Non-British personnel and families

The MOD welcomed the Forces in Mind Trust report: [*Meeting the Needs of Commonwealth Personnel and Families: A Map of Service Provision*](#) published in March 2018 and commissioned by Cobseo. The Department is working with the Home Office on several actions which look to address the findings and recommendations of the report .

To assist with the understandable challenge faced by the Army Families Federation in responding to the significant increase in queries from non-British families, funding has been provided via the Covenant Trust Fund for an extra caseworker at the Federation, and funding is now available for two extra caseworkers in the Army.

Discussions have taken place between the MOD and the Home Office to consider options for mitigating disadvantage in relation to the Minimum Income Threshold and the cost of immigration, which can be prohibitive for some families. In parallel, MOD is working with the Joining Forces Credit Union to create a savings scheme for non-British Personnel to help them prepare for the cost of settlement for them and their families at the end of their Service.

Following a literature review, preliminary feedback has been received from all three Services on the guidance currently provided to non-British personnel on immigration issues. This indicates that while improvements are currently being made, a more coherent central approach to communications would help personnel and their families to understand the various issues involved.

The MOD also acknowledges that more needs to be done to improve awareness of non-British immigration issues amongst personnel and the Chain of Command, and this is subject to ongoing work.



CHAPTER 7 – THROUGH-LIFE SUPPORT

Preparing for life after Service

Achievement across the UK

Transition to civilian life

The MOD will be introducing a [Defence Holistic Transition policy](#). Transition support currently provided by the MOD largely focuses on the employment support delivered by the Career Transition Partnership. Transition is far wider than finding employment, and relates to the holistic and significant life changing processes which affect both the Service Person and their immediate family through the entire time they are within or connected to the Armed Forces, through to discharge and beyond, which need to be appropriately addressed to ensure successful transition into civilian life.

Defence in partnership with a range of other public and private organisations, already provides many pillars of support across what is termed ‘holistic transition’, which includes; resettlement; health and wellbeing; welfare; housing advice; financial information and chain of command pastoral guidance, for example, but which are not effectively coordinated under a single policy. The purpose of the new policy will be to provide a centrally coordinated approach that better prepares and transitions personnel and their families at the end of Service.

The new policy will have four main strands:

- Improving the resilience and understanding of Service Personnel and their families on a regular basis while in service to prepare for their inevitable transition into civilian life at the end of Service. This will include information and guidance on ‘Life Skills’ about ‘civilian’ and ‘life’ issues (for example, budgeting, debt management, housing, health, civilian agencies, individual responsibilities to prepare and plan).

- Better coordination among the various domains which currently contribute to holistic ‘transition’. The Career Transition Partnership will continue to provide the excellent existing employment support for all Service Leavers under its normal resettlement remit.
- The creation of a new organisation ‘Defence Transition Services’, which will provide the additional ‘helping hand’ for those who are like to struggle the most and face greater barriers to making a successful transition.
- Monitoring Service Personnel during their career on their preparation for their civilian future, and assessing Service Leavers prior to discharge on their readiness to transition (via a monitoring and assessment tool). Those who have significant challenges, will be referred to the Defence Transition Services.

Defence Transition Service

15,000 Service Personnel leave the Armed Forces each year, and a small proportion of those are assessed as being at risk of struggling with the transition to civilian life. Difficulty adjusting is particularly prevalent for Personnel with less than four years’ service, or who joined with pre-existing issues which their time with the Armed Forces was unable to permanently resolve. In addition to the support offered to Service Leavers through Armed Forces resettlement provision and the Career Transition Partnership, the Defence Transition Service will provide bespoke support to this cohort of leavers.

The new organisation, which will launch in winter 2018/19, will be part of the existing Veterans UK organisation. It will receive all the referrals from the single Services for those individuals assessed as needing extra support. Once a holistic needs assessment has been undertaken by Defence

Transition Service staff, a jointly owned plan will be made and executed, which will involve the new service plugging the individual into the specific interventions required. This could entail support with debt management, with finding appropriate housing, alcohol misuse, or anger management.

The team will be based at MOD's Veterans UK organisation at Norcross in Lancashire, but the staff themselves will be located throughout the UK, including within the Devolved Nations. This will ensure that individuals are connected to the networks of support available from national, devolved and local government, including charitable support where necessary.

Early Service Leavers Transition support Case Study from Richmond Jobcentre Plus Partnership Team: Catterick Garrison

Staff from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) local Jobcentre Plus (JCP) office attend Catterick Garrison twice a week to give presentations to Early Service Leavers (ESLs) about benefits and support available to them.

On the day, the DWP provide a one- one support service for the ESLs from the Infantry Training Centre and others leaving units within Catterick Garrison. The DWP staff are based at the Army Welfare Service HiVE (an information hub) and their presence ensures that the ESLs get the advice and the holistic package of support they need prior to leaving the military.

The DWP support ESL claims to benefit and ensure that they can access JCP support in the area they choose to return to. DWP have been able to support many of those attending the DWP presentations with their benefit claims.

In addition to supporting an ESL with making a claim the DWP play a pivotal role in co-ordinating support for the most vulnerable leavers such as those identified at risk of being homeless and care leavers whom joined the service and are now ESLs. The DWP contact the Armed Forces Outreach Service on behalf of any ESLs at risk of being homeless, to get support with housing options and contact Care leavers' social workers. This support all happens prior to the ESLs leaving Catterick Garrison.

The MOD is working with its partners to improve the support available on leaving the Services, particularly for those Veterans who struggle. However, it should be noted that Office for National Statistics Annual Population Survey data indicates that the working age Veteran employment rate at 78% is comparable with that of working age non-Veterans at 79%.¹⁵

UK Veterans Strategy

The UK-wide [Strategy for our Veterans](#) builds on the work that public, private and charitable sector do to support and empower Veterans. It goes on to set clear goals for the future, with the principles and aims needed to continue to meet the needs of the older Veterans and the wider Veteran community over the next ten years, and set the right conditions for society to empower – and support – them for the next 100 years.

This Strategy provides enduring Vision and Principles for the whole of the UK and is applicable across all sectors of life: public, private, charitable and individual. There are five cross-cutting factors (Collaboration between organisations, Coordination of Veterans' Services, Data on the Veteran Community, Public Perception and understanding, and Recognition of Veterans) that provide a backdrop to the overall system of Veterans service provision. In addition to this, there are six identified themes, that emerged as affecting the Veteran experience (community and relationships; employment, education and skills; finance and debt; health and wellbeing; making a home in civilian society; and Veterans and the Law). For each of the cross-cutting factors and themes there is a 2028 outcome which all nations will work to deliver.

Veteran identification

As announced by the Prime Minister in December 2017 and as a key deliverable and enabler of the Veterans Strategy, a new [Veterans ID Card](#) will be launched in December 2018. This new ID card will enable Veterans to provide instant verification of Service when accessing Government and Charitable Sector support, while providing an emotional and tangible link to the Armed Forces.

¹⁵ To enable comparisons the non-veteran employment rate has been adjusted to account for the age and gender structure of the veteran population.

The new ID card has two functions: to provide a memento of Service, maintaining a tangible link to the Armed Forces, and to ensure that public and Charitable Sector services and support can be provided where needed to Veterans as efficiently as possible. Currently, there is no way for existing Veterans to easily prove the fact that they have served, and the administrative burden on providers when verifying that a person is a Veteran can be considerable, both in time and cost.

Veterans' Gateway

The Veterans' Gateway, led by the Royal British Legion charity consortium, celebrated its one year anniversary in July 2018 with a visit from the Right Honourable Tobias Ellwood, Minister for Defence People and Veterans. The Gateway recorded over 10,000 enquires and 183,420 website users in its first year and the Minister met with Veterans who now work as call handlers to see first-hand the work that goes on behind the scenes to support the Veteran community.



The Gateway was created as a single point of contact for Veterans to access the services they need. The Royal British Legion has awarded funding to Ulster University for an 18 months research project which will evaluate the effectiveness of the Veterans' Gateway service.

Financial Compensation

Quinquennial Review of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

The Quinquennial Review *One Year On* report was published in April 2018. The report recommended that the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) lump sum awards, be uplifted in line with inflation to maintain their value. It also recommended an uplift of the highest tariff from £570,000 to £650,000, which was last reviewed by Lord Boyce in 2010. These two recommendations, as well as an increase in the cap, i.e. the total lump sum payment awarded for multiple injuries, from £570,000 to £650,000, which automatically follows the top tier increase to £650,000, were implemented on 9 April 2018.

A review of the maximum tariff level award for mental health conditions upwards (potentially from level 6 (£140,000) to level 4 (£290,000)) has been approved and is due to be implemented from April 2019.

Armed Forces Compensation Service tribunals

Direct Lodgement refers to the ability to submit an appeal directly to the appropriate committee, without having to go through the respondent organisation. Rollout of Direct Lodgement started with Scotland on 1 January 2018. England, Wales and Northern Ireland will follow over 2019/20 using Scotland as a pilot. This is being taken forward with full consultation of the three jurisdictions. The consultation has included consideration of panel composition, which will remain a matter for the Senior President of Tribunals who will continue to ensure that the tribunal is not only accessible, fair, handled quickly and efficiently, but that the composition will continue to reflect the specific needs of the Armed Forces as the court system is modernised.

Support available in England

Transition to Civilian Life

Beginning a new career

As part of the Government's support for Service Leavers, the Department for Education and the MOD jointly operate the [Further Education and Higher Education Scheme for Service Leavers](#). This pays the tuition fees for UK higher education courses for Service Leavers – usually three year undergraduate courses but also integrated Masters courses (four year courses that give an undergraduate degree after three years and a Masters after four), Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas. The scheme is open to eligible Service Personnel leaving the Armed Forces who have not previously undertaken higher education. Funding is available for Service Leavers for up to five years after they have left the Services.

NHS England launched the [Step into Health](#) programme in January, which promotes the skills of Veterans to the entire NHS and career opportunities (especially non-clinical ones) to Service Leavers. This is of benefit to both sides given the synergy of values and the work ready nature of state investments in skilled ex-Service personnel, as well as skilled families moving around the country, on posting. It is intended to use this model for other areas of government.

There are opportunities for ex-Service Personnel to work in a variety of roles such as NHS porters or in pharmaceuticals.

The [Troops to Teachers Undergraduate Initial Teacher Training Bursary](#) initiative makes bursaries worth £40,000 over two years available to Veterans

who study for an undergraduate degree with qualified teacher status in England in a priority subject (i.e. secondary biology, chemistry, physics, computing maths or modern foreign languages). The bursary will be payable in the final two years of an undergraduate initial teacher training programme. The Department for Education, MOD policy officials and resettlement advisors are working in partnership to ensure that Veterans are aware of the new bursary, including via their regular employment fairs. Information on the bursary will also be widely available via the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service and through the Get into Teaching website and advice line. The former Troops to Teachers Initial Teacher Training programme, which was funded by the Department for Education and provided Service Leavers with a two-year, fully-funded employment based route to Qualified Teacher Status, will continue to be delivered to existing participants through the University of Brighton. The final cohort is due to complete the programme in September 2019.

The [Further Forces](#) programme aims to recruit Service Leavers with relevant skills in science, engineering and technology to train and teach related subjects in further education. The Department for Education supports the scheme through its funding of the Education and Training Foundation, which oversees the programme in partnership with the Gatsby Charitable Trust. It is delivered by the University of Portsmouth in association with the University of Brighton, and aims to recruit and train 110 further education teachers by 2020. There are currently 99 Service Leavers engaged in the programme – and through the autumn 2017 budget the Department for Education secured additional resources to expand the programme by up to 100 further places.





Campbell Christie CBE, an Education and Training Foundation Associate and the ambassador for the Further Forces programme.

Support for the Vulnerable

Transition Mentoring Trial at Catterick

On 15 January 2018, SSAFA the Armed Forces Charity, launched its Transition Mentoring Trial for the Army at Catterick Garrison. This is a collaboration between SSAFA, Defence (MOD centre and Army) and the Career Transition Partnership (CTP). The aim is to provide bespoke mentoring support to Early Service Leavers as they transition out of the Armed Forces; it centres on motivating and empowering them to realise their own strengths and develop their own strategies for the future. The trial is being held at Catterick as one of the largest Army garrisons in the UK. This location was decided due to all major stakeholders having a footprint on the ground; SSAFA has a branch on site, the CTP has career consultants and there is a steady trail of Early Service Leavers for whom this trial caters. The mentoring service is linked in with the CTP whereby individuals are offered a SSAFA Mentor by their Career Consultants and subsequently passed to a SSAFA mentoring coordinator if they wish. So far the trial has provided mentoring and information support for a small number of Service leavers in Catterick who have needed additional help. The trial is a good

example of collaborative work between Defence, CTP and SSAFA.

Tackling homelessness in England

While the great majority of Veterans go on to lead successful lives as civilians, using their wide-ranging skills developed through Service to make a positive impact on society, there are those who have difficulty making the transition. Available data indicates that rates of homelessness with the Veteran community are no greater than the general population. Nevertheless, for those who find themselves in this vulnerable position, we have a duty to provide them with the support they need.

Tracking rates of homelessness in the Veteran community will be easier in future. The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government's new Homelessness Case Level Information Classification System (H-CLIC) will flag whether those people applying for homelessness assistance have served in the Armed Forces. This will be recorded under the applicant's 'support needs'. This new information and other contextual data in H-CLIC will provide a far richer picture of the needs of this cohort and the outcomes achieved for them. The Ministry will

also be notified when a referral to a local authority has been made by the MOD. The first data set from H-CLIC will be available in December 2018, but it will not yet be at level of maturity necessary to draw any conclusions.

Alongside this, the Secretary of State for Defence is subject to the [Duty to Refer](#) in relation to members of the Regular Forces. The Secretary of State is required to refer those transitioning out of the Regular Forces in England he considers may be homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days to a local housing authority. This is subject to the individual's consent except in cases where there are safeguarding concerns about the welfare of children or vulnerable adults.

The Criminal Justice System

Research suggests that Veterans are less likely to be convicted of a criminal offence than the general population, but that those who are tend to be convicted of more serious offences. [Project Nova](#) works with Veterans in the Criminal Justice System to understand their issues and needs and is jointly delivered by RFEA - The Forces Employment Charity (formerly the Regular Forces Employment Association) and Walking With The Wounded. They work with Veterans who are arrested and are in prison as well as with ex-offenders, organising support, working with their charity partners, on a range of issues such as accommodation; employment, education and training; drugs & alcohol; finances and debt; mental health. Project Nova is currently available in North East and West England, the East of England, South Yorkshire and Humberside.

The impact of Project Nova on reoffending rates is striking. Seven out of ten participants had been arrested in the six-month period prior to their engagement with the Project but none were arrested in the following six months afterwards. The report also found that the greatest number of offences were carried out by those who had transitioned out of the military over 20 years earlier. However, while these statistics around the impact of engagement are encouraging, because of the relatively small data sets available, further factors need to be explored which could account for these changes.

[SSAFA](#) has operated a [prison in-reach service](#) for over 10 years and continues to provide an in-reach service within prisons and immigration removal centres across the UK. Its network of specially trained volunteers provide non-judgemental holistic support to all members of the Armed Forces community, and their families, who find themselves in custody. SSAFA also provides support for those in the wider criminal justice system, including those on probation or serving community sentences.

Support available in Scotland

Transition to civilian life

Skills development

The [Scottish Government's Veterans Employability Strategic Group](#) is now well established and has driven several initiatives aimed at removing the barriers to Veterans' employment. The Group has overseen engagement with some key employers to identify and share best practice and has also benefited from direct input from stakeholders such as the Families Federations and the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework Partnership.

A dedicated employability page on support for Armed Forces leavers and Veterans has now been created on *My World of Work*, an online tool accessible to people of all ages and at any point in their journey. The tools, advice and support available complements face-to-face services, helping people choose their future pathway and consider how they can continue to develop their skills and strengths throughout their lives. The new page for Service Leavers and Veterans was launched during Modern Apprenticeship week in March 2018.

As part of the work [Skills Development Scotland](#) and the Careers Transition Partnership is undertaking, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships will be promoted to Early Service Leavers, Veterans and their families. Skills Development Scotland will engage with Service Leavers and Veterans as part of Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2019, which will be held in March 2019.

Transferable skills

Responding to one of the recommendations from the [Scottish Veterans Commissioner](#), funding was approved through the Scottish Funding Council in early 2018 to enable the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework Partnership to lead a project on translating military qualifications to their Scottish equivalents that will be more easily recognised and understood by employers in Scotland. The project has been endorsed by both Scottish and UK Government Ministers and

the outcomes will have wide benefits for Service Personnel and Veterans.

Support for the vulnerable

Tackling Homelessness in Scotland

The [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group](#)¹⁶ was set up in October 2017 to recommend to the Scottish Ministers the actions and solutions needed to eradicate rough sleeping, transform the use of temporary accommodation and end homelessness in Scotland. The Action Group published its fourth and final¹⁷ set of recommendations on 27 June 2018, which were accepted in principle by the Scottish Government. Work has begun with the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group¹⁸ and partners, including local authorities, health and the charitable sector to consider and implement not only the Action Group's recommendations but also those from the Local Government and Communities Committee's Report on Homelessness of 12 February 2018.

¹⁶ <https://beta.gov.scot/groups/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group/>

¹⁷ <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group-final-report/>

¹⁸ <https://beta.gov.scot/groups/homelessness-prevention-and-strategy-group/>

Support available in Wales

Transition to civilian life

Skills development

Wales' [Further and Higher Education Commitment scheme](#) pays the tuition fees of those Service Leavers living in Wales when they study for a first full level 3 qualification, a first undergraduate or foundation degree, or a first Higher National Certificate or Higher National Diploma. The Welsh Government contributed a total of £232,464 in academic financial year 2017/18 towards this scheme enabling Service Leavers across Wales to benefit from further/higher education. The above commitments will continue in 2019.

Cardiff Metropolitan University's REGEN Hub

has created a linkage strategy with the Military Covenant Pupil Referral Unit. Phase two of the project will involve recruiting a pilot cohort of people undergoing voluntary discharge from the Armed Forces. Veterans will undertake an initial, ten credit, 'Preparing to Teach' Programme provided by Cardiff Metropolitan University. This will provide the Veterans with skills necessary to work with pupils to enhance interpersonal, self-management and employability skills. Veterans will be provided with volunteering opportunities and a potential career path and pupils will benefit from positive role models.

The Welsh Government launched its [Employment Pathway for ex-Service personnel](#) during Remembrance. The Pathway has been developed by working collectively with key partners in to clarify the employment options available and services that can offer assistance to ex-Service Personnel. It aims to reduce the challenge facing serving personnel upon transition into civilian life by assisting with accessing new employment opportunities.

To complement the Pathway work is underway to develop an Employers Toolkit. Providing clear guidance for ex-Service Personnel and employers on the added benefits of employing ex-Service Personnel, the toolkit will create a recruitment process that is accessible and friendly to Veterans, ensure recruiters and managers understand how to interpret

military experience and provide practical workplace experience, offering skills and conversion training.

Aimed at Veterans and individuals due to leave the Services a '[Forces in Construction](#)' event took place in October 2018. Delivered in partnership between the CITB and Coleg Cumbria the event provided valuable guidance, information and genuine career opportunities for members of the Armed Forces in engineering and construction. Providing an opportunity to meet North West-based construction and civil engineering employers the event showcased the employment, career and training opportunities available.

Support for the vulnerable

Tackling homelessness in Wales

The Code of Guidance for Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness already includes information and advice on how local authorities should consider the needs of the Armed Forces when undertaking housing assessments. However, the Welsh Government aims to strengthen this further when the Code is refreshed and published for consultation in the autumn. The revised guidance will be published in spring 2019.

Criminal Justice System

The Welsh Government is working in collaboration with key partners to reduce offending and reoffending in Wales. Through its [Framework to support positive change for those at risk of offending in Wales](#)¹⁹, the Welsh Government has made a commitment to increase partnership working between the statutory agencies and voluntary sector to ensure the support is in place for ex-Service Personnel within the criminal justice system.

The [Endeavour Unit at HMP Parc](#) in South Wales opened in 2015, housing ex-Service Personnel with prisoners sentenced to custody for the first time. The unit provides a focus for specialist Veteran support services working outside the prison to help rehabilitate prisoners during sentence and on release. Peer mentoring services for ex-Service Personnel are delivered by Change Step with employability support from Hire a Hero.

¹⁹ <https://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/safety/publications/framework-supporting-positive-change-for-those-at-risk-of-offending-in-wales/?lang=en>

Adopting a similar model, HMP Berwyn (a category C training prison for sentenced adult and young adult men) opened in February 2017 in Wrexham, North Wales. Including a Veteran wing, there is a strong focus on rehabilitation as over time the Veteran prisoners are moved out of the Veteran wing to aid transition into civilian life.

Supporting the Transition of Military Personnel (SToMP project) adopts a whole-system approach to supporting Veterans who come into contact with the criminal justice system in Wales. In the past year SToMP has implemented its ex-Service Personnel whole system pathway at the five Welsh prisons. The SToMP team worked closely with all prisons in Wales to scope their existing processes of identification, support and referrals of ex-Service Personnel, and develop a shared, consistent approach. The pathway includes identification, recording and signposting stages with consideration of transferring ex-Service Personnel where appropriate to HMP Parc and HMP Berwyn's dedicated ex-Service Personnel units.

Veteran Care Committees are also encouraged to pull together key partners both within and outside the establishment to ensure ongoing buy-in to the Pathway. The Pathway also encourages a Veteran Liaison Officer in each prison (a role recommended by the Phillips Review) and for their attendance at quarterly Covenant meetings.

SToMP has also coordinated a series of prison community days across the five prisons funded by an Armed Forces Covenant Grant. Activities included an assault course, a walking football match between Endeavour and Change Step, a Veteran's family day, HMP Rye Hill challenge and employment events.

SToMP CASE STUDY

Allen is 36 years old and served in the Royal Engineers when he was younger. After leaving the Army he committed three offences and following the third offence he was sentenced to twelve months imprisonment. Identified by the prison pathway as a Veteran, which was devised by Integrated Offender Management Cymru's Supporting Transition of Military Personnel (SToMP) which was funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, he was located to a Veteran's wing within HMP Parc. The unit is specifically designed for Veterans to access help from internal and external agencies who can support them during their time in custody and through the gate into the community.

Allen became involved with helping staff and other prisoners on the unit and as part of this, he helped Veterans cope with the prison environment and found himself becoming a peer mentor.

The charity Care after Combat worked with Allen before his release with regular visits to the unit and using a mentor system they were there for him upon his release.

Allen now lives in Bridgend and is the employment link for Care after Combat and Railtrack apprentices. It has been just over 12 months since Allen was released from HMP Parc and he continues to encourage Veterans in custody to take up the apprentice scheme.



CHAPTER 8 – BUSINESS AND THE COMMUNITY

Covenant in Business

The Armed Forces community contributes extremely positively to the UK economy and the extent to which companies support serving personnel or acknowledge the role of the Service Family, helps to improve perceptions of a career in the Armed Forces and acts as a positive recruitment and retention tool. The 2018 continuous attitudes surveys revealed that 75% of Reservists feel that their main civilian employer values their Service. Increasingly companies are understanding what the Armed Forces community has to offer the civilian workplace

and translating it into positive engagement activity which provides tangible support to serving personnel, families and Veterans.

Office for National Statistics Annual Population Survey data indicates that the working age Veteran employment rate at 78% is comparable with that of working age non-Veterans at 79%²⁰. Companies such as Lloyd's of London are taking advantage of the available talent. Lloyd's Veterans internship programme provides the company with access to highly skilled people. In 2018 75% of interns who entered the programme were recruited.

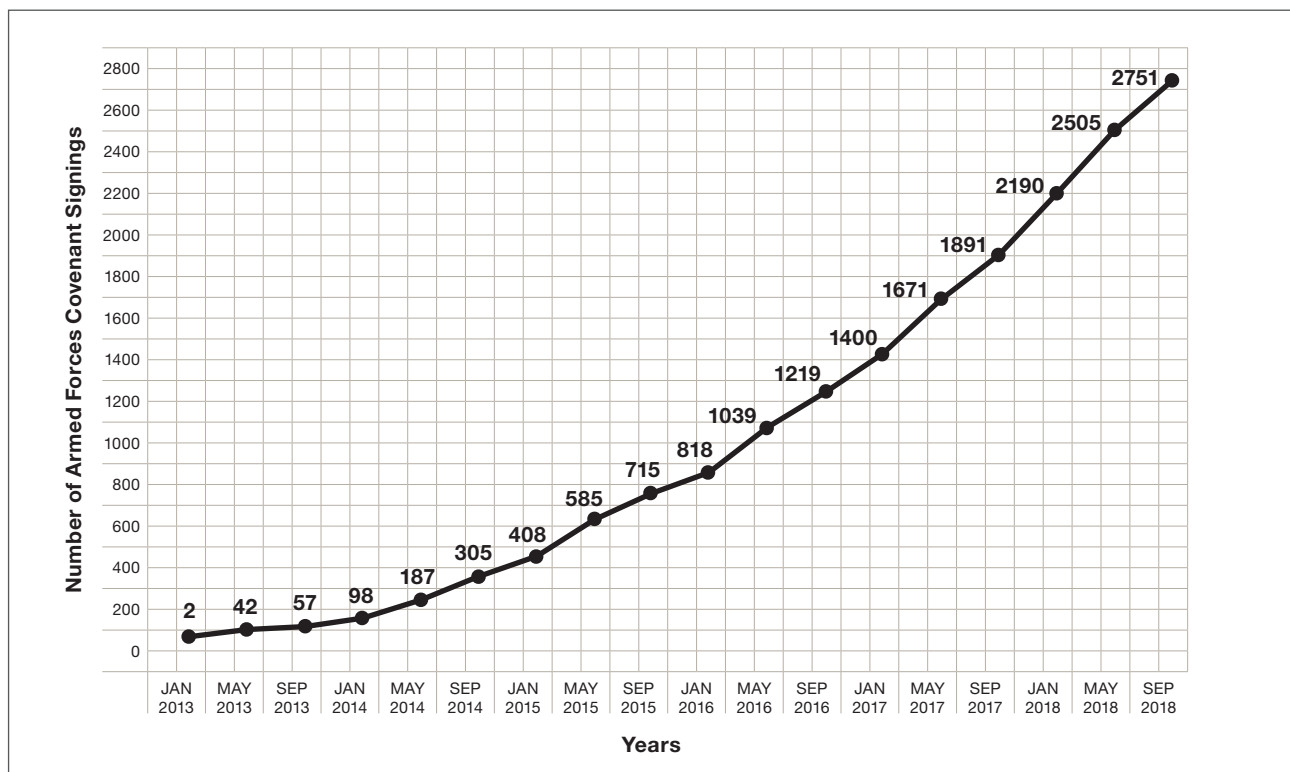


Figure 1: The Progression of Armed Forces Covenant signings as at 12 September 2018

²⁰ To enable comparisons the non-veteran employment rate has been adjusted to account for the age and gender structure of the veteran population.

Armed Forces Covenant signings

This year has seen the fastest ever increase in signings of the Armed Forces Covenant. UK Plc's support for the Covenant continues to grow with an increase in signings by organisations of all types and sizes, across the UK. In under 12 months we have generated more than 1,000 new signings, taking the total to over 3,000.

The Covenant is a critical tool in the development of meaningful, long term relationships with businesses. The rate of signings is ever-increasing, and currently growing at an average rate of around 25 new signatories a week. These incorporate organisations that signed a number of years ago, and which are now coming forward to re-sign with stronger pledges. Such organisations include well-known companies like Balfour Beatty, Vodafone, Serco and Network Rail.

Case studies of role model Covenant signatories

Sage signed the Covenant at the beginning of 2018, agreeing to work with social enterprise X-Forces to support military-owned start-ups and scale-up businesses as they develop to reach their potential. Such initiatives show how the Covenant agenda lends weight to wider social objectives including economic development and entrepreneurship.

Sage is also working to assist members of the wider Armed Forces family. If a Service spouse employed by the company needs to relocate to accompany their partner, Sage will endeavour to find alternative employment within the business in another location. In addition, they offer flexibility in granting leave for Service spouses and partners before, during and after a partner's deployment.

The company is also committed to helping Veterans through the Sage Serving Heroes program, which provides guidance on accessing meaningful civilian employment, building professional skills, and starting their own businesses after Service.

National Express Ltd, the first company to sign the Covenant in 2013, re-signed with exemplary pledges including providing ten days' extra leave for staff in the Reserve Forces, and offering free bus travel to families visiting soldiers at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham and to volunteers on Remembrance Sunday. They also pledged to offer guaranteed interviews to Service Leavers and their families for all National Express roles across Coach and Bus, and a 60% discount on Coach travel to members of the Armed Forces community.



Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP with National Express Group Chief Executive, Dean Finch and the Blues and Royals Guards

Microsoft pledged to encourage military spouses to apply for roles with the company by offering flexible working where possible; to support Reservists by providing them with 10 days of paid leave to undertake annual mandatory training; to support Armed Forces charitable organisations by matching funds collected on their behalf by employees; to collecting on an annual basis for Royal British Legion Poppy Day; and to promoting the fact that Microsoft is an Armed Forces-friendly organisation by publicising this on its website, through internal communications and when attending events with external partners.

The company's Digital Skills Programme aims to develop digital skills for people across the UK to ensure the country remains one of the global leaders in cloud computing, artificial intelligence and other next-generation technologies. Microsoft offers Veterans free training to help them upskill for a career in the technology sector, also providing a 10% discount on products for all military personnel. Chief Executive, Cindy Rose said *"the technical and leadership skills that those who serve their country bring to our business are incredibly valuable, and I am honoured to work alongside them."*



From left to right: Jeffrey Tremaine, Microsoft CEO Cindy Rose, Minister for the Armed Forces the Rt. Hon. Mark Lancaster MP, Sarah Finlay.

The technology and cyber security sector is rapidly growing, and people leaving the Armed Forces have unique skills and experience which they can contribute in this area. Fewer Veterans are working in tech and cyber, in comparison to the general population. TechVets, who signed the Covenant in July, are aware that the transferable skills of the Veteran community are an underutilised national resource and have a vital role to play in supporting the security and prosperity of the nation. They are working with the MOD's Career Transition Partnership to provide training and employment for Veterans in technology and cyber security sectors of the economy.

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme

Since its launch in 2014, the [Defence Employer Recognition Scheme](#) has presented 128 Gold awards to a wide variety of organisations, in recognition of their outstanding support to the Armed Forces. Although there is still work to be done to increase awareness, particularly among small businesses, the scheme is becoming increasingly embedded in the employer psyche. 2018 has seen a record number of businesses receive the award (51 in total, an increase of 54% from the 33 awarded in 2017) and a number of well-known organisations and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises were recognised with Gold Employer Recognition Scheme awards. These include Ernst and Young, Standard Life Aberdeen, Handy Heroes, Lloyd's of London, NHS Orkney, Swansea Council and Stoll Housing Association. Seven local authorities won a gold award in 2018, including City of Wolverhampton Council, Kent County Council, Newcastle City Council, Northumberland County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Swansea Council and Wandsworth Council. Many of the achievements were a direct result of initiatives proposed and work undertaken alongside businesses.

In announcing the Gold awards, #GoldERS2018 generated over 1.5 million Twitter impressions, a third of these within just 24 hours. This proves the enormous PR benefit of the scheme, encouraging major businesses to publicise the Armed Forces Covenant agenda via their own considerable communications resources.

To recognise the contributions made by employers engaging with the Employer Recognition Scheme,

2018 also saw the announcement of the 'Menu of Benefits' for scheme winners, with discounts being negotiated for corporate hospitality venues and world-renowned military leadership courses provided by the UK Defence Academy and RAF Cranwell. In addition, plans were set in train to strengthen and evolve the Gold Alumni Association to ensure that it is both resilient and fit for purpose as the number of Gold award holders continues to grow.

A major focus during 2019 will be to begin the process of measuring the effectiveness of the pledges made by businesses in support of the Covenant.

Cross-government employer engagement

The Department for Work and Pensions [National Employer Partnership Team](#) promotes the Armed Forces Covenant to employers and trade bodies, encouraging them to sign the Covenant, develop their pledges and share good practice. Working closely with the MOD, the Partnership Team routinely encourages and supports those large employers they are working with to sign the Covenant. During 2018 the team has been conducting deep dives with individual employers to support them in delivering their Covenant pledges, in particular to provide employment opportunities for Veterans and encourage them to enable a sustainable career for Service Families (for example by putting in place flexible employment policies to help ensure spouses/partners can easily transfer between locations) and to share good practice with other organisations. Employers included Skanska, G4S, Centrica, UPS and Network Rail.

During the year the National Employer Partnership Team has also worked with different Trade Body organisations such as; Hire Association Europe, Road Haulage Association, Confederation of Passenger Transport, British Marine and British Retail Consortium to promote the Covenant to their members.

Arrangements in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has developed its own bespoke and highly successful arrangements for engagement between the MOD and the business sector. These are delivered by the Regional Employer Engagement Director, sitting within RFCA NI, who has developed a network of "supportive employers" that now numbers over 700. The support garnered supplements that of

the Career Transition Partnership, but with particular focus on the period after transition.

Priorities for 2019

Forces in Mind Trust review of the Covenant in Business

The Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) commissioned review of the Covenant in Business was completed in 2018. The review considered how to improve the delivery of organisational pledges made under the Covenant with the scope including small and medium sized enterprises, charities, not-for-profit organisations, the public sector (except for local authorities) and multi-national corporations.

The findings highlight the significant challenge that remains in raising awareness of the Covenant, with only 28% of organisations surveyed having heard of the Covenant and only 8% having signed it. The untapped potential to continue to improve the support available to the Armed Forces community through the private and public sectors is considerable. The report points out that in order to exploit this the Government and service providers need to better understand the ways in which organisations can be mobilised to sign the Covenant and deliver their pledges.

Among other recommendations, the report suggests that this can be achieved through greater central government coherence in delivering the Covenant, mobilising trade associations and membership bodies to encourage their organisations to sign the Covenant, greater emphasis on the Armed Forces community promoting the Covenant from within, improving understanding of the benefits to businesses, developing a mentoring network within industry and making better use of the Government supply chain.

Promoting the Covenant

The MOD plans to develop the business section of the Covenant website to appeal to businesses and organisations who have signed or who want to support the Covenant. Signposting to business content will be improved and the '[Menu of Benefits](#)' will be published to showcase the mutual benefits of signing the Covenant. Other content will also be reviewed to ensure it continues to meet the needs of beneficiaries and delivery partners.

Covenant in Business metrics

The rapid growth in awareness of the Covenant in the business community is clearly demonstrated by the number of signatories and by companies' engagement with the Employer Recognition Scheme. To strengthen this further we intend to describe how this increased engagement is making a difference to our serving personnel, families and Veterans. The Defence Relationship Management Employer Engagement [Measurement of Effectiveness Model](#) has been created to do just this.

The model was specifically developed to map Defence Relationship Management's activity to MOD's strategic objectives and to demonstrate that tangible, effective, support is being provided.

It is anticipated that by June 2019 the data captured by the model will be sufficiently mature to draw significant findings and recommendations from but, with every month of continued data capture, the MOD's understanding of what is really making a difference to Service Personnel, families and Veteran's will improve.

A more detailed picture will enable the identification of which types of Employer Engagement activity employers are more responsive to and that will, in time, help target and drive future activity.

The Defence Discount Service

The Defence Discount Service (DDS) supports the Armed Forces community, including serving and Reserve Personnel, Veterans, and families. DDS has seen further growth in 2018 of on average 10,000 members per month meaning that there are now over 469,405 members and 9,340 business now signed up. DDS has continued to invest in and promote its service and this has included the development of a new mobile app and website with updated mapping and easier search facilities. In addition, the back of the Privilege Card has been designed to contain Veterans UK and Veterans' Gateway contact information. DDS continues to play an integral part in Armed Forces Day, attending the national event and helping in advance with introductions to corporate sponsors.

The Financial Services Steering Group

The results of Families Continuous Attitudes Survey 2018 indicate that around one third of mobile Service

Families feel disadvantaged in their ability to access commercial products and services. The MOD-hosted Financial Services Steering Group is focused on addressing this. The group meets on a quarterly basis and is attended by finance industry experts, including representatives from banks, building societies and credit reference agencies.

British Forces Post Office addresses

During 2018, the credit reference agencies have been working together on a common approach to ensure a consistent and best possible outcome for Service Personnel while they are based at British Forces Post Office addresses. The agencies continue to work with the financial services industry to adopt best practice / guidance when providing account information to help maintain accurate and complete customer information.

Through the Steering Group, the agencies and lenders have engaged with the MOD to provide 'Top Tips' guidance for Service Personnel when applying for credit, including education on how to ensure that personal information is accurate, and how personnel can improve their 'credit rating' to enhance their ability to access affordable credit.

Investment advice overseas

New guidance has been developed for Service Personnel who want to receive investment advice and are, or will be, stationed overseas. There are strict laws around the provision of investment advice, and additional requirements for investment advisors where the Service Person receiving the advice is overseas at the time it is provided. A summary document has been produced providing guidance for personnel on steps they can take to ensure they can receive the investment advice they want. The document includes guidance on how to find a regulated financial advisor that would be able to provide advice in the overseas country in which they will be stationed.

Compensation awards

The Steering Group has also produced new guidance to raise awareness with lenders of "interim" compensation awards when they assess the ability of current and former Service Personnel to be able to afford to repay credit. The guidance clarifies to lenders that the "Interim" Guaranteed Income Payments cannot be reduced, even when the final decision is made. This helps to ensure that the sustainable and guaranteed nature of the income is

understood, and ensure that Service Families have a fair chance of accessing mortgages and credit.

Support for the Covenant in the community

Improving delivery at a local level

Local authorities and their partners around the country are increasingly taking real ownership of Covenant delivery. The recommendations of the [Our Community, Our Covenant](#) report continue to act as the focal point for Covenant delivery in the community and the Community Action Group, formed in response to the recommendations, has expanded to include representatives from the Devolved Administrations, English, Scottish and Welsh Local Government Associations and the Charitable Sector. The Group is now looking more widely at priorities identified by key stakeholders, such as the Families Federations and Covenant Champions within the Services.

While we now have a clearer understanding of what can be achieved at the Community level, challenges remain, not least in consistency of outcomes for the Armed Forces community. The most effective way to address this is by sharing good practice using platforms such as the Covenant Website, Covenant Facebook page, Covenant stakeholder's networks and in our Guides to local authorities. In addition, a joint letter from Defence and Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government Ministers, stressing the importance of the Covenant, sharing useful resources and encouraging their continued commitment was sent to all local authority leaders and Chief Executives in England, while similar letters were sent from Ministers in the Scottish and Welsh Governments.

The MOD ran a highly successful [Covenant in the Community conference](#) in February (and plans are being developed for the 2019 conference) and attended a great many more local conferences around the UK sharing the Covenant message with delivery partners. There are also plans to run a national workshop in spring 2019 with those local authorities who have achieved Gold Employment Recognition Scheme accreditation to discuss how to promote good practice and support the local authorities with less available resource to improve their Covenant delivery.

Priorities for 2019

In 2019 the Action Group will look to improve the consistency of delivery and understanding of the role of Covenant Champions by developing a self-assessment tool and e-learning package to clearly set out how they can make the best use of limited

resources to embed the Covenant within their local authorities. The Covenant Fund remains a vital tool in promoting the Covenant and the needs of the Armed Forces community among key decision-makers and providers of local services.

FORCES CONNECT SOUTH EAST is a cross-border partnership created to support the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant and promote a greater understanding and awareness of the issues affecting the Armed Forces community within public services across the South East. It comprises:

- **Local Authorities** – Surrey (lead authority), Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex and Hampshire County Councils, Brighton & Hove, and Medway Council;
- **Military** – Regular and Reserve (Royal Naval Command East, 11 Infantry Brigade, RAF Odiham and SE Reserve Forces and Cadets Association);
- **Service Charities** – SSAFA, The Royal British Legion;
- **Health** – Sussex and Kent NHS Armed Forces Networks.



The partnership was awarded £321,300 of MOD Covenant funding in spring 2017 to deliver a project enabling fair and consistent advice and access to public services for the Armed Forces community across the South East and to ensure they face no disadvantage compared to any other citizen. This is being achieved through the delivery of four training packages which have been designed to embed the Covenant message across all levels of staff and councillors, emphasising the importance of asking 'have you (or your partner) served?'

Further strands are being delivered to complement the training which include the development of referral pathways and a mobile app to ensure quick and easy access to the services and support available to the Forces community, as well as a mentoring programme to better assist Service Leavers who are transitioning into civilian employment. It is expected that the final number of people trained will well exceed the original 2,500 target.

Work is progressing on a legacy to promote and share the partnership concept and training materials to other local authorities across the country.

For more information contact Amanda Barnes, Programme Officer on Amanda.barnes@surreycc.org.uk or visit www.surreycc.gov.uk/forcesconnectse



Chief of Defence People, Lt. Gen. Richard Nugee meets the Forces Connect South East team

Department for Work and Pensions Armed Forces Champions

Each Jobcentre Plus District has an Armed Forces Champion. This dedicated resource aims to raise awareness of how each Jobcentre can support Service Leavers and build local partnerships with the Armed Forces community and charities to improve the support for Service Leavers and their families. During the year, a series of webinars has been delivered to partner organisations such as Royal British Legion Industries to provide information on how Universal Credit supports Service Leavers. The Department for Work and Pensions has worked with colleagues in the Careers Transition Partnership to update the information available to Service Leavers.

Several jobs fairs have taken place throughout the year, across the country. In Catterick, the Department for Work and Pensions and the MOD have jointly introduced a biannual job fair specifically aimed to support service spouses and families in finding employment.

Employment opportunities

Early voluntary entry to the *Work and Health Programme*, which offers more intensive tailored support for individuals, is available for Veterans and Reservists who would benefit from specialist employment support to find work. Early voluntary entry is also available to partners of Veterans and partners of members of the Armed Forces where appropriate. Allowing voluntary targeted early access will help provide support at the right time for individuals and will help towards preventing them becoming long-term unemployed.

Benefits

In 2017 the Department for Work and Pensions reported on the National Insurance credit introduced in 2016, designed to help Armed Forces spouses and civil partners who accompanied their Service partner on postings outside the UK. These credits continue to be popular and to date there have been over 6,000 online applications, helping people to protect their future state pension.

Expansion of Armed Forces and Veterans Network in Scotland

The Scottish Government continues to have a strong network of champions across local authorities, the NHS and other public sector bodies in Scotland. Most recently, Skills Development Scotland established a network of Veterans Champions across its five regional areas to support Service Leavers and Veterans along their employment pathway.

In October 2018, the Scottish Government's Minister for Veterans attended the Armed Forces and Veterans Champions Gathering. The Gathering was an opportunity for Champions from across the public sector, the Charitable Sector and the Armed Forces to come together to highlight and share best practice. During the event the Scottish Government stressed its continued commitment to supporting and enabling the work of Champions across Scotland as we move forward into 2019.

Wales Armed Forces Liaison Officers

The appointment of Armed Forces Liaison Officers, initially across North Wales local authorities, and since rolled out across most of Wales provides the Welsh Government with a unique means of supporting local authorities, to ensure consistent delivery of policies and procedures that support the Armed Forces community.

All local authorities have worked with the Liaison Officers to identify the regional and local needs of the Armed Forces community. Following engagement with local authorities across North Wales each local authority has now embedded the principles within the *Our Community - Our Covenant report*.

In 2017, the Welsh Local Government Association received Covenant funding aimed at raising awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and the issues affecting the Armed Forces community in Wales. Resources are now available for local authorities to access, including an Armed Forces Training Package and Covenant microsite.

Armed Forces Day

This central Government initiative remains popular with communities around the UK. The general public express their support and thanks to the wider Armed Forces community, with over 300 local events conducted throughout the country and an expansive social media campaign taking place. The national event was held in Llandudno, North Wales, and was attended by HRH The Princess Royal and the Prime Minister, and attracted over 150,000 attendees. The 2019 national event will be hosted by Wiltshire Council in Salisbury, followed by Scarborough Council in 2020.

Conwy County Borough Council hosted this year's National Armed Forces Day. With support from the Welsh Government, the MOD and other key partners, the event celebrated the Armed Forces, and provided an opportunity for the public to express their support and thanks to the wider Armed Forces community.

Just over a thousand serving personnel, cadets and Veterans took part in the parade along the promenade from the War Memorial to Bodafon Fields. The parade was watched by dignitaries including Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, Rt Hon. Theresa May MP, and Rt Hon Carwyn Jones AM.

Over 100,000 onlookers gathered along the promenade to support the parade and then enjoy a range of activities and displays including a visit from HMS Somerset, a combat display, military working dogs demonstration and a flypast from the Red Arrows. The day also saw a return of Shenkin IV, the goat from the Great Orme, for his first official parade as mascot leading the 3rd Battalion the Royal Welsh.



RAF Shawbury: Family Fun on Armed Forces Day

Shrewsbury Sports Village hosted families, cadets, Veterans, Armed Forces Covenant signatories and local and military charities on 30 June for Armed Forces Day 2018. The event started with the arrival of the Councillor Phil Gillam, the Deputy Mayor of Shrewsbury, who toured the various activities which included a supervised climbing wall, arts and crafts, roller disco, cycling, indoor bowls and football practice delivered by Shrewsbury Town in the Community.

Group Captain Chuck Norris said: *"Today has been a fantastic event. It was especially nice to see the support from military charities as well as those local businesses who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, all coming together to make today such an enjoyable day."*

"What surprised me is the diversity of the organisations here today which shows the support for our Armed Forces from both military charities and local businesses."



The Armed Forces Day event is opened by Gp Capt Chuck Norris and Cllr Phil Gillam.

First World War commemorations

Commemorative events are an important means of giving thanks and acknowledging the sacrifice made by Service Personnel and their families. This year's First World War commemorative programme included three events: a service to mark the centenary of the appointment of Marshal Foch; a cathedral service for the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Amiens; and the hundredth anniversary of the Armistice, which this year falls on 11 November.

On 9 March 2018, representatives from the UK and France stood side-by-side to remember the achievements of Marshal Foch, after he took on the appointment of Supreme Allied Commander. The event took place at the Statue of Marshal Foch in Lower Grosvenor Gardens in Victoria, London, in the presence of descendants of Marshal Foch and Field Marshal Douglas Haig.

The Battle of Amiens marked the beginning of the end of the First World War. On 8 August 2018, Amiens cathedral in France played host to an event that offered guests, including descendants of soldiers who fought in the battle, an opportunity to reflect on the sacrifice and the achievements of British and Commonwealth troops. The cathedral service included Prime Minister Theresa May and senior representatives from all belligerent nations, demonstrating the legacy of First World War partnerships and a theme of reconciliation with former enemies.

As part of the Welsh Government's *Cymru'n Cofio* Wales Remembers 1914-1918 programme for the centenary of the First World War in Wales, a commemorative event took place in January 2018 to mark the centenary of Prime Minister David Lloyd George's role in the formation of the Royal Air Force. The Welsh Government will continue to support and develop targeted activities for Wales' commemoration of the First World War until March 2020.

Throughout the First World War Centenary the Scottish Commemorations Panel has led on a number of commemorations for events of particular significance for Scotland. On 11 November 2018, similar to the other home nations, Scotland's National Service marking the centenary of the first Armistice will take place in Glasgow Cathedral. For Scotland, there will still be one more commemoration to follow marking the centenary of the loss of HMY *lolaire*. On 1 January 1919, HMY *lolaire* foundered on rocks off the coast of the island of Lewis with the loss of over 200 men, mostly from the island, returning home from the war.





Annex A: Table of commitments

This table shows the commitments that were made for the first time in the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report that was published in December 2016 and those that were recorded in the table at the back of that report as “to be completed”.

KEY TO RED/AMBER/GREEN STATUS

Completed/Terminated	
On target for delivery	
More work needed to achieve target	
At risk of not being delivered	

GOVERNANCE

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	RAG
The Government will implement the new cross-government communications strategy, endorsed and owned by the new Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board, in order to increase awareness and understanding of the Covenant.	UK	The strategy is being implemented and a number of key milestones have been delivered.	

HEALTHCARE

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	RAG
Defence Statistics will publish the first report on the causes of deaths amongst Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts in 2015-16.	UK	In October 2018 MOD announced the new study into the causes of death of military personnel who served between 2001 and 2014 (the time period of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan). MOD is currently completing the ethics protocols ahead of NHS Digital carrying out the matching process. Defence Statistic will publish the first report in 2019.	
All GP registration forms in England will include a specific question about whether a patient has served in the UK Armed Forces	England	The Department for Health and Social Care has confirmed that the question will be included in the next print run, to be issued in the coming months.	
The Welsh Government will implement a national action plan across Wales, aimed at expanding the provision of psychological therapies.	Wales	The Welsh Government remains committed to expanding provision of psychological therapies, across the ages, and will be directly allocating an additional £4million to health boards from this year.	
The Department for Work and Pensions has committed to improving the awareness of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder among its assessment providers by releasing insight reports. The Department will also produce tailored advice to Veterans who are applying for Personal Independence Payments or Employment Support Allowance.	England	Insight reports on post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are now being released to assessment providers. A full range of support is available to Veterans applying for Personal Independence Payments or Employment Support Allowance.	
The Welsh Government is working with Veterans NHS Wales, Cais and the Royal British Legion to introduce a more seamless approach to ensure that Veterans continue to receive healthcare that meets their needs.	Wales	With the issuing of the Welsh Health Circular, Welsh Government facilitated Royal British Legion attendance, to further promote the principle of priority treatment at the various professional committees for them to feed back to their members. All health boards are aware of the health circular and are reporting back to Welsh Government on how the principle is understood and being applied in their areas.	

EDUCATION

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	RAG
The Department for Education will produce guidelines for schools on the use of Service Pupil Premium funding.	England	Booklet entitled 'SPP – examples of good practice' published by MOD's Directorate for Children and Young People in January 2017. DCYP to develop a revised version in 2019.	
The MOD will consider options for providing increased notice to Service families to allow more time for the school admissions process.	UK	The MOD is leading a review into assignment policy, the outcome of which will report in spring 2019.	
The MOD will continue to strengthen its partnerships with education departments, local authorities of main Armed Forces areas, professional bodies and networks to promote the needs of children from Service families.	UK	The Local Authority working group met for the 3rd time week commencing 24 September, where it discussed how to progress the development of a national Service child data tool with external partners.	
The MOD will continue to work with colleagues in the Department for Education to seek to resolve the issue of transfer of information for children from Service families, particularly those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities; modify and promote the Pupil Information Profile (PIP) for overseas and Devolved Administrations schools.	UK	As of September 2018, additional contextual information on Service children can be included within the Common Transfer File.	
The MOD will work with Devolved Administrations and local authorities to ease the transition for Service Personnel returning to the UK from Germany.	UK	The vast majority of the remaining 3,600 Service Personnel in Germany will relocate to Wiltshire in 2019 and the Department has been working closely with Wiltshire Council since 2014 to Masterplan this relocation, which represents the biggest number of soldiers returning from Germany to a specific UK location, i.e. Salisbury Plain. The Department is spending over £1.2 billion in Wiltshire on new and refurbished infrastructure for units returning in 2019 and, as part of our s106 planning application agreement we have made a substantial payment to Wiltshire Council to fund a new school and provide additional school and pre-school places in readiness for the uplift in pupils. Our payment has also funded highways improvements, a shared MOD/NHS medical centre and pharmacy, cycle and pedestrian routes and we have provided local community access to MOD sports and leisure facilities. The extension of the Educational Support Fund for a period of two years will also provide additional resources to assist with the DAs with accommodating the rebasing programme.	
The MOD will complete an additional 50,000 apprenticeships by 2020.	UK	MOD is on track to meet the 50,000 target by 2020.	
Education Scotland will develop accessible national and local information to support Service families' transition into Scotland.	Scotland	The Scottish Government has published guidance for teachers, local authorities and parents on supporting early stages transitions between different education systems which can be a particular area of concern. The NTO also worked with the National Parent Forum Scotland to develop a 'Nutshell' – a series of parent friendly information – specifically about supporting Armed Forces children.	
In England, from September 2018 the Common Transfer File will include a richer set of data on Service pupils. This data will aid the development of policies to ensure that children from Service families are not disadvantaged.	England	The changes to the Common Transfer File were implemented in September 2018.	
The MOD will make further announcements, once the costings have been agreed, on where and when work will commence following the distribution of £20m of LIBOR money to support childcare provision.	UK-Cyp	A total of 40 bids were successful and in late December 2018 the final setting will complete its refurbishment.	

Education Scotland will add an explicit reference to children from Service families and barriers to learning they may face to the Additional Support for Learning Code of Practice.	Scotland	The Scottish Government published the revised Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice in December 2017.	
The MOD will improve online information on the school admissions process for Service families.	UK	The GOV.UK web pages are now updated and the guidance from 2017 has been uploaded. The Single Services are also reviewing their online information.	

ACCOMMODATION

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	RAG
By 2019 the MOD will establish a Single Living Accommodation Management System to provide critical information on the condition of the estate and inform key investment decisions.	UK	The Management Information system is in the design phase and expected to be delivered in late 2019. As the project progresses, the quality of data available on the SLA estate continues to improve.	
Develop an alternative approach to the provision of accommodation for Service Personnel and their families.	UK	A pilot is being developed to allow the MOD to test this new approach to accommodation and understand how it affects Service Personnel and their families.	
Continue to support Service Personnel with the Forces Help To Buy Scheme.	UK	Work is ongoing to consider how to take this policy forward and details will be confirmed later this year.	
Continue to ensure that the National Housing Prime contract awarded to CarillionAmey meets contracted standards and that this is reflected in satisfaction levels.	UK	Following the liquidation of Carillion plc, as per the terms of the joint venture, Amey took full responsibility for delivering against the terms of the contract. Amey is meeting the Key performance indicators within the National Housing prime contract.	
The MOD will spend some £1.85 billion on accommodation by 2020/21 in order to deliver 18,500 SLA bed spaces and 3,000 homes.	UK	During the current financial year, we plan to deliver more than 1,200 new Single Living Accommodation bed-spaces across eight sites and, on current spending plans, more than 3,000 over the following three financial years.	
MHCLG proposes to remove the age restriction for eligibility for starter homes for injured Service Personnel and bereaved spouses by spring 2017.	England	The Government is engaging with stakeholders through the Starter Homes Technical Working Group on the detail of the starter homes at present, in advance of laying the regulations before Parliament.	
MHCLG intends to go out to consultation on new statutory guidance for local authorities which will remove the local connection requirement for divorced and separated spouses and civil partners of Service Personnel.	England	A consultation on the new guidance will be published imminently. The document updates guidance for local authorities on the wider allocation of social housing to the Armed Forces community.	

BUSINESS AND THE COMMUNITY

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	RAG
The MOD will work with the Financial Services Sector to address any potential disadvantages associated with Service overseas.	UK	The MOD continues to engage with industry to review means of mitigating disadvantage experienced by Service Personnel posted overseas, as well as to increase awareness within the Armed Forces community.	
During 2018 credit reference agencies and lenders are aiming to complete system changes to improve the recognition and transfer of individuals' credit history while they are based at British Forces Post Office addresses, building on recent improvements in this area.	UK	The new requirements of the GDPR have delayed this work due to the availability of Credit Reference Agency resources. Progress with the technical changes has been made.	

The Government will continue to drive delivery of the recommendations of the Our Community Our Covenant report via the newly formed Action Group.	UK	The group now includes representatives from the Devolved Administrations, English, Scottish and Welsh Local Government Associations and the charitable sector. A priority is to address regional inconsistencies in delivery through the sharing of good practice. In addition, a joint letter from Defence and MHCLG Ministers, stressing the importance of the Covenant, sharing useful resources and encouraging their continued commitment was sent to all LA leaders and CEs in England, while similar letters were sent from Ministers in the Scottish and Welsh Governments.	
MOD will, in consultation with business, introduce key performance indicators for the Covenant in Business.	UK	The findings of the Defence Relationship Management Measurement of Effect work will be published in 2019 and form the basis for introducing KPIs.	
An independent review of the Covenant in Business will publish its findings in 2018.	UK	The report will be published at the end of November 2018.	

FAMILY LIFE

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	RAG
Following thorough consultation in 2017, MOD will formally consider options for strengthening the childcare support offer for the families of Service Personnel early in 2018.	England	In October 2018 the Service People Policy Group reviewed a range of options for addressing this issue; from a universal childcare allowance to a more targeted approach, that focuses on addressing the higher costs of childcare in specific areas of the United Kingdom. The MOD remuneration team will make a recommendation to the group in February.	
The Home Office will work to resolve issues experienced by Foreign and Commonwealth families applying for visas and passports.	UK	The technical changes to the online visa application process will be resolved in full by the end of the year.	
The MOD will continue working with the Families Federations to gather further evidence on the inclusion of divorced spouses in the categories of the Armed Forces community and report on the subject in this year's report.	UK	The Government is working with the Families Federations and Charitable Sector to consider the needs of this cohort of the Armed Forces community.	
The Welsh Government to introduce an enhanced flexible childcare offer for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds by 2020.	Wales	Seven new Local Authorities will be added to early implementation of the offer in September 2018 and the offer will be available to all eligible parents' from 2020.	

THROUGH-LIFE SUPPORT

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	RAG
The Welsh Government will develop proposals for a Veterans' employment pathway.	Wales	The Welsh government has made good progress in the development of its employment pathway, which will clarify employment options available and services that can offer assistance.	
The MOD to identify ways to inform Veterans how to access the high levels of support available to them. The MOD to report on this further in the 2016 Covenant annual report.	UK	The Veterans' Gateway, Veterans Covenant Hospital Alliance and various initiatives underway in the Devolved Administrations are providing Veterans with different ways of accessing support. Further details are available in the UK Veterans Strategy published in November 2018.	
HMG will produce an evidence-based Veterans Strategy informed by monitoring the Veterans' Gateway and the developing Map of Need, to ensure resource is allocated to areas of greatest need.	UK	The UK Veterans Strategy was published in November 2018.	
SSAFA, in collaboration with MOD and the Career Transition Partnership, will launch a two-year mentoring trial in January 2018 aimed at supporting early Service Leavers.	UK	The trial was launched.	

Annex B: List of Ministers with responsibility for Covenant and Veterans issues

Department	Minister	Title
Cabinet Office	Rt Hon David Lidington CBE MP	Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster & (co-Chair)
Ministry of Defence	Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP	Secretary of State for Defence (co-Chair)
Ministry of Defence	Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP	Minister for Defence People and Veterans
Northern Ireland Office	Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Office for Secretary of State for Scotland	Rt Hon David Mundell MP	Secretary of State for Scotland
Office of the Secretary of State for Wales	Rt Hon Alun Cairns MP	Secretary of State for Wales
Home Office	Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP	Minister of State for Immigration
Ministry of Justice	Edward Argar MP	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Ministry of Justice
Department for Education	Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP	Minister of State for School Standards
Department of Health and Social Care	Jackie Doyle-Price MP	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Mental Health, Inequalities and Suicide Prevention
Department for Work and Pensions	Baroness Buscombe	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions (Lords)
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	Heather Wheeler MP	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Housing and Homelessness
Her Majesty's Treasury	Rt Hon Liz Truss MP	Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Scottish Government	Graeme Dey MSP	Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans
Welsh Government	Alun Davies AM	Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services

