



THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT ANNUAL REPORT 2018

Summary





A MESSAGE FROM THE DEFENCE SECRETARY

The Armed Forces Covenant is a formal promise from the nation that Service Personnel, their families and Veterans are recognised for the sacrifices they make to keep us safe and should not be disadvantaged when accessing public and commercial services.

I am proud to present this report, which follows the launch of the Veterans Strategy on 14 November, and will focus on serving personnel and families. This is seventh report since the Armed Forces Act 2011 which established the Armed Forces Covenant. The theme of this year's report is *Delivering Effective Support*; through improved measurement of the Covenant we have been able to examine delivery and progress against commitments over the past year. While recognising the differences we have made to the Armed Forces community, we know there is much more still to be achieved.

The report covers progress on healthcare, education, accommodation, inquests, family life, through-life support, and business and community. Key highlights of the report include:

- The launch of a **new Tri-Service Defence Holistic Transition** Policy, supporting both the Service person and the Service Family, by the end of 2018.
- £5 million to extend the **Educational Support Fund** until 2020 to assist educational authorities across the UK during the ongoing draw-down from Germany.
- From September 2018, the expansion of the Department for Education's **Common Transfer File** to improve the information available on Service Children when they move between schools.
- A new scheme to support **Spousal Employment**, announced in September 2018, will facilitate access to vocational training and development opportunities.
- The launch of the **Combat Stress 24-hour Mental Health Helpline** (0800 323 4444) for serving personnel and their families.
- The **3,000th signatory** of the Covenant.
- The relocation of the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre to a new purpose-built facility at **Stanford Hall**, Nottinghamshire.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Jones', is positioned at the bottom right of the page.

HEALTHCARE

What have we done?

- **The Combat Stress 24-Hour Mental Health Helpline** (0800 323 4444) for serving personnel and their families was launched on 25 February 2018. The helpline received nearly 1,000 calls during the first six months of operation, an average of 36 calls per week, or five calls per day.
- The MOD and UK Departments of Health Partnership Board is working closely to improve the healthcare of the entire Service Community and mitigate regional variation in provision.
- The NHS Veterans' Mental Health **Complex Treatment Service**, launched in April 2018, provides an enhanced 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 **Veterans Trauma Network** continues to be a vital service for Veterans requiring on going NHS care due to medical problems arising from their time in uniform. As at August 2018, 83 Veterans have been referred to the service.
- The Welsh Government provide nearly £700K per annum to **Veterans NHS Wales** towards the treatment of Veterans with mental health issues. Veterans NHS Wales is leading the way in providing research to remedy health problems including PTSD and personal trauma caused by their Service experience.
- 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.

FOR FAMILIES

What have we done?

- A new scheme to support **Spousal Employment**, announced in September 2018, will facilitate access to vocational training and development opportunities, helping Service spouses and civil partners to enter new sectors or self-employment.

- Working with Defence Relationship Management, the MOD's **Partner Employment**

Steering Group will continue to explore what more employers can do to support Service spouses and partners to attain and retain rewarding employment.



- The Chronic conditions and Disability in Defence (**CanDiD**) Network was established to connect and support Service Personnel, their dependants and Veterans diagnosed with, or caring for persons diagnosed with a life-changing or life-limiting condition, impairment or disability.
- The first Defence domestic abuse strategy '**No Defence For Abuse**' was launched in July 2018. Building on existing support and initiatives, the Strategy aims to reduce the prevalence and impact of domestic abuse and increase the safety and wellbeing of all those affected.

EDUCATION

What have we done?

- In July 2018, the Secretary of State for Defence announced a £5 million extension of the **Educational Support Fund**, until 2020, to assist educational authorities across the UK during the ongoing draw-down from Germany. The Fund is available to those publicly-funded schools, Academies and Free Schools attended by Service children whose parents are subject to exceptional mobility or deployments.



- The Department for Education implemented changes to the **Common Transfer File** from September 2018; the means by which state schools in England and local authorities transfer pupil data when a child moves from one school to another. The expansion of the information available will ensure a greater continuity of education and pastoral support for Service children.

- **The Office for Students**, the independent regulator of higher education in England, published new guidance making clear the sector's duty to support Service children's progression into and through higher education.
- The Welsh Government introduced its 2018/19 **Supporting Service Children** in Wales Fund. 27 schools successfully secured full or partial funding totalling £250,000.
- Scotland's National Transitions Officer launched a **Forces children's education website**¹ which hosts resources for parents and educators.

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

ACCOMMODATION

What have we done?

- More than **£68 million** invested in **Service Family Accommodation** over the course of the 2017/18 financial year.
- **£242 million** to more than 16,100 Service personnel in **Forces Help To Buy** payments as at October 2018.
- **The Scottish Guide for people leaving the Armed Forces** and former Service Personnel has been updated.



- The Northern Ireland Department for Communities has published proposals to update the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Housing Selection Scheme.
- In Wales **Tŷ Ryan, an innovative self-build scheme** for ex-Service Personnel has been developed. The self-build project in Wrexham 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 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.

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY

- More than 1,000 new Covenant signings in 2018. In November the Post Office became the **3,000th signatory** of the Covenant.
- An independent **review of the Covenant in Business** was completed in 2018.
- Guides giving advice and information about the differences of provision and access to services between the English, Scottish and Welsh administrations have been created for Service Personnel and their families. The **'Welcome to Scotland'** pack and a **'Welcome to Wales'** pack have been published by the respective governments, with the **'Welcome to England'** pack being published on the Covenant website, www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk at the end of 2018.



FOR VETERANS

- The appointment of **lead Ministers for Covenant and Veterans'** issues in key Government Departments across the UK.
- The first ever **UK-wide Strategy for our Veterans** was published on 14 November 2018. Produced jointly between the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments, and working closely with the Northern Ireland Office, the Strategy outlines a new vision and principles to support those who have served, and their families, in every aspect of their lives.
- A new **Veterans ID Card** will be launched in December 2018, providing instant verification of Service when accessing Government and third sector support, while providing an emotional and tangible link to the Armed Forces.
- The publication of a new **Tri-Service Defence Holistic Transition Policy** in December 2018, supporting both the Service person and the Service Family. Alongside that, a new organisation – Defence Transition Services – which will be part of the existing Veterans UK organisation, will receive referrals from the single Services for those individuals at risk of struggling with the transition to civilian life, offering a wide range of support, including for debt management; housing advice; and alcohol misuse, or anger management.

- 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 launched its **Employment Pathway**. The Pathway clarifies employment options available and services that can offer assistance. To complement the Pathway development of an Employers Toolkit is underway, providing clear guidance for ex-Serving Personnel and employers on the added benefits of employing ex-Service Personnel.
- The **Welsh Government** has announced funding of £250k a year for a further two years for the **Armed Forces Liaison Officers**. This will enable them to build on progress made and embed initiatives and mainstream support within their local authorities.



FUNDING THE COVENANT

The Covenant Fund moved to an independent charity;
The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund **Local Grants Programme**, now in its fourth year, has made over 500 small grants.

The **Armistice and Armed Forces Communities Programme** supported over **2,600 projects**, bringing people together to think about the Armistice and Armed Forces community today.

A programme to help **Veterans suffering with serious stress** was launched. It will make awards in early 2019.

Existing programmes are making a difference:

- **£4.35 million** to assist Service Families under the **Families in Stress Programme.**
- **£4.6 million** supporting former **Service Personnel in the Criminal Justice System.**
- **£2 million** towards the establishment of the **Veterans Gateway.**
- **£6.6 million to local authorities** through the **Strengthening Local Delivery of the Covenant Programme.**



TARGETS FOR NEXT YEAR

- The Government will continue to work with its partners in the Devolved Administrations and providers of local services, to identify disadvantage in the Armed Forces community and, where possible, agree plans to mitigate this.
- The MOD is committed to considering options for **strengthening the childcare support offer** for the families of Service Personnel.
- The MOD's Directorate for Children and Young People will develop a revised version of the Department for Education's guidelines for schools on the use of Service Pupil Premium funding.
- 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 the impact on school admissions. An update will be provided in spring.
- 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.

- The MOD is spending over **£1.2 billion in Wiltshire** on new and refurbished infrastructure for units returning from Germany.
- The recommendations of the **Covenant in Business review** will be taken forward, promoting positive employment support to the Armed Forces community and improved engagement with industry.
- The **Community Action Group** will focus on consistency of delivery 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 findings from the Welsh Government **scoping exercise will 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 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.

FIND OUT MORE

The full report includes contributions from the Scottish and Welsh Governments and Northern Ireland Office on the Covenant commitments they have delivered. You can also find out more about their work by visiting their websites.

To find out more about the Armed Forces Covenant and what it means to you visit:

www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk

If you think you aren't getting fair access to goods and services because you are a member of the Armed Forces, we want to hear about it. Contact either your Service Families Federation or the MOD Covenant team by emailing Covenant-mailbox@mod.uk

You can find the NHS choices, Armed Forces Community healthcare pages here:

<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Militaryhealthcare/Pages/Militaryhealthcare.aspx>

To find out whether Forces Help to Buy could help you visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forces-help-to-buy>

To find out more about the help and support available to Veterans

Veterans Gateway:

<https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/>

Veterans UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk>

Veterans Work:

www.veteranswork.org.uk
<https://gov.wales/>

Veterans in Scotland:

<https://www.mygov.scot/veterans/> .

For online support with making informed financial decisions

Moneyforce website:

<http://www.moneyforce.org.uk/>

Financial top tips for Service Personnel:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-top-tips-for-service-personnel/financial-top-tips-for-service-personnel>

For more information on Forces Friendly Insurers:

<https://www.biba.org.uk/armed-forces-biba-members-can-help>

Other useful links

The Royal British Legion:

<http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/>

SSAFA

<https://www.ssafa.org.uk/>

The War Widows Association:

<http://www.warwidows.org.uk/>

The Confederation of Service Charities:

<https://www.cobseo.org.uk/>

The Navy Families Federation:

<http://nff.org.uk/>

The Army Families Federation:

<http://www.aff.org.uk/>

The RAF Families Federation:

<http://www.raf-ff.org.uk/>