



Ministry
of Defence

THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT ANNUAL REPORT 2014



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Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 2 of the Armed Forces Act 2011

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.

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FOREWORD

**By the Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP,
Secretary of State for Defence**

This is my first annual report since becoming Defence Secretary in July 2014 and is the third to be published since the Armed Forces Act 2011 came into force, requiring the Secretary of State to report to Parliament each year.

When I joined the Department in July I was immediately struck by the dedication and professionalism of our Armed Forces Community, and they continue to impress me. I have seen first hand how they have responded to meet the challenges in Afghanistan, while continuing to deliver on so many fronts at home and abroad. It is no surprise that the public hold our Armed Forces in such high regard. We should be in no doubt about the debt of gratitude we owe to those whose service often puts them in harm's way.

This year's report has added poignancy as we mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. Through the many commemorative events we have held, and plan to hold, we all remember and recognise the courage and sacrifice of the military personnel who served in that conflict. Much has changed about service life, but what is unsurprising is that the character demanded by conflict has not changed over the decades. The current generation of Service personnel who served in Afghanistan are testament to this. As we rightly look back with pride at our achievements in Afghanistan over the past 13 years, we should similarly remember, respect and recognise the contribution that the men and women of our Armed Forces have made there. Now that they have returned home, it is more important than ever that we understand the sacrifices they have made, and to repay that loyalty and dedication through the care and support that they need and deserve.

That is why the Prime Minister, I and the rest of Government are passionate about delivering the commitments we have made under the Covenant, and ensuring that our Armed Forces are respected and supported. The Prime Minister made this position absolutely clear when he spoke at the Armed Forces Covenant celebration earlier in the summer. In September, this commitment was demonstrated again when the Prime Minister made it his personal priority to ensure that all members of the alliance signed a joint declaration at the NATO summit in Wales to recognise how highly each country valued the contribution of its Armed Forces and to pledge their continued support.

In last year's foreword, my predecessor Philip Hammond announced the launch of the Corporate Covenant and the development of the Forces Help to Buy scheme. I am delighted with the progress that has been made on both. Over 370 companies have now signed the Corporate Covenant, with 10 organisations receiving a Gold Employer Recognition Award from the Prime Minister. The Forces Help to Buy scheme, which launched on 1 April, has already allocated around £29M to help over 1,900 Service families to get on-to, or stay on, the housing ladder.

In February, Lord Ashcroft published his review into the transition process for Service personnel moving back into civilian life. I, the Chief of the Defence Staff and the rest of

Government, welcomed the report and particularly the key message: that the majority of those who leave the Armed Forces go on to lead successful civilian lives. We have already implemented many of his recommendations, and we will continue strengthening the Veterans support network, and strive to increase society's understanding of the wider Armed Forces community. Support for this community through the Armed Forces Covenant has also continued to grow at the local level. In July we announced the first successful applications to the £40M Veterans Accommodation Fund, and that every Local Authority in Great Britain has now signed the Community Covenant. In the Chancellor's 2014 autumn statement, he made several announcements about extra funding the Government have agreed to provide. These include: £6M to support key World War 1 and World War 2 anniversaries between now and up to the Royal British Legion's centenary in 2021; £10M over five years for Veterans with Service-related hearing problems; and £5m to help the Ghurkha Welfare Trust setup a third care home for Ghurkhas in Nepal. At the end of this financial year the Government will have committed over £100M to support delivery of the Covenant.



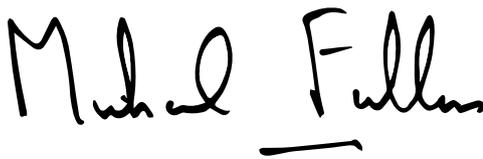
Defence Secretary Michael Fallon and UK Managing Director for Tesco Robin Terrell sign the Corporate Covenant

In preparing this report, I have considered the unique obligations and the sacrifices that our Armed Forces make, as well as the Covenant's key principles: the commitment to remove the disadvantages experienced by the Armed Forces community when compared to their civilian counterparts, in accessing public and commercial goods and services; and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most, such as the injured and the bereaved. In keeping with last year, the main chapters in this year's report concentrate on the issues specified in the legislation and which have the greatest impact on our people: Healthcare, Education, Housing and Coroners Inquests. The report also focuses on other important subjects under the Covenant, such as: changes to Terms and Conditions of Service; support for Armed Forces families through the provision of operational welfare; ensuring equity of support for the growing number of reserve forces; sponsoring schemes to help Armed Forces spouses overcome disadvantage when seeking employment; and helping personnel during the transition from military to civil life.

As required by legislation, I have consulted the Devolved Administrations while preparing the report. I am pleased to say that we have received assistance from Scotland and Wales, and that my Officials have had positive discussions with their opposite numbers in the Northern Ireland Executive. As on previous occasions, and in keeping with the commitment that has been given to Parliament, this report includes the unedited comments that we have received from the external members of the Covenant Reference Group. I am grateful for all that they, the Service Charities and other supporters of the Armed Forces continue to do.

I hope that this has produced a report that informs and engages the different audiences for whom it is intended. I recognise that not all will wish to read the report from cover to cover. So, as with last year, I have arranged for a much shorter version, which will capture the report's key aspects, to be sent to every serving member of the Armed Forces.

While I am proud of the progress we have made, and I can offer my personal reassurance that the Government will continue working to deliver our commitments under the Covenant, I would be the first to acknowledge that there will always be more to do. Improving awareness and understanding about the Covenant, and being vigorous in addressing comparative disadvantage wherever it occurs, will be an enduring task. We cannot promise to eradicate disadvantage entirely - the demands of Service life make this an unfortunate reality. However, we can pledge to ensure that, through the Armed Forces Covenant, we strive to do the absolute best we can for our people.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Fallon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP
Secretary of State for Defence

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"Delivering lasting change"

This is the third Annual Report, and as with previous year's it seeks to set out the key achievements from this year and the areas where we know there is still more to be done. It is encouraging that the value of the Covenant has continued to grow, with the focus on how we used the principles of the Covenant to deliver lasting change for the Armed Forces Community. One of the best examples of this was the recent announcement by the Prime Minister that with effect from 1 April 2015, widows, widowers and surviving civil partners will now retain their pensions for life, including if they re-marry.

A major strand of work this year has been on how we extend the reach of the Covenant beyond Central Government. Every Local Authority in Great Britain has now signed a Community Covenant. This is a major achievement, with every Local Authority now committed to supporting the Armed Forces Communities in their area. The Royal British Legion has produced two Community Covenant Best Practice Guides and our challenge for next year is to work much more closely with Local Authorities to ensure that best practice is promulgated and to tackle those issues, such as access to social housing and school places for children of Service families, that need an extra push. This will not be easy, and will need to take account of the pressures already facing Local Authorities by ensuring activity is properly prioritised and coordinated. We will discuss these proposals with Local Authorities at a series of regional events in 2015.

Another important way that society is supporting the Armed Forces Community, and living up to the principles of the Covenant, is through the Corporate Covenant. This enables employers to acknowledge and record their support for the Armed Forces Community. This can be through the employment of Reserves, Veterans, or Spouses, or through dedicated programmes to support the Armed Forces in their local communities. This year we launched the Defence Relationship Management Organisation to provide a dedicated team of professionals to coordinate our engagement with employers, and in July the Prime Minister announced the first 10 gold awards in the Employer Recognition Scheme. There are now over 370 organisations signed up to the Corporate Covenant and we expect that number to continue to grow over the next year. The names of all those that have signed are included on the inside back pages of this report, with their detailed pledges shown on the gov.uk website.

Also shown on the website are details of all the projects we have supported through the £35M LIBOR fund and the projects that have been announced from this year's £40M Veterans Accommodation Fund (including the new Royal British Legion Veterans dementia unit in Kent, and Erskine care homes in Scotland to help improve the quality of the living environment for elderly Veterans with dementia). In the New Year we will announce the details of a new annual £10M consolidated Armed Forces Covenant fund.

The report seeks to capture both the key achievements, as well as those areas that need more work. This includes not only the main areas we are obliged to report on by the Act (Healthcare, Education, Housing and Coroners Inquests) but all the strands of activity supported by the Covenant. Outside of the main chapters, the following areas are worthy of particular attention:

Service personnel - We are working on our new offer to Service personnel through the framework of the New Employment Model. The first element of that package, the new Forces Help to Buy scheme, went live on 1 April 2014. In April 2016, a new Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS) will be introduced; work will continue to develop a new pay model; and new engagement structures for regular personnel will be introduced. We also reflect in the report on the progress which the MOD has made on diversity and inclusion, demonstrated best by the RAF's inclusion as one of the Times' Top 50 Employers for Women 2014.

Reserves – We are making good progress on the recruitment of Reservists. Through the introduction of the Defence Reform Act, Reservists now have a right of access to an employment tribunal to give them better protection in civilian employment. Through the Corporate Covenant, and the introduction of payments to small and medium sized organisations when reservist employees are mobilised, we have helped to make employing Reservists easier. We have also made changes to some terms and conditions for Reservists. The Report goes on to detail the Armed Forces Covenant support that we provide for Veterans of the Reserve forces such as payment of tuition fees for higher education.

Families – We recognise the importance of support for the families of Service personnel particularly during deployments. A lot of good work has also gone into addressing the challenges faced by Service spouses in gaining employment whilst they “follow the flag”. The Report includes several case studies which highlight the schemes that support Service partners, such as Lifeworks for Families provided by the Royal British Legion Industries. The report also focuses on our continued work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to help publicise some of the policies which the DWP have implemented to support Service families. There have been further welcome developments in the education of children from Service families. The MOD's Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) continue to work closely with the Education Departments in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales on key issues such as School Admissions Codes, Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Codes of Practice, Service Pupil Premiums, Term-Time Absence, and Service Pupil Information Profiles. DCYP also continues to work closely with the national networks supporting schoolchildren from Service families across the United Kingdom. The MOD Education Support Fund (previously the Support Fund for State Schools with Service Children) has been doubled to £6M per year and extended until 2018, and £20M of LIBOR fines has been allocated for childcare provision for Service families.

Veterans – The Government and the nation have a moral obligation to support our Veterans and commemorate and remember their commitment and sacrifice. We now have a shared vision for Veterans which we will use to inform any policy making that could affect this part of our community. Lord Ashcroft's review of the process of the Service leaver's transition to civilian life was published during the year. It painted a positive picture of our current process whilst suggesting that things could be improved further in some places. Many of the Report's 43 recommendations have now been implemented, for example a 24 hour helpline. We report on the £40M that has been awarded to projects providing accommodation for Veterans in the UK. There is a strong framework of support for Veterans in place across the Devolved Administrations. The report highlights some of this, including; the appointment of a Scottish Veterans minister; the publication by the Welsh Government of a package of support aimed at providing advice and signposting of public services to the Armed Forces community; and the setting up of a Veterans support forum in Northern Ireland.



Defence Minister Anna Soubry speaks with veteran Norman Perry during a visit to Blind Veterans UK's Brighton centre

In last year's report we made a commitment to improve evidence gathering to support a quantitative assessment of the success of the Covenant. While progress has been made identifying the main data sources, to conduct this work, we are still gathering the necessary data to complete it. This work and better communications to maintain awareness of the Covenant, will be key strands of activity for the next year as we build on work to embed and sustain the Covenant. At its meeting in October, the Covenant Reference Group agreed the Work Plan for next year. Some of the key areas we will focus on are: making sure that we prioritise appropriately and fairly when deciding how the enduring £10M for Armed Forces Covenant Commitments should be spent; the Armed Forces family, how this is defined and ensuring that it is properly supported by the Covenant; and taking stock of how the Corporate Covenant is developing. We will report progress against these issues in next year's report.

OBSERVATIONS

By external members of the covenant reference group

Naval Families Federation, Army Families Federation, RAF Families Federation

Introduction

The three Service Families Federations are once again grateful for the opportunity to comment on those elements of the Report relevant to the military personnel and families we represent and we would like to acknowledge the tremendous work that has been done in the last 12 months to continue building the Armed Forces Covenant, the Community Covenant and the Corporate Covenant. We wholeheartedly endorse and support the intent of the AF Covenant and we look forward to a continuing and growing involvement in helping to sustain it in the long term.

General

We are clear that many of the Covenant initiatives are beginning to make a difference for serving personnel and their families and these are to be welcomed. However, there remains much to be done if the Covenant is to be successfully applied and sustained over the long term and there are two areas we think require specific effort.

Firstly, communicating the AF Covenant and its components to Service personnel and their families. We remain disappointed that a sizeable proportion of our people continue to say that they have little or no knowledge of the AF Covenant and the principles that underpin it. We acknowledge that the MOD understands the problem and is working to overcome it but we all have a part to play in improving the level of knowledge and understanding. We would again urge everybody involved in delivering the AF Covenant to use every opportunity to spread the message about the aims of the Covenant as widely as possible - not only throughout the Service community but amongst those delivering it as well. Our evidence indicates that there remain communication issues for those delivering the Covenant in both the public and private sectors: Tremendous support and commitment to the Covenant is declared at senior executive levels within major organisations and companies - and this is acknowledged and applauded - but there are still far too many occasions when that commitment is not adequately transmitted to the people working at "desk level", the very people who have day to day contact with our military personnel and families. Too often, these people either have not heard of the AF Covenant at all, or have no idea of the involvement and support that their organisation has signed up to. This can lead at best to simple misunderstandings and at worst to appalling treatment and unnecessary stress. We would ask that ministers and senior civil servants in charge of government departments make a deliberate effort to ensure that the messaging to their staff about

the AF Covenant is communicated to everybody and to make sure it does not fade away at middle management and section head level. Equally, we would ask the same of the private sector companies that have signed up to the Corporate Covenant to make sure that the services and treatment afforded to Service personnel are communicated to ALL their staff and reinforced regularly.

Delivery of Community Covenants

Secondly, that 100% of local authorities have now signed a Community Covenant is a great achievement but our evidence continues to indicate that delivery remains patchy. In some regions, the authorities are working collaboratively and to great effect to introduce initiatives that support the Covenant principle of removing disadvantage caused by the military lifestyle. However, we are aware that in other areas the process is much slower and less well organised. (Sometimes even just finding the Covenant point of contact within an organisation is a real challenge). The identification of regions that need further support to identify good practice and ideas is therefore crucial to maintaining the momentum of Covenant implementation across the UK. Local authorities also face significant budgetary pressures and are having to 'do much more with much less' while we are still asking them to do more to support their Service Community. We are concerned about the risk to sustaining the Community Covenant in the long term as local authorities have to focus on other issues within their areas of responsibility. It is not good enough to simply argue that, having signed Community Covenants, local authorities must commit to delivering on them in the long term regardless of other priorities. We therefore welcome work planned for the coming year led by the Covenant Reference Group to help authorities deliver on their commitments by working more collaboratively, identifying and spreading best practice, sharing innovative ideas and providing them with better data wherever possible. The regional Community Covenant conferences will be important in supporting this but our own Covenant Co-ordinator staff have already done much to help in this respect as well, and we hope that their role can be continued in order to help improve delivery: An understanding of the unique nature of Armed Forces family life is crucial in local policy development and the MOD and the single Services need to be more forward leaning in reaching out to communities and local authorities – even something as simple as better granularity on where our people live would be helpful - otherwise we risk Community Covenants becoming just a "nice to have" on the website.

Turning to the detail of the Report, we would like to record the following:

Healthcare

The Department of Health is to be applauded for the advances that have been made in healthcare provision in the last year; they are genuinely appreciated by those Service personnel and their families that need them. We would add that, so far as is reasonably practicable, families serving overseas should be able to access the same level and breadth of treatment that their civilian counterparts in the UK can access. We welcome the Defence Select Committee recommendations to further improve mental health support for serving personnel, reservists, veterans and their families, and to reduce harm caused by alcohol abuse.

Education

We are pleased to see that this report commits to improve awareness of the Service Pupil Premium amongst schools and Service families alike. Equally, the Special Education Needs code has made some headway into providing for Service children, but we still have some concern about how it actually translates in practice for mobile Service families moving from one area to another. We are therefore reassured that the report sets out the need to monitor its implementation. The guidance recently issued to schools by the Head Teachers Association on authorised absences is hugely welcome but remains just guidance and so will need to be monitored. We hope DfE will agree to officially endorse the guidance. Finally, the consultation on the School Admissions Code is hugely important to identify and address the disadvantages that still remain.

Accommodation

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation continues to improve service delivery on housing. The new contract is in its infancy and must be given chance to bed in but we hope it will help to increase the rate of improvement because the quality of forces accommodation remains very much a mixed bag. We are hearing more and more from single personnel on issues with Single Living Accommodation (SLA) and these issues now need to be prioritised as far as possible within the budgetary constraints. We also support the introduction of the new Combined Accommodation Assessment Scheme, which provides a badly needed and far more pragmatic process for grading service accommodation. However, some families will undoubtedly struggle to afford higher charges for regraded housing and we are concerned about the impact on these families during a period of continuing pay constraint, whereby an increase in accommodation charge due to re-grading could easily wipe out a 1% annual pay rise for the most junior ranks.

The new Forces Help to Buy scheme is working well but it remains a 3 year trial and we hope that a decision can be made soon to set it in stone. Whilst measures have been taken to ensure former Armed Forces personnel are not disadvantaged in accessing social housing, divorced and separated spouses continue to be vulnerable. Divorced spouses should be included in the categories of the Armed Forces community where the need to meet local connection criteria should not be applied. The council tax discount available to many Armed Forces personnel living in Service accommodation on their furnished second homes in GB, ceases when personnel are assigned to Northern Ireland or overseas. Armed Forces personnel often have no choice in being assigned to Northern Ireland or overseas and we are disappointed that a commitment has not been made to address this issue with councils.

Through life

Employment

We are encouraged by the MOD's continued efforts to understand the issues on spouse/partner employment, especially as the New Employment Model is encouraging Service families into their own homes and a second income can be essential in helping to achieve that. We would still like MOD to consider supporting the older children of Service

personnel, who may have seen their career and job options adversely affected by their family's mobility. We are also hopeful that spouses and partners can be better supported through the resettlement process as whole families, and not just the serving member, transition from the military into civilian life.

Childcare

The issue of childcare provision is something that we are hearing more and more about from Service personnel and families. The availability and cost of childcare is not only a further factor in the ability of spouses and partners to gain meaningful employment but can also be a challenge given the serving person's frequently unpredictable working hours. It is good to see these issues and challenges recognised in the report.

Armed Forces Pensions for Life

The recent announcement by the government that, with effect from 1 April 2015, changes will be made to both the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 75 and the War Pension Scheme to ensure that widows, widowers and surviving civil partners will now retain their pensions for life, is very good news indeed and we congratulate everyone involved in coming to the right decision.

Commercial Services

This year many personnel have told us of the disadvantages they face in the provision of commercial services due to the Armed Forces lifestyle and especially as a result of overseas assignments. These include issues with obtaining mortgages, with insurance and with things like mobile phone contracts. We continue to provide evidence to the MOD and to the companies involved but success is not always guaranteed and we would ask that pressure is maintained to remove disadvantage in this area.

Foreign and Commonwealth

The new Armed Forces immigration rules introduced last December address many of the inequalities that Foreign and Commonwealth families have been experiencing and the Army Families Federation in particular is working hard to ensure that the transition period is as painless as possible. However, and despite the new rules, foreign and commonwealth families continue to be disadvantaged in certain circumstances. It is disappointing that there is no acknowledgement in this report that there remain issues still to be resolved.

Transition to Civilian Life

As with previous Reports, we would like again to emphasise that the vast majority of Service families are incredibly resilient and "just get on with" whatever is thrown at them, providing unstinting support to their military spouses and partners. In addition, we would highlight that the Ashcroft Report found that the majority of Armed Forces leavers make a successful transition to civilian life. And while it is good to see so many of the recommendations of the Ashcroft Report being implemented, we would stress that transition very often involves a whole family and not just the individual.

Conclusion

We conclude with a heartfelt “Thank you” on behalf of serving personnel and their families to everybody involved in delivering the AF Covenant and the Community and Corporate Covenant components within it. But in applauding the excellent work done to date we must not take the foot off the pedal: There remains much to be done, particularly to ensure better delivery and to communicate the aims and intent of the AF Covenant to all Service personnel and their families and to those charged with its delivery at desk level.

Cobseo – The Confederation of Service Charities TRBL, SSAFA, War Widows Association, and Professor Sir Hew Strachan

The declaration in the Covenant Report by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence, on behalf of the Government, of their passion for delivering the commitments made under the Covenant and ensuring that the Armed Forces are respected and supported is very warmly welcomed. This latest Report highlights the many areas in which some considerable progress has been made, and also where more work is needed. The recent Government announcement rectifying the injustice to Armed Forces Widows, including War Widows, whereby their pensions were removed on remarriage or cohabitation has been widely seen as a very important demonstration of the Government's commitment to the Covenant and has been universally warmly welcomed.

The complexity of dealing with increasingly diverse levels of Government, including Central Government, the Devolved Administrations, different levels of local government and the delegated responsibilities of the NHS is not underestimated. It is noted that the Devolved Administrations have initiated some developments that might be worth evaluating with regard to wider implementation. These include: the appointment of a Veterans' Commissioner in Scotland and it will be important to assess how successful he is in managing to pull together diverse groups within Government, the private sector and Service charities for the benefit of the Armed Forces community; the establishment of an Armed Forces and Veterans' Champion in Police Scotland; the possibility of issuing a Veterans ID card in Wales; and the creation of a Veterans Support Forum in Northern Ireland.

The announcement that all local authorities in Great Britain have now signed up to the Community Covenant is excellent news. However, the challenge now is to ensure that these declarations of intent are turned into positive action to ensure that the Covenant is implemented at the crucial local level. There is much evidence to show that the delivery of the objectives of the Covenant at this level remains extremely mixed. As an example, in the recent Stoll/Riverside survey of local authorities into housing practices, of the 150 that responded, only 32 claimed to have any initiatives in place with regard to housing ex-Service personnel and, of these, only 15 initiatives would have had any impact. The key requirement is the putting in place of appropriate policies, particularly with regard to education and health as well as housing. Examples of best practice policies in these areas are included in the RBL manuals which have been sent to all local authorities. Action now needs to be taken to assist local authorities to put them in place and to ensure that they are implemented. The Service Charity Sector, and especially TRBL, is standing by to assist with this process. The planned programme of regional Community Covenant presentations is welcomed and should be a useful initiative but it is not nearly enough in itself to deliver the necessary level of support required to what is, with regard to the Armed Forces Covenant, the Front Line.

An important part of ensuring that local authorities understand the needs of the Armed Forces community in their area is the establishment of a communication network whereby the local Armed Forces and the local authority both identify points of contact for liaison on these issues. In some local authority areas, especially where significant numbers of serving members of the Armed Forces are based, these points of contact are well established. However, this is not universal and they need to be extended to cover all 407 local authorities in Great Britain. The challenges of implementing the Community Covenant in Northern Ireland are acknowledged. Nonetheless, it is important to make sure that machinery is put in place to ensure that members of the Armed Forces community in the Province are not disadvantaged.

The enthusiasm with which major companies have embraced the Corporate Covenant is to be welcomed. The challenge is to turn this enthusiastic support for the Armed Forces community into tangible benefits. Facilitating the enlistment of employees into the Reserve, important though this is, is not enough. The companies that have signed up to Honour and Support the Armed Forces community need to be helped to deliver their commitment and effort needs to be put into publicly recognising those companies that achieve this goal. Signing the Covenant should be seen as just the first step in a process.

The provision of data about the size, nature and location of the Armed Forces community is of vital importance to those committed to providing support, including Government in all its forms and the Service Charity Sector. An extremely helpful TRBL Household Survey Report has recently been published which provides some very important and valuable updated information. However, what is really required is access to the full range of Government data, including that available through the DWP. This would allow all those involved to target their support for the community more efficiently. The DWP's willingness to embrace this process is acknowledged and now needs to be put into action.

The additional funding provided in the area of prosthetics, following the Murrison Review, has had a major impact particularly on wounded Servicemen and women, and especially on veterans with attributable injuries from conflicts long ago. While the written assurance from the Health Minister, Dr Dan Poulter MP, to the Health Partnership Working Group that £6million per annum of recurring funds for veterans' prosthetics has been made available to NHS England in the mandate monies for 2015/16 and beyond is to be welcomed, concerns remain that this funding is subject to the NHS England prioritisation process. In simple terms assurance has yet to be given that the money will be used to continue the excellent work currently being undertaken to improve the provision of enhanced prosthetic devices and services for veterans. This uncertainty is causing nervousness within the Limb Service, and amongst serving personnel and veterans. There is also concern that there is no equivalent scheme for other forms of mobility, notably wheel chairs, and that veterans with attributable injuries will not experience the same support as those still serving and in the Defence recovery pathway.

There also remain concerns about the UK-wide availability of mental health support and the effectiveness of treatments and therapy. Some £6M has been provided to the NHS in recent years to provide Veteran specific mental health treatment but there is, as yet, no output data available to measure effectiveness. This is an area which would benefit from some Government-led objective research into outcomes to ensure that those in need of support receive the best that is available; the results may well result in the need for additional funding. The Forces in Mind Trust is assessing how they might be able to assist in this process. There is also a separate but continuing issue about the timely transfer of medical records when Veterans are in need of this sort of support.

Hearing Loss remains a source of apparent disadvantage to Veterans. The condition is prevalent amongst the veteran community and yet the WPAFC Tribunal continues to deny appropriate compensation. This appears to be because the level of compensation is based upon industrial noise levels, rather than the high impact noise that causes most cases of hearing loss within the Armed Forces. There would be merit in examining this issue to provide the evidence to rectify this anomaly. The announcement in the Chancellor's 2014 Autumn Statement of additional funding to address Veteran long term hearing issues is welcomed.

The publication of the Ashcroft Report earlier in the year provided a valuable focus on the Transition process and confirmed that most Servicemen and women make a successful transition to civilian life. The commitment by the Government to implement the vast majority of the recommendations is noted and some form of audit process to track the implementation of these important recommendations would be welcome. Ensuring that members of the Armed Forces community have easy access to the wealth of information available to assist with Transition is a key requirement of the Report. This will demand close coordination between Government and the Service Charity Sector. The provision of properly integrated call centres and websites will be an important feature of this process, as will be the provision of locally provided advice through drop in centres in more than just major centres of population. The provision of support for spouses in the transition process, including in initiatives such as the RBLI Lifeworks programme, is another area of concern which needs to be addressed to ensure that spouses are not disadvantaged. The inclusion of a requirement to include employment support for spouses within the Invitation to Tender process for the new CTP contract is most welcome and now needs to be put into action.

Service housing remains a major source of concern for both single and married Servicemen and women. The report clearly highlights the major investment in improving the quality of Service Family Accommodation during the year. The introduction of a Patch Management organisation is also noted. However, and despite these developments, nearly a third of those who responded to the 2014 FAMCAS survey declared themselves unhappy with their accommodation, particularly with regard to boiler maintenance and black mould. There are similar concerns regarding Single Living Accommodation. The impact of the 2-year pause in Single Living Accommodation improvements is still being felt with more than half rated as below categories 1 and 2. There is clearly much more to be done in all these areas.

The provision of adapted houses for seriously injured Servicemen and women also remains an issue. The current policy requires that expenditure for the adaptation of a house be committed to before the Serviceman or woman leaves the Service. This is inevitably likely to be at a very difficult time for the individual concerned and the policy often forces premature decisions on the choice of final place of residence. The policy needs to be amended to provide more flexibility thereby ensuring that the injured individual is not disadvantaged.

The implementation of the New Employment Model continues to impact on the delivery of the Covenant as it involves a fundamental review of the package of terms and conditions of Service personnel. Its stated aim is to deliver an updated career structure and to provide more choice and flexibility. The publication of individual elements of the review has fostered continuing uncertainty within the Services about its full implications. The Reserve community is similarly uncertain about its position with respect to the level of support due to it as part of the wider Armed Forces community. As Reservists and their families tend to live in locations that are more isolated from the main centres of the military community,

they inevitably find it harder to receive the same level of support. This is an issue that will increasingly affect Regular Servicemen and women and their families as the New Employment Model begins to be implemented.

We note that the SSAFA voluntary adoption service continues to be required by Service families who face significant difficulties in adopting, due to their peripatetic lifestyle and some continuing prejudice in a small number of local authorities. However, there remain challenges unique to the circumstances of many Service families, particularly with regard to the absence of one or more parents for protracted periods during the adoption process as a result of exercises or operational deployments. The intention to take these issues forward with the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for Education is noted.

Some concerns remain over the conduct of appeals to the WPAFC Tribunal. Members of the Armed Forces community are unique in the judicial process in that they have to lodge an appeal with the defendant organisation rather than appeal directly to the tribunal. While the implications of this process might only be with respect to the timing of the hearing of an appeal, they have an impact on perceptions. There are also some continuing concerns about the relationship between AFCS and War Pension payments and assessments for Universal Credit income. It is noted that AFCS payments are discounted but War Pensions and some other allowances are taken into account in social care means testing. This is not the case in most civilian compensation payments and would seem to be an Armed Forces disadvantage. Furthermore, compensation such as the AFCS GIP payment is supposed to be recompense for loss of earnings, and yet is index-linked to price inflation. Over time the cumulative loss of purchasing power is dramatic. For example, an annual payment of £5,000 awarded in 1982 would now be worth £22,000 if linked to average earnings, but only £15,000 if linked to prices. In order to promote the financial independence of the seriously injured, compensation payments should be uprated in the same way as the basic state pension – using the higher of average earnings, CPI or 2.5% to make the annual adjustment

There remains an anomaly within the Covenant. It is long established that certain members of the Merchant Navy who took part in military operations under Royal Navy command are to be treated as veterans. This is recognised and documented in the current MOD Veterans Strategy. However, these individuals are not included in the definition of the Armed Forces community with respect to the Covenant. This omission needs to be rectified to avoid a small but important potential area of disadvantage.

The allocation of Libor funding to support the delivery of the Covenant has been welcomed and the new £10M perpetuity fund has the potential to deliver real benefits. The key will be putting in place a structure that allows the expenditure to be strategically targeted so as to have a significant impact on the key areas identified in this report; and to include a rigorous process of audit that reviews the delivery of the stated goals.

Finally, there remains a difficulty in determining just how successful are Government, in all its forms, and the population at large in delivering the overall goals of the Armed Forces Covenant. The plans to develop some metrics to assist in this process are welcomed. There may be merit in developing a simple Red, Amber and Green system for the Commitments table at Annex A to help identify those which have been met in full, those where some progress has been made but more work is needed; and those where there remains much to be done. This would help all concerned to track progress on the many areas being addressed and would certainly be easier to analyse than the multiple shades of blue in the current table.



CHAPTER 1 – HEALTHCARE

The MOD provides primary healthcare for all Service personnel, families registered with Defence Medical Services (DMS), and mobilised reservists. The NHS is responsible for providing secondary healthcare for serving personnel and for providing primary and secondary healthcare for all Veterans, non-mobilised reservists, and families.

The Covenant sets the following goals with respect to healthcare:

- Members of the Armed Forces Community should enjoy the same standard of, and access to, healthcare as received by any other UK citizen in the area where they live.
- Personnel injured on operations should be treated in conditions which recognise the specific needs of Service personnel.
- Family Members should retain their relative position on any NHS waiting list, if moved around the UK due to the Service Person being posted.
- Veterans should receive priority treatment (subject to the clinical needs of others) in respect of treatment relating to a condition resulting from their service in the Armed Forces; and

- Veterans should be able to access mental health professionals who have an understanding of Armed Forces culture.

Healthcare Provision for the Service Community

In the past year the MOD has delivered on a number of important Covenant commitments which will serve to improve patient care for both Service personnel and reservists. We have:

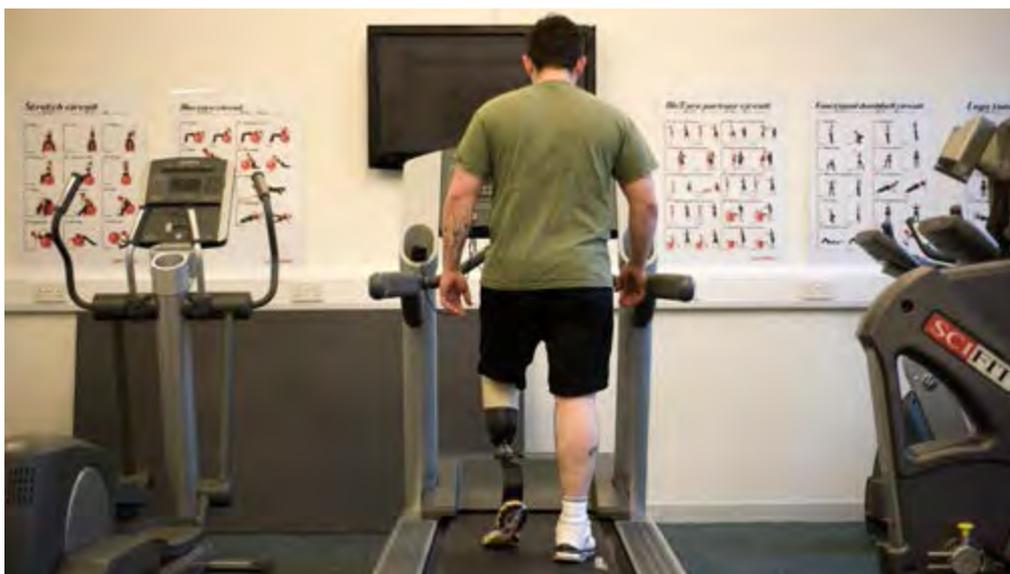
Completed the transformation of military primary and intermediate healthcare into a unified **Defence Primary Healthcare**. Integrating the 194 single Service medical centres and 149 single Service dental centres has allowed us to share best practice, improve healthcare delivery and governance and reduce overall costs. It is also helping to improve links with the NHS and access to secondary care services when required.

- Completed the £138M **Midlands Medical Accommodation** project. The project has established Whittington Barracks near Lichfield as a single purpose-built world class centre of excellence for the training and delivery of Defence Medical Services.
- Given members of the Reserve Forces entitlement to receive **enhanced occupational healthcare** which includes fitness for work medicals, dental and hearing assessments and sight tests, all delivered by Defence Primary Healthcare.
- Extended the **Defence Medical Rehabilitation Programme (DMRP)**, to include mobilised reservists and those injured during Reserve training.
- Continued work to implement the recommendations of the **Care Quality Commission** to further improve the level of care provided by Defence Medical Services. MOD has already addressed the majority of the recommendations, and is now implementing the recommended infrastructure improvements should be completed by early 2016.

The Welsh Government has implemented a fast-track protocol to shorten referral to treatment times for serving personnel and dependants who are registered with the DMS and require secondary care.

Operational Care and Recovery

The primary focus when a Service person is wounded, injured, or sick is to return them back to health, and operational capability, as soon as possible through the provision of effective and comprehensive medical and rehabilitative care. In addition to recent improvements to deployed medical care, in July the Defence Secretary announced that medical rehabilitation services (currently delivered at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court) would transfer to a new **Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre (DNRC)** based at Stanford Hall, near Loughborough. The new facility will ensure that there is continued world-leading clinical rehabilitation care, tailored to the unique needs of Service personnel, for the long term. This has been made possible due to the major charitable initiative stemming from the generosity of the Duke of Westminster, and is consistent with the long-standing tradition of Service charities contributing towards the welfare of the Armed Forces.



In a similar vein, this year Help for Heroes have supported the enhancement of the Naval Service Recovery Pathway through the opening of a bespoke rehabilitation centre in HMS Drake – The Endeavour Building. Together with the Parker VC accommodation block that opened in 2013, the new facility will ensure personnel from all 3 Services in the South West have access to dedicated and specialist rehabilitative care. The Endeavour Building facilities were used extensively to support the training of wounded in service personnel who competed in the Invictus Games.



Corporal Andrew Garthwaite demonstrates his ‘thought-controlled’ prosthetic arm to Defence Minister Anna Soubry

Another major focus from previous years has been the delivery of high quality prosthetics. This year we have worked to ensure long term continuity of this service. The Department of Health has confirmed that the current funding levels for NHS England will continue.

Local Health Boards in Wales have adopted the formal commissioning policy for enhanced prosthetic services for Veterans developed by an all Wales expert working group and will remain on course to complete the further phase of work on improvements to prosthetic services as a whole by the end of 2014.

In Scotland, the new State Of The Art prosthetics service became operational in April 2014. This offers Veterans specialist prosthetics, based on agreed clinical need and multi-disciplinary assessment. This service is provided through limb fitting and rehabilitation centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow, with links to Aberdeen, Inverness and Dundee. While there are no prosthetic centres in Northern Ireland, Service personnel can be referred to a centre in Great Britain for treatment if required. This ensures serving personnel are not disadvantaged as a result of assignments to Northern Ireland.



Launched by His Royal Highness Prince Harry, the hugely successful Invictus games held in September 2014, was a powerful demonstration of the role that sport and physical activity can play in recovery. It also helped to generate a wider understanding of, and respect for, those who serve their country.

A team of 130 wounded and injured GB Service personnel; many of who were supported by the Battle Back programme, and the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Programme, competed against other nations over four days at venues in London made famous by the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Throughout the Games, we heard inspiring and uplifting personal stories of the competitors. However, the most important message was the value that sport can play in rehabilitation, and how it helps to reintegrate the injured back into society:



Lance Corporal, Derek Derenalagi from the Second Battalion, whose vehicle was hit by an IED in Afghanistan in 2007. "Seeing some of the guys I was in hospital with when I got injured and to see them here competing in different kinds of events, it's so encouraging to see."

Captain of Team GB, David Henson (pictured), went on to win gold in the 200 metre final, after losing both legs above the knee when he stood on an improvised explosive device.

"People stop looking at you as if you are weird, and instead want to hear your story."

In his closing speech, Prince Harry called on everyone to help in building a future for our wounded, injured and sick service personnel, asking for 'respect, admiration and recognition of their considerable talent'. He rightly called them "a credit to our nation and to each nation here at these Games".

Transition and Support from the MOD to the NHS

There is regular and close co-operation between the MOD, Department of Health, NHS England, and the Devolved Administrations to deliver the Healthcare needs

of Service personnel, their families and Veterans. The **Transition Protocol** is an established practice to ensure the effective smooth transition of health and social care for injured Service leavers to local public providers. It was reviewed as part of the House of Commons Defence Committee inquiry into Military Casualties earlier this year, and all main delivery organisations reported that it is working well and that any issues were being successfully addressed through the MOD's Defence Recovery Working Group and Medical Advisory Group.

Key to a successful 'transition' is the effective transfer of information between the MOD and the civilian medical practitioner. The MOD, in partnership with NHS England, has worked hard this year to develop a system to help ensure NHS GPs are made aware of a patient's status as a Veteran and know how to get access to their **military healthcare records**. We are working with the NHS to improve this system further to allow for a summary of in-service care to be included in their records.

It remains our goal to develop a system to transfer medical records between Defence Medical Services and the UK Health Services and this has been captured within the scope of the future Defence Medical Information Service programme. The programme was initiated in April 2014 and will deliver improvements incrementally from 2018. Greater collaboration and information exchange with the NHS is a key tenet of this programme.

Ministers in England, Scotland and Wales agreed that the recipients of compensation under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme for injuries which result in infertility should be entitled to appropriate treatment, including IVF. The recommended three cycles of IVF for this specific group is available in England and Scotland. In Wales, eligible Armed Forces personnel can access two free cycles of IVF treatment and can apply for further cycles, based on clinical need, as an Individual Patient Funding Request to the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee. Uptake of the further cycle has been reviewed and no applications have been made by Armed Forces personnel in the past four years. As Northern Ireland residents requiring IVF treatment are only entitled to one free cycle of treatment, while this differs from those in Great Britain, where Service medical professionals can refer personnel for treatment in Great Britain.

Professor Tim Briggs, immediate past President of the British Orthopaedic Association (BOA), published the **Chavasse Report** in July 2014 on improved access to elective orthopaedic care in England for both Regular and Reservist personnel and Veterans. The report builds on his 'Getting It Right First Time' report suggesting changes to orthopaedic surgery provision in England. The Chavasse Report proposes the establishment of a network of hospitals to deliver orthopaedic treatment and rehabilitation. The MOD is working closely with the Department of Health and NHS England to see how Professor Briggs' proposals can offer more timely access to specialist centres for the Armed Forces community.

In the Chancellor's 2014 autumn statement, he announced that the Government will provide funding of £10M over five years for Veterans with Service-related hearing problems. The MOD will work with the Royal British Legion (RBL) to deliver this.

Mental Health

The MOD continues to achieve progress in the treatment and understanding of mental health conditions through a large number of existing initiatives, including:

- Phase 4 of the **Kings College for Military Health Research** study which is looking at Armed Forces personnel who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the effect their deployment had on their health and well-being, and life once they left Service. Phase 4 concludes in 2016.
- Research in conjunction with the US Department of Defense into a possible **Mental Health Screening Tool** which could help assess if personnel are likely to be affected by PTSD.
- Defence Statistics to publish the first report on the causes of deaths amongst Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts in 2015-16.
- The MOD and Department of Health and NHS England **Psychiatric Interoperability and On-the-job Training (PILOT) scheme** which will allow NHS staff to transfer skills with Departments of Community Mental Health (DCMH) staff to improve their understanding of the needs of Service personnel.
- Enhancement of the **Veterans Information Service (VIS)**, which was put in place following the report by Dr Andrew Murrison MP to signpost the mental health support available to Service leavers, has been enhanced by linking it to the wider RBL knowledge database, which provides Veterans with access to a wide range of resources.
- £1.4M of funding by the Scottish Government to support specialist mental health services in partnership with NHS Scotland and Combat Stress. This includes the Combat Stress outreach service, which made nearly 1,000 visits to provide valuable treatment and welfare support to Veterans and their families.
- The Welsh Government invests £485,000 each year in Veterans NHS Wales. This year a further £100,000 of additional funding has been invested to help speed up access to mental health services for Veterans. The Welsh Government is currently reviewing the results of a review of Veterans NHS Wales to ensure it is operating effectively.
- Veterans' NHS Wales has also developed a common care pathway with the main Veterans' charities and agencies, all have signed up to it.
- In February the Welsh Government also published a Substance Misuse Treatment Framework to improve access to substance misuse treatment for veterans
- The Welsh Government published its Veterans in Prison Pathway to Care in November 2013, to ensure that Veterans in prisons receive access to the same mental health services as those who are not in prison. In February 2014 it also published the Substance Misuse Treatment Framework module 'Improving Access to substance misuse treatment services for Veterans'.

2014 Report Commitments

The MOD will continue work to implement the recommendations of the Care Quality Commission and the majority of the recommended infrastructure improvements by early 2016.

On hearing loss, the MOD will examine whether this is a widespread issue for Service personnel and Veterans, whether they are being disadvantaged, and if so, what the MOD is doing to address the issue: and

The MOD will also work with the Department of Health and the Royal British Legion to help deliver the Government's commitment to support Veterans with Service-related hearing problems.

The MOD will, through the future Defence Medical Information Programme, develop a system to transfer medical records between Defence Medical Services and the UK Health Services.

Defence Statistics will publish the first report on the causes of deaths amongst Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts in 2015-16.



Chapter 2 – Education

The Covenant sets the following goals with respect to education:

- Children of members of the Armed Forces should have the same standard of, and access to education (including early years services) as any other UK citizen in the area in which they live.
- There should be special arrangements to support access to schools if a place is required part way through an academic year as a consequence of a posting; and
- Service personnel should expect to receive appropriate training and education for both personal and professional development.

Children of Service Families

Ensuring that the children of Service personnel are not disadvantaged through their parent's service goes to the very heart of the Covenant. The Government is improving the education system in England to ensure it is amongst the best in the world. All pupils, including those from Service families, will benefit from these reforms. Service Children in State Schools is an affiliation of over 2,300 state maintained schools in England with children from Service families on their roll. It is led by a National Executive Advisory Committee of Head Teachers and key representatives of the Local Authorities. It helps to identify best practice and to address areas that could result in educational disadvantage for children from Service families. Last year, pupils from Service families achieved results on par with or above the national average: 79% achieved level 4 or higher in reading, writing and maths; and 63.7% achieved five or more A*-C grades at GCSEs, including English and maths.

The Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) at the MOD also run similar forums with the Devolved Administrations. In Scotland the National Transitions Officer (NTO) continues to be instrumental in establishing and maintaining support networks to assist those authorities most affected by the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review – there are now 20 Local Authority nominated education officers participating in the Association of Directors Education Scotland Armed Forces Working Group. The NTO is also working with schools and Local Authorities to progress measures to identify children from Service families in schools and to ensure consistent methods of data collection across schools and Local Authorities. Education Scotland are also due to publish a professional learning resource, providing evidence of successful approaches and instances of good practice, to enhance the capacity of practitioners in Scottish schools to respond to the needs of Service families' children.

The MOD Children's Education Advisory Service, who are part of DCYP, provide a one stop shop for help and advice for Services Families concerns on educational issues. DCYP Key activity to help address educational disadvantage this year includes:

- Management of a further £20M in LIBOR fines to improve the infrastructure currently in place in support of childcare provision for Service families. Over 53 applications are being considered and the results will be announced next year.
- Promoting and spreading good practice in the use of the £300 **Service Pupil Premium**. Schools applying to the MOD's Education Support Fund (see page 28) have to provide details of how they have used their Service Pupil Premium so this can be shared with the DfE and other schools. The Department for Education allocated £17.4M in the last financial year to support the needs of 57,940 pupils from Service families. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) is being commissioned to investigate the relationship between SPP and children from Service families attainment.
- Work with the Department of Education to identify where the current **Schools Admissions Code**, or the interpretation of it, has not resulted in removing disadvantage for Service children. As part of a new consultation the Department for Education has laid before Parliament a revised admissions code which allows all schools to give admission priority to children who are eligible for the Service Pupil Premium. Subject to Parliamentary approval, this code comes into force in late December 2014.

- Changing the **Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Code of Practice** to ensure it meets the specific needs of Service children with Special Educational Needs. A new code came into force in September 2014 and includes a section to help manage the difficulties faced by children with special educational needs because of Service family mobility. This is a positive step forward, but we will need to monitor implementation to ensure it delivers the required change.
- Promoting use of the **Pupil Information Profile** form to support continuous learning during school moves by indentifying the pupil's current and future learning needs. Although the form is available for use and can be downloaded from gov.uk more work is required to mainstream its use.

In Wales the School Admission Code 2013 makes provision for the children of Armed Forces personnel to be admitted to an infant class (Reception year 1 and 2) school mid-term even if it means the class will breach the infant class size limit

In Wales the Welsh Government has established a Standing Committee for Children from Service families. The Committee brings together a range of stakeholders including representatives from the MoD, Welfare Officers and educationalists, to consider issues children from Service families may face in education.



Harestock Primary School is a two-form entry school with approximately 280 children on roll. There are 56 children from Service families. There is a Service families' pupil support worker who looks after the children. Prior to their arrival, if possible, the family has a tour of the school and the support worker introduces the child to the class teacher and shows them the important places.

As soon as the school is aware of the child's arrival date, the support worker ensures that things are in place, such as tray and peg labels. This gives the child a sense of belonging from the start. A welcome pack is also issued, consisting of things that the family may find useful, such as NHS dentists and family-friendly pubs.

Within the first week the child is assessed in reading, comprehension and mathematics and the information shared with the class teacher, so even if there is a delay in records from the old school the child can be placed accordingly in class from the beginning. They are also given a Passport to success, which is a leaflet explaining how the school day works.

The school has a very popular 'Where in the world board'. The children each have their own photograph, which is displayed whenever a parent/carer is deployed, along with a pointer showing where in the world they are. At the end of the deployment the child, if they wish, can bring mum or dad into school and they remove their picture and put it away. This can give the child closure to what may have been a difficult time. It is also useful for staff members as they are then aware that there is a change in the child's home life, which may be affecting their classroom behaviour.

Friday lunchtime is Forces Friday. All the Service children, if they wish, can eat together with the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA). This gives them the chance to share with each other anything that they are finding difficult. It also gives them a chance to chat to the ELSA if

they feel they need to. They do a range of activities, including writing e-blueys if they have a parent/carer who is overseas.

The support worker also runs weekly booster sessions in reading, writing and mathematics with Service children if they have fallen behind. The sessions are proving to be an incredibly useful tool in adding value to the children's progress and attainment.

The support worker role has proved to be very beneficial to the children and the school, and they are constantly looking for ways to enhance the experience the child has whilst at Harestock Primary School.

Future Challenges For Service Children From Service Families

The **Education of Service Children Change Programme** aims to mitigate the impact that changes in current Defence policy will have on children from Service families and young people to ensure that the educational needs of children from Service families in the UK and overseas are met in a manner that allows each child to fulfil their potential. Primarily the programme is addressing the issues arising from drawdown from Germany, rebasing within the UK, and the impact of the New Employment Model (NEM) on a more static Service family footprint. Recent activity has focused on ensuring that Local Authorities and schools are aware of the changes and the likely increase in the numbers of children from Service families they are likely to experience over the coming years. The Programme has also helped to host a series of introductory visits between Local Authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, with schools in Germany and other parts of the UK where children from Service families are moving to or from.

In December 2013 the Government announced that the **MOD Education Support Fund** (previously the Support Fund for State Schools with Children from Service families) which is designed to help mitigate issues caused by exceptional mobility and deployment, was to be increased to £6M per year from Apr 14 and extended until FY17/18. The extension in timeline and increase reflects the changes taking place through drawdown from Germany and rebasing taking place within the UK and recognises the challenges that the schools supporting children from Service families may face at this time.

The MOD has been in discussion with the Department for Education in England regarding the Government's policy on leave of absence from school, in particular how this relates to Service children before, during, and after a parent's deployment. Head Teachers have the discretion to grant leave in exceptional circumstances. The National Association of Head Teachers has issued new guidelines for head teachers on the range of factors they may wish to take into account when considering each individual request. It remains the case that all requests should be considered by head teachers on their individual merits.

The Welsh Government recognises that there can be circumstances that would warrant a pupil taking time off in term time and Head Teachers already have discretionary power to authorise leave for a family holiday during term time where parents seek permission.



Eleven-year-olds attending MOD schools within Service Children's Education (SCE) have attained outstanding results in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2 with many schools outperforming the national average for state schools in England.

The results show that the MOD are delivering on their commitment and continuing to improve as there has been an improvement of 6 percentage points compared to last year's figures.

SCE's Director of Education, joined the MOD's Director of Children and Young People, in

applauding the SCE teachers and pupils adding:

"These fantastic results are the best ever for 11-year-olds attending SCE schools."

Elsewhere across SCE, GCSE results improved by 11% this year with 76% of entries resulting in an A* to C grade. This is 7 percentage points above the figure for national schools in England and Wales.

Commander British Forces Cyprus, said of the results:

"All the SCE schools here in Cyprus offer an exceptional standard of education. These most recent results are testament to the dedication and professionalism of SCE staff and the encouraging learning environment they create that enables our children to excel".

General Officer Commanding British Forces Germany (BFG), said:

"I am delighted that SCE schools in Germany have achieved improved results from last year and are higher than the published figures for England. This is especially significant during this period of drawdown and provides reassurance to our families that the high quality of teaching coupled with detailed school closure plans are ensuring that children in BFG will continue to receive the very highest standard in education until drawdown is complete."

Parents can be confident that MOD schools are delivering on the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant and enriching the lives of children from Service families in providing them with high quality teaching and learning.

Detailed statistics about exam results can be found on the DCYP GOV.UK website by accessing links to individual SCE schools overseas.

In Service Education

Whilst Service personnel can achieve recognised qualifications by undertaking relevant Service-related training, elective learning is supported through the use of the Standard Learning Credit scheme. This is designed to support small scale learning activities to enhance educational or vocational achievement up to a maximum of £175 per financial year. This funding can be used towards the cost of course fees, examinations, or support. Between 2012 and 2013, over 13,000 Service personnel claimed some £1.87M of scheme funding. From April 2014, access to the Standard Learning Credit scheme was also extended to Reservists as well as full-time Armed Forces personnel.

Both in the UK and overseas, the Enhanced Learning Credit scheme gives financial help to Service personnel (who meet the specified criteria) towards the cost of achieving a qualification at level 3 or above. In addition, the Further and Higher Education Commitment scheme pays the tuition fees of those Service leavers living in England, Scotland or Wales when they study for a first full level 3 qualification, a first undergraduate or foundation degree, or a first HNC or HND.

Cadets

The Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP) is making significant progress following the Prime Minister's and Deputy Prime Minister's announcement in June 2012, that 100 new cadet units would be established in state-funded schools in England by September 2015. This programme is on track, with 61 new units established and over 100 more in the pipeline. To financially assist schools who join the programme, the Cadet Bursary Scheme has been established to provide financial assistance in these state schools. This was spear-headed by a Department for Education led fundraising event on 18 June 2014, at Number 10 Downing Street, which was supported by members of the Cadet Forces, where it was announced that £1M of LIBOR funding had been allocated to the scheme..



Members of the National Marching band of the Air Cadet Organisation at the No 10 event, on 18 June 2014

Through the Department for Education funded 'Military Ethos Alternative Provision Programme', delivered by **Challenger Troop, Commando Joes, Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation, Knowsley Skills Academy, SkillForce and The Prince's Trust**, ex-Service men and women are helping disengaged and disadvantaged young people in schools across England. The programme is aimed at helping our young people achieve the academic standards valued by employers and universities, gain the skills and experiences they need to get on in life, and learn values to prepare them for life in modern Britain. In 2014, over 16,000 disengaged and disadvantaged pupils from 460 schools participated in the Programme including over 1,300 pupils outside the mainstream school system.



Working together: children on Challenger Troop's Military Ethos Alternative Provision programme

The National Youth Work Strategy for Wales (2014-2018) aims to elevate the status of youth work as both a service and a profession. The Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS) provides the Welsh Government with advice on how existing activities and structures can be aligned best with the unique contribution of uniformed youth work organisations in Wales. Welsh Ministers are encouraging Local Authority Education Departments to work with cadet organisations in the context of the Strategy.

Northern Ireland has five Combined Cadet Force contingents and numerous Army Cadet Force detachments. The Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations (RFCA) engages directly with the NI Department for Education on their behalf. As Continuous Education Programme and BTEC funding isn't available in NI, the RFCA have raised funds from other sources in order to cover the gap and ensure NI-based Cadets maintain funding parity with the rest of the UK. A recent schools' conference on Cadets held at Hillsborough Castle saw around 200 schools from across NI send representatives.

2014 Report Commitments

In next year's report, the MOD will report on how LIBOR money has been distributed to support childcare provision for Service families.

The MOD will work with the Department for Education to identify where the current schools admission code, or the interpretation of it, has not resulted in removing disadvantage for children from Service families.

The MOD will work with the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to investigate the relationship between the Service Pupil Premium (SPP) and children from Service families attainment. To produce quantitative and qualitative data on SPP use and improve understanding of its impact.

The MOD will continue work to promote the SPP to improve awareness amongst Service families.



Chapter 3 – Housing

The Covenant sets the following goals with respect to housing:

- Where Serving personnel are entitled to publicly-provided accommodation, it should be of good quality, affordable and suitably located.
- Service personnel should have priority status in applying for Government-sponsored affordable housing schemes and Service leavers should retain this status for a period after discharge.
- Those injured in Service should also have preferential access to appropriate housing schemes, as well as assistance with necessary adaptations to private housing or Service accommodation whilst serving; and
- Members of the Armed Forces Community should have the same access to social housing and other housing schemes as any other citizen, and not be disadvantaged in that respect by the requirement for mobility whilst in Service.

Provision of accommodation to Service personnel and their families remains important and, as a result of a range of new and ongoing programmes aimed at improving the condition of accommodation, we continue to **ensure the accommodation is right for our people**.

During financial year 2013/14, we spent £90m on upgrades and **improvements to Service Family Accommodation (SFA)** which involved 650 properties being upgraded to the highest condition standard. In addition, the fully funded asset replacement programme allowed around 4,000 SFA to benefit from cyclical improvements such as new kitchens, bathrooms, central heating systems and double glazing units; which Service personnel and their families have told us are most important to them.

As of March 2014 some 99.6% of SFA within the UK were at the highest Standards for Condition (SfC 1 or 2¹) and improvements will continue. Current and past holdings of SFA are shown in the following table:

Surveyed condition of Service Family Accommodation in the United Kingdom at 31 March each year

For the period 2002-07, the condition of holdings was reported against core stock². From 2008, for consistency with other reporting, this was changed back to reporting against total stock.

This table is a national statistic								
	2000	2008	2009³	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total Stock By Condition	57.4	48.8	49.9	49.1	49.1	49.0	49.4	49.4
Standard 1 ⁴ for condition	12.8	28.4	15.8	23.4	22.1	21.1	23.0	24.8
Standard 2 for condition	28.4	17.4	25.6	21.3	23.8	24.8	23.9	22.5
Standard 3 for condition	15.7	2.0	2.4	1.2	1.2	1.0	0.6	0.2
Standard 4 for condition	0.6	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	*
Not recorded ⁵	*	0.8	5.8	3.0	1.7	1.9	1.8	1.9
Percentage of SFA which are Standard 1 or 2 (excludes Not Recorded)	71.7	95.6	93.9	97	97	97.5	98.5	99.6

Source: MOD Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)

We continue to demonstrate our commitment to provide high quality SFA properties by not allocating any properties in the UK which are below Standard 2 for Condition.

- 1 The Standard for Condition of some 3.5% of SFA is not recorded. The vast majority of these properties are in Northern Ireland, but includes a small number of recently purchased properties awaiting allocation.
- 2 Core stock are those properties that are expected to be required in the longer term.
- 3 Northern Ireland data is included from 2009 onwards due to DIO assuming responsibility for NI. Years prior to 2009 cover GB only.
- 4 There are 4 levels of Standard for Condition, 1 being the highest. The assessment methodology uses 8 sets of factors: building fabric, energy efficiency, health and safety, security, electrical standard, sanitary fittings, kitchens, and bathrooms. *Source: DIO Estate Condition Survey Assessment Methodology, 25 March 2002.*
- 5 Core stock are those properties that are expected to be required in the longer term.

From April 2016, we will shift to the Government's Decent Homes Standard (DHS); **no Service family will be allocated a house in the UK which does not meet the DHS.** DHS sets higher benchmarks in relation to aspects such as mould and damp as well as thermal efficiency, whilst also ensuring that houses have an appropriate level of modernity in respect to items such as kitchens and bathrooms. It will also ensure that the overall condition of Defence's occupied estate is significantly better than that seen across the UK overall – just under 20% of social housing fails the DHS, and this failure rate is even higher in the private rental sector.

The MOD will introduce a new charging system for Service Family Accommodation (SFA), a key element of the New Employment Model Programme. The Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS) will replace the current Four Tier Grading (4TG) system for all UK based SFA from 1 April 2016. The charges will continue to be set by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body rather than being linked to civilian rents – the highest charge for each type of property will also be the same as it would be for the current system. The introduction of CAAS will ensure that charges for Service accommodation are fair, transparent and represent good value for money, with a substantial subsidy compared to the civilian sector.

In tandem with SFA condition improvements, over 700 high quality properties were purchased from developers to address the shortfall of SFA at those locations with an enduring requirement. These have now been delivered, and are being allocated to Service families. This investment programme will continue in support of the Army Rebasing programme, with immediate plans in place to purchase properties in Grantham and York.

The key measurement question from the independent MOD **customer satisfaction survey**, which started in June 2013, shows that around 71% of Service personnel in SFA were satisfied with the overall service provided by DIO and its Industry Partners

Building on the success reported in last year's report, good progress has been made on improving the 'customer experience'. Introduction of an on-line self-preference SFA application system has revolutionised the way Service personnel apply for their SFA. The system has streamlined the process and provides more choice for Service families in the allocation of their own home; some 98% of all applications are now made electronically. We have also introduced the SFA Service Delivery Improvement Plan to **enhance the support provided to Service families**. Benefits include:

Introducing 'Patch Management' which involves nominated Housing Officers having oversight for the condition of SFA in their own patch, setting aside time to 'walk the ground' to talk with Service families.

Enhancing the 'Move-In' standard to include provision of higher specifications through the installation of new kitchen work surfaces and showers and replacing marked or unsightly carpets and curtains.

Delivering a 'Mould Action' plan – the thermal comfort of properties affected by mould and damp is being improved through overcladding and better insulation and ventilation. Some 1,000 properties have been tackled, with a further 2,000 properties planned in the next two years.

Service Family Accommodation - Mould Action Plan



Sgt Bennett and his wife Jennifer

Sergeant James Bennett is a Helmand Company Nurse in the 1st Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment. Sgt Bennett and his family moved to Service Family Accommodation (SFA) in Warminster in November 2013 from Cyprus, where he had been working as a nurse at the Medical Reception at Dhekelia Station. Sgt Bennett has been in the Army for 12 years and he has lived in five SFA to date.

The family originally occupied a different, unrefurbished property in the area before moving around the corner to a refurbished one in August 2014. The new property is one of 62 being improved in the estate, and is part of DIO's Mould Action Plan. In financial year 2013/14 this programme targeted 1,063 properties that had a history of damp and mould, and is targeting a further 1,700 in 2014/15. The plan was established to address the issue which is seen as the prevalent maintenance concern of Service personnel and their families. The programme also aims to improve energy efficiency, and therefore comfort and expenditure on energy, for families.



A similar unrefurbished property on the same estate

"Our previous property in the area was cold and old, with the main problem with damp and mould being brought about because the windows, especially in the bathroom, did not seal properly. We spent a lot of time drying a very wet bathroom. We noticed that the children had more regular coughs; and although I'm not sure if this can be attributed directly to the damp, it may have contributed. We also had to get the boiler looked at regularly because it lost pressure, but other than that the maintenance call outs were relatively routine."

"We watched our current property being refurbished because we only lived around the corner. We were pleased with how the new property looked from the outside once it was completed.

It is an improvement on our last one. As well as being much warmer and cosier, the damp and mould issues are now a thing of the past. And because it is newer with neutral decoration, it is easier to maintain and look after. Plus we've also been able to put our stamp on it and make it our own. We take more pride in the appearance of our new property and as a consequence it feels more like 'home'. The property heats up more quickly than our last property and it stays warmer for longer. We haven't noticed any reduction in the amount of energy that we use so far as we haven't been in for very long and we've had some lovely warm weather, but I'm sure we'll notice a difference as winter draws in. Another thing we've noticed is that there is very little noise from traffic."



Sgt Bennett's refurbished property

"Whilst your next property can depend on the luck of the draw, it's good to see that this kind of improvement work is happening, and the new look houses have definitely improved the general look and feel of the area."

The National Housing Prime (NHP) contract, awarded to CarillionAmey is being introduced in phases from November 2014. We expect that contracting out of service delivery will lead to further improvements in the delivery of SFA. It includes, for the first time, responsibility for SFA allocations, move appointments, furniture provision, as well as the ongoing repair and maintenance and improvement activities.

Significant investment has also been made in Single Living Accommodation (SLA). MOD owns an estimated 146,000 SLA bed spaces, some 126,000 in the UK. Of these, some 44% within the UK were at the highest Standards for Condition (SfC 1 or 2). In excess of 50,000 bed spaces have been delivered through the SLA Modernisation (SLAM) programme in the last decade to high 'target' conditions which reflects the high quality conditions that PFI SLA assets are built and maintained to during their compliancy period. Around 1,800 bed spaces were modernised as part of this programme in 2013/14 and around a further 2,000

are planned for next year. All of these are single rooms of the highest standard (Standard for Condition 1) with en-suite facilities.

However, we are not yet in a position to confirm the condition of the SLA estate in full detail and with real confidence. The new leadership of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation is committed to improving our understanding of the SLA estate as a priority. Work is also ongoing (the Living Accommodation Strategy Review) to project Defence SLA supply and demand in 2020, and this will enable us to better target future investment.

The provision of accommodation remains an integral part of the **New Employment Model** which continues to pursue policies that will assist our people in meeting their needs through: supporting choice, including home ownership; supporting stability whilst enabling mobility; and, for the longer term, through providing an accommodation offer which is attractive and relevant to the 21st Century.

In April we introduced the **Forces Help to Buy scheme** (FHTB) which is one of a number of actions taken in response to the feedback received from Service personnel and their families. Service personnel can struggle to enter the housing market as they move around throughout their military career. By giving them this extra help, those who aspire to be homeowners will be able to set down roots and get onto the property ladder – giving their families the domestic stability that many of us take for granted. The Department has allocated £200M to the scheme over the next three years.

FHTB offers military personnel an interest free advance of up to 50% of their gross annual salary (capped at £25,000) to assist them in buying their first home or, in particular circumstances, extending their existing home or moving property, within the UK or Republic of Ireland. The FHTB advance is repaid directly from their salary over a 10 year period and has replaced the previous, more limited, Long Service Advance of Pay. We have worked very closely with the Council of Mortgage Lenders in designing the scheme and are very pleased that mainstream mortgage providers are supporting Service personnel by offering mortgage products in conjunction with the scheme. Over the five months since FHTB's launch around 1,900 families have benefited, to the value of approximately £29M. 79% of recipients are Other Ranks and around two thirds of the Officers to have benefited are OF2 (Captain and equivalent) or below.

FHTB demonstrates the Department's commitment to strengthen the Armed Forces Covenant, ensuring that personnel and their families are not disadvantaged by their military service.

MORE than £29 million has been loaned to Armed Forces families to enable them to buy their first homes or to move up the property ladder, as part of a new scheme.

1,900 families have had their Forces Help to Buy applications approved and have bought, or are in the process of buying, their own homes since the scheme was launched in April 2014. The pilot scheme, which will run for three years, aims to address the low rate of home ownership in the Armed Forces.

Through the annual Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS), the MOD has been listening to the concerns of its personnel and their husbands, wives and children. The survey results showed one of the key worries for Service personnel was not being able to afford their own homes, as they move about during their careers. Over the past year, Defence has been



Sergeant Nicholas Brett and family

working hard in partnership with some of Britain's biggest companies, including building society Nationwide, to address these worries.

Sergeant Nicholas Brett, 43, joined the Army in 1996, and will move into his first home in time for Christmas. The three-bed, detached house in Tidworth will give Sgt Brett and his wife, Jayne, a permanent base, and somewhere to bring up their children.

Sgt Brett, who works at the headquarters of the Armoured Infantry Brigade in Bulford, said:

"Without the Forces Help to Buy scheme I envisage it would have taken an extra couple of years before we had enough saved for a deposit. If house prices continue to increase then obviously it may have taken even longer.

"Everyone eventually wants to purchase their own property - being a home owner ensures long term stability and security for my family. My children are now getting to the age where constantly moving them could affect their school and personal life. Now no matter where the Army may send me, I know my family will not be affected by my movements.

"If Service Personnel want help to get on the housing ladder, then the Forces Home to Buy is the quickest and easiest way. The process from start to finish was straight forward and very efficient. Without it I wouldn't have been able to purchase a property at this moment in time."

We recognise that there is an aspiration amongst some Service Personnel to own their own home when they make the transition to civilian life. They have therefore been given priority for Government-funded shared ownership schemes and are able to access the Help to Buy: equity loan scheme. The priority status can also be transferred to bereaved spouses or civil partners. Over the last two years more than 780 military households have either bought or reserved a new home through Help to Buy and its predecessor scheme FirstBuy.

In Scotland serving members of the Armed Forces, Veterans who have left the Armed Forces within the past two years, and the bereaved spouses of Service personnel are also given **priority access to 'Low Cost Initiatives for First Time Buyers'**. This aims to support people on low to moderate incomes across Scotland to get on the property ladder. The Scottish Government has allocated £50 million in 2014-15 under these schemes.

The MOD's **Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO)** continues to provide specialist housing information and advice to encourage Service personnel and their dependants across the UK to consider their civilian housing options and to assist them in their **transition to civilian life**. The Scottish Government, in consultation with the MOD's JSHAO, completed production of a tailored housing guide to help Service leavers and ex-Service personnel in Scotland. The revised guide was issued in 2013 and provides information on housing options (across all tenures) and where to go for further advice and support.

In Northern Ireland, the Department for Social Development's position is that applicants for social housing or homelessness assistance must not be disadvantaged because of a background in the Armed Forces. It issues guidelines to the Housing Executive which highlights the fact that former members of the Armed Forces in common with others with an institutional background, are at particular risk of homelessness and rough sleeping

and suggests that applications from former members of the Armed Forces need to be considered carefully to assess whether the applicant is vulnerable as a result of their service. Service personnel leaving the Armed Forces because of injury or disability can be allowed to stay in Service families' housing for 3 months after discharge but may ultimately need access to adapted housing. The guidance also emphasises that applications from former members of the Armed Forces with serious injuries, and serving and former members of the Reserve Forces who have been injured on active Service, should be assessed as quickly as possible to minimise delays in allocating suitable adapted accommodation.

Welsh Government officials have liaised with the MOD Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO) who have advertised the MOD referral scheme through their various Armed Forces channels and 30 expressions of interest have been submitted. Subsequently Local Authorities have been identified following advertisement by the JSHAO and funding has been directed towards Social Housing Grant schemes that are either on site or just about to start.

Officials have met with representatives from Local Authorities and we have jointly developed an approach for assessing people who have expressed an interest and, if eligible offering them a home within the schemes identified.

We have also continued to take a pan-Government approach to ensuring that former Service personnel are not disadvantaged in accessing social housing. Seriously injured personnel and former members of the Armed Forces with urgent housing needs are always given **high priority for social housing**, and serving personnel and those who have recently been discharged do not lose their qualification rights because of the requirement to move from base to base. We have also encouraged Local Authorities to in general give sympathetic consideration to the housing needs of family members of serving or former Service personnel.

The Welsh Government Capital Funding of £2m which was made available in 2013/14 to support housing for personnel leaving the Armed Forces has now been allocated to Local Authorities in Wales.

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 is a significant strengthening of homelessness legislation in Wales which will ensure that Veterans are helped whenever they are at risk of homelessness, not just when they leave service. It will require Local Authorities to help prevent homelessness up to 56 days before people are threatened with homelessness, and that will include people leaving Service accommodation. This legislation will come into effect from April 2015, and we will consult Veterans' organisations in developing guidance to support it.

Council Tax

Local Council Tax Support

Since 1 April 2013 council tax benefit has been replaced by local council tax support schemes. Devolved Administrations are responsible for determining their own approach to council tax support for low income groups.

Local Authorities in England have discretion to design their own schemes for low income working age claimants, which must be consulted on locally. The pensioner scheme is set nationally and replicates the level of support under council tax benefit.

The Welsh Government has maintained full entitlements for all those eligible for a reduction, and has committed to doing so for a further two years (2015-16 and 2016-17). This includes serving members of the Armed Forces and ex-Service personnel, and their families.

In addition to our maintaining full entitlements, for the 2013-14 financial year, all Local Authorities in Wales used their discretionary powers to disregard, in full, War Disablement Pension and War Widow's Pension when means-testing applicants. All Local Authorities will continue to disregard monies from these pensions in full under the schemes they have adopted for 2014-15.

As well as these disregards, the Council Tax Reduction Schemes Regulations also set out specific provisions which may provide additional protection to members of the Armed Forces Community, depending on their particular circumstances, such as Disability Premium and Carer Premium.

2014 Report Commitments

The MOD will not allocate SFA properties below Standard 2 for Condition in the UK.

The MOD will introduce a new charging system for Service Family Accommodation (SFA), a key element of the New Employment Model Programme.



Chapter 4 – Inquests

The Covenant sets the following goals with respect to coroners and the operation of inquests:

- Bereaved families should receive assistance commensurate with the loss that they have suffered, including help during the vital, but difficult, inquest process.

Inquests

Chief Coroner Update

In July 2013, the Chief Coroner, His Honour Judge Peter Thornton QC, announced that he would be creating a specialist cadre of coroners that would be available to investigate deaths of Service personnel on active service. This is now in operation.

In February 2014 the Ministry of Justice published its 'Guide to coroner services' booklet and accompanying short guide leaflet⁶. It provides statutory guidance (under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009) on how the coroner system should operate in relation to all bereaved people. It explains how the inquest process works, what to expect, the standards of service bereaved people should receive, how they can find help and what to do if they are not satisfied with the service. The guidance builds on the 'Guide to Coroners and Inquests' and Charter for Coroner Services and is complemented by the MOD-produced DVD which is sent to bereaved Service families and any MOD witnesses to help them understand what happens during an inquest.

Reducing delays

The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 introduced a range of measures to tackle delays, which included:

- Completion of investigations within 6 months wherever possible, or as soon as possible thereafter.
- Notification to the Chief Coroner of any investigation lasting longer than a year and the reason for the delay.
- Post-mortem examinations and inquests can be held outside of the coroner's area (which helps if there is a lack of facilities in the coroner's area).
- An investigation can be transferred to another coroner or to a judge / retired judge / retired coroner.
- Coroners can compel witnesses to attend an inquest or evidence to be produced.
- Written evidence can be accepted at inquest where a witness will not attend (e.g. because they are ill or abroad).

Additionally, the Chief Coroner has:

- Stressed to coroners their duty to set dates for inquests at the opening of an inquest and the need to have timely hearings.
- Suggested that coroners direct at the opening of an inquest that a medical report should normally be produced to the coroner within six weeks.
- Highlighted to coroners that recent decisions, following complaints against coroners made to the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office, show that a delayed inquest may lead to formal disciplinary action.

The Chief Coroner monitors investigations into deaths of Service personnel, requiring coroners to notify him of all such investigations and update him on their progress and outcome.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guide-to-coroner-services-and-coroner-investigations-a-short-guide>

Inquests

The Defence Inquests Unit (DIU) continues to manage the inquest process on behalf of the MOD, liaising closely with the coroner services in England and Wales and the Procurator Fiscal Service in Scotland.

In the year ending 31 March 2014, a total of 25 operational inquests and 25 non-operational (where DIU had the lead) have been completed. These include a number of longstanding complex inquests.

Where deaths are subject to a Service Inquiry (which can take over 12 months to complete) it remains challenging for inquests into these to be completed within the period suggested by the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, particularly as the findings of the Service Inquiry invariably form a key part of inquest evidence. Other factors can also contribute to delays, including operational conditions and detailed technical considerations where equipment is involved. However, every effort is made to minimise their effect and there has been progress in reducing timescales overall.



Chapter 5 – Through Life

Recognition

World War 1

In October 2012, the Prime Minister announced a four year programme to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. He made clear that the Government's ambition is to deliver a truly national commemoration, worthy of this historic centenary; a commemoration that captures our national spirit, in every corner of the country, from our schools to our workplaces, to our town halls and local communities. The centenary will also provide the foundations upon which to build an enduring cultural and educational legacy, to put young people front and centre in our commemoration and to ensure that the sacrifice and service of a hundred years ago is still remembered in a hundred years' time. The programme is built around the key themes of remembrance, youth and education.

On 4 August 2014 commemorative events at Glasgow Cathedral, St Symphorien Military Cemetery near Mons in Belgium and Westminster Abbey delivered unique opportunities for national reflection and set an appropriate tone for this four year programme of

commemoration. 16.7 million people participated in “Lights Out” – darkening their lights between 10 and 11pm to reflect Sir Edward Grey’s reported reference to the lamps going out across Europe when war was declared.

The Chancellor announced in the 2014 autumn statement that funding of £6M would be provided between now and 2021, to provide support to the significant number of World War 1 and World War 2 anniversaries, that will occur between now and the Royal British Legion’s centenary in 2021. The MOD will deliver this in partnership with the RBL.

There will be national acts of commemoration to mark the Gallipoli Campaign (2015), the Battle of Jutland (2016), the Battle of the Somme (2016), the Battle of Passchendaele (2017) and the final period between the Battle of Amiens and Armistice Day (2018). An important part of our programme is to recognise and mark the contribution of Ireland and the Commonwealth. The Government of Ireland was invited to lay a wreath at this and future years’ Remembrance Sunday ceremony at the Cenotaph. We are working with partners to mark the centenary of the Indian Army’s involvement at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915; the contribution of the Caribbean regiments; the sinking of the SS Mendi; and the life and death of Walter Tull (the first black officer to lead white British soldiers in battle).

Scotland’s commemorative programme will focus specifically on remembering First World War events that had a significant impact on Scotland and the Scottish people. The first of Scotland’s commemorative events took place in August 2014, in the form of a Drumhead Service (a replica of those held in the field 100 years ago) followed by a march and procession down the Royal Mile in Edinburgh to a memorial event in Holyrood Park. Over the next four and a half years further key dates will be remembered, including the end of the war, the anniversary of major military battles at Gallipoli, Loos and Arras, the naval battle of Jutland and the tragic domestic incidents of the Gretna rail disaster and the loss of HMV Iolaire.

The Welsh Government is leading on the programme for the centenary commemoration of the First World War in Wales, *Cymru’n Cofio* Wales Remembers 1914-1918, with the support of Professor Sir Deian Hopkin, the First Minister’s Expert Adviser on the First World War. The Welsh Government’s intention is to deliver an inclusive Framework Programme with national events and exhibitions, accompanied by community-based activities, for example researching local war memorials, together with a variety of educational projects and programmes. A Programme Board drawn from a number of relevant organisations is supporting and monitoring the delivery of the Programme.

This activity is in addition to 100 plus annual Armed Forces Day events held across the UK. This year’s national event was hosted by Stirling City Council and was supported by HRH the Princess Royal, the Prime Minister, First Minister and the Vice Chief of Defence Staff. Northern Ireland also hosted two large regional events in Newtownards and Carrickfergus, and there were a range of events in both North and South Wales including both Wrexham and Cardiff.

Medals

Last year we reported on Sir John Holmes’ independent review of Military medals and policy issues. This work has now been concluded and Sir John has recommended that:

- The qualifying period of the award of the South Atlantic Medal without Rosette will be extended until 21 October 1982.

- Those who participated in the suppression of acts of terrorism in Cyprus between 1 April 1955 and 18 April 1959 should qualify for the General Service Medal 1918 - 62 with clasp "CYPRUS" if they served for 90 days or more.
- Those Servicemen who served in Cyprus during the period 21 December 1963 to 26 March 1964 will be awarded the General Service Medal with clasp "Cyprus 1963-64".
- The General Service Medal 1918–62 with clasp "BERLIN AIRLIFT" should be awarded for at least one day's service to all aircrew, military and civilian, who took part in the Berlin Airlift operation from 25 June 1948 to 6 October 1949 inclusive.

These recommendations were subsequently approved by Her Majesty the Queen, and work continues to ensure that all those eligible receive their awards in a timely fashion. Once again there has been an excellent response from Veterans and their families, and it is especially pleasing to be able to recognise all those civilian pilots who flew alongside their military counterparts during the Berlin Airlift.

On 1 October 2014, the Secretary of State for Defence announced his intention to recognise the contribution of Reservists with the introduction of a post nominal decoration for all those who serve 10 years or more. A review is now underway.

The Community Covenant

In June 2014 the Isles of Scilly Council signed their Community Covenant. This means that all 407 Local Authorities in Great Britain at district level and above have now signed a Community Covenant. The Community Covenant encourages local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their area and promote mutual understanding and awareness. Over the last four years the MOD has committed £30M to support a Community Covenant Grant Scheme. The grant scheme has funded over 900 projects with the aim of helping local civilian and military communities to come together. The Grant scheme ends in March 2015 and a full list of all the projects that have been supported will be published shortly afterwards. The Welsh Government continues to monitor the progress made against Community Covenant implementation plans. It has held three Armed Forces Champion Networking events, bringing together Champions from Local Authorities, Local Health Boards, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Probation Service to encourage closer collaboration and joint working locally. The Welsh Local Government Association has arranged to meet with Local Authority lead officers to further explore progress following the discussions held at the Armed Forces Champions Events.

The Covenant Reference Group recently reviewed options for how to strengthen and improve the support provided by Local Authorities to members of the Armed Forces community. These are being developed and will be reported on further in next years report. Examples of the good work we have seen under the Community Covenant this year include:

- Wandsworth Council have a quota of social housing allocated to members of AF community – they work closely with Housing charity Stoll who nominate clients.
- Buckinghamshire County Council's School team will accept in-year transfer of school children before a posting date or order has been finalised.

- Glasgow City Council launched workshops helping Veterans to transfer Military skills and qualifications into civilian equivalents, following an increase in the number of younger service leavers.

As part of their community covenant, a number of Local Authorities in Wales have collaborated with the Royal British Legion to deliver sessions to frontline staff, to improve knowledge and awareness regarding the issues facing the Armed Forces community.

The Welsh Government's Expert Group on the needs of the Armed Forces community in Wales continue to meet to advise on how public services can best meet the Service community's needs. Chaired by the Minister for Public Services, the Group includes serving officers from the three services, along with representatives of the Naval, Army, and RAF Families Federations, and of third-sector organisations who are active in supporting the Forces community. Membership of the group has been extended to include representatives from Welsh Local Health Boards, the Department for Work and Pensions and the All Wales Criminal Justice Board.

The Corporate Covenant

The Corporate Covenant is a public pledge from businesses and other organisations who wish to demonstrate their support for the Armed Forces community. The specific nature of that support will depend on the size and nature of the organisation, but could range from specific measures to support the employment of Veterans, Reserves or spouses, to more tailored packages of support for Service personnel more widely. It is hugely encouraging that over 370 organisations have now signed a Corporate Covenant. A list of all the signatories can be found at the back of this report. Over the next 12 months the new Defence Relationship Management organisation will take on responsibility for delivering signed Corporate Covenant pledges as part of the Chief of Defence Personnel's wider Employer Engagement programme.



Jason Molloy pictured on the left

Liverpool FC Foundation supports Jason's journey back to civilian life. The foundation is the club's official charity and has signed the Corporate Covenant. It runs a Military Veterans programme to re-engage ex-Service personnel with physical activity and help to recapture their spirit of service.

There are over 30,000 Veterans in Liverpool, and this figure is likely to increase significantly

over the next four years, so it's an important area for the Foundation to provide support for Service personnel when they return to civilian life.

24 year old Jason Molloy from Bootle served in the Artillery Regiment for seven years and joined the foundation's programme in November 2012. "Unfortunately I had to return from duty on medical grounds" he said. "I was in the recovery unit in Preston and I met another ex-Serviceman who told me about the Foundation's programme, so I signed up. It's one of the best decisions I've made".

As part of the programme, weekly sessions are held for the Veterans at LFC's Academy in Kirkby and a seven-a-side football league has been created to compete against other Veteran teams.

Jason, who is a big Liverpool fan said: "This programme has helped me so much to readjust to civilian life. It's great to be able to speak to other ex-Service personnel about their experiences and continue to work together as part of a team. "Really the football is just a way of getting us together. You don't need to be a great standard to join in – it's for all levels. We do plenty of other things too and I even had the chance to ride on the first team coach to a match we played against the US Air Force. The programme has given me real drive and enthusiasm to keep fit. It's also the closest thing I'll get to becoming a Liverpool player!"

The programme which is part funded by the People's Postcode Trust, also links Veterans to education and counselling services, which opens up pathways to employment opportunities. Liverpool FC Foundation would welcome more ex-Servicemen and women to its programme. If you or a family member would like to be part of the programme. Please email: LFCFoundation@liverpoolfc.com for more information. Follow them on twitter@LFCFoundation



Secretary of State Michael Fallon with Asda Vice President Martin Dawson at the Asda Corporate Covenant signing

Covenant Funds

The Chancellor allocated an initial £35 million from fines levied on banks for attempting to manipulate the LIBOR interest rate to the Covenant Reference Group (CRG). All of this has now been allocated. In December 2013, the Chancellor announced the successful projects from the third tranche of bids, including £1.94 million to build special needs houses for disabled ex-Service personnel in Scotland, £996,000 for Change Step's peer mentoring service for hard to reach Veterans in Wales, and £575,000 to help Combat Stress continue providing a 24 hour helpline for members of the Armed Forces community dealing with mental health related issues. A full list of the supported projects is at Annex C.

The £40 million Veterans Accommodation Fund was a one off fund supporting projects which would offer a range of accommodation for Veterans with a housing need. The fund

closed having received 69 applications, amounting to bids in excess of £163 million. A final list of 16 projects was agreed supporting homeless Veterans and those in long term care. To date the Prime Minister has announced 10 of the successful projects with the remainder expected over the next few months.

Looking to the future, the MOD is considering how the new annual £10M fund can be managed to best support the commitments of the covenant. The intention is to put in place a sustainable solution that can support the commitments of the covenant in the longer term. The Covenant Reference Group is also discussing future priorities for the fund.



The Prime Minister speaking at the Armed Forces Covenant Celebration on 17 July 2014

Service Personnel

New Employment Model

The NEM programme is reviewing the package of terms and conditions of service that are offered to Service personnel. It is the first wholesale review of the offer since the 70s, looking in depth at pay and allowances; accommodation; training and education; and terms of service. Its aim is to update the offer so that it better reflects modern lifestyles, enabling Service personnel and their families to have greater choice and addressing those aspects of the current offer that are regularly cited through personnel surveys such as AFCAS and FAMCAS as sources of dissatisfaction.

The *Forces Help to Buy* scheme, which went live in April, marked the beginning of the new offer coming to life. Additionally, during the period covered by this report, an enhancement was made to the scheme to offer additional support to those leaving their service as a result of Tranche 4 redundancy. Personnel in those circumstances were offered

the opportunity to take an advance of up to 90% of their lump sum redundancy payment, capped at £68,000. This additional funding was intended to support transition to civilian life by helping personnel subject to redundancy buy a home during the period between notification of redundancy and the date on which they were due to leave the Armed Forces.

In July this year we published the results of a comprehensive period of consultation with Service personnel and their families on the proposed changes under NEM. Consultation began during summer 2013; the end of the first phase of our consultation and launch of the second phase took place around the same time as publication of last year's Annual Report. Consultation had the twin aims of two-way communication with Service personnel on the principles of NEM and gaining specific pieces of information to help us design effective policy. We were delighted with the response; around 30,000 gave us their views either through surveys, in focus groups, interviews or via our mailbox. This period of engagement with Service personnel was essential for the NEM programme and gave us some real insight into what they liked and didn't like about the current package of terms and conditions, and what they would like to see change or improve. This has helped us to shape our policy ideas into tangible proposals for the Defence Board to consider.

Over the coming year we will be progressing a number of key initiatives under NEM including: the introduction of a new Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS); the development of a new pay model which aims to provide greater pay predictability and remove some of the unpopular and divisive features of the current pay model whilst retaining the fundamental characteristics of rank-based pay progression; and the introduction of new engagement structures for regular personnel reflecting a three stage career which will be mapped against the milestones laid down by Armed Forces Pension Scheme 15.

Diversity

Diversity and inclusion truly lies at the heart of all we are trying to do. Over the past year there have been a number of initiatives to help create a more inclusive workforce, including:

- The launch of the Defence Diversity and Inclusion Programme (DDIP) to provide a coherent strategy to create an organisation that accepts and encourages diversity of culture, attitude and approach.
- The Chief of Defence Personnel (CDP) joining the advisory panel of Radius; an organisation which aims to show the tangible improvements that can be made in recruiting a more diverse workforce through employee engagement, talent and business development.
- The MOD hosting the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Leadership Summit at its headquarters in London.
- Personnel from all 3 services marching at the gay pride event in London. According to research completed by the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies the MOD has the second most gay-friendly military in the world.
- Hosting an Armed Forces Muslim Conference and launching the country's first ever Armed Forces Muslim Forum in partnership with the Muslim community.
- Attendance at the 2014 Living Islam Festival presentation by Military personnel from the Armed Forces Muslim Association who also presented on their roles in the military.

Additionally, in April, the Royal Air Force was recognised as leading the way on the inclusion and progress of women in the workplace at the Opportunity Now Excellence in Practice Awards. Opportunity Now is the workplace gender campaign from Business in the Community. The RAF took the 'Inspiring the Workforce of the Future' prize. The awards recognise public and private sector organisations that have put gender at the heart of their business and are committed to creating inclusive workplaces for women at all levels. Alongside their win, the RAF has also been named as one of The Times' Top 50 Employers for Women 2014. This was swiftly followed by the RAF joining the Inspiring Women campaign, which was founded by Miriam González Durántez to encourage young girls to seek high-powered jobs.

Women in Combat

In May, the Defence Secretary announced a review of the exclusion of women from ground close combat roles. At present women are excluded from 30% of posts in the Army, 21% in the RN and 6% in the RAF. The review will include a consultation with external stakeholders focused on equivalent professions such as the emergency services and other specified dangerous occupations. The review is due to report to the Defence Secretary towards the end of the year.

Service Complaints Ombudsman

In March 2014, the Secretary of State for Defence announced in the House of Commons that through collaboration with Dr Susan Atkins, the Service Complaints Commissioner (SCC), we had produced the outline of a new model for the Service complaints system which had the potential to deliver important advantages over the existing system. The central feature of the new model would be that the SCC would, in future, have the power to consider whether a Service complaint had been handled properly, and make recommendations based on their findings. Reflecting the increase in its powers and the nature of them, the SCC would be retitled "Service Complaints Ombudsman". With the introduction of the new role, one of the levels of appeal would also be removed from the system.

As changes of this nature require amendments to the Armed Forces Act 2006, we introduced a Bill in June to make the necessary amendments (the Armed Forces (Service Complaints and Financial Assistance) Bill). Subject to the Bill achieving Royal Assent, the new Service complaints system is expected to be implemented by the end of 2015. The bill will also enable the Secretary of State to authorise financial assistance anywhere in the world in support of the covenant.

The SCC's annual reports continue to be a valuable source of lessons for improving the current system. The SCC has consistently identified delay as a major factor in the Service complaints system, and a key reason as to why in her latest report she is still unable to report that the system is working efficiently, effectively or fairly. The changes being brought forward in the Bill should result in complaints being resolved more quickly, thereby reducing delay and, in turn, delivering a system which is more efficient, effective and fair. With the implementation of the new system in 2015, we look forward to the new ombudsman's assessment of the impact made by the changes in their subsequent annual reports. You can access SCC annual reports at: <http://armedforcescomplaints.independent.gov.uk/>

NATO



Picture of a signed copy of the NATO declaration

At the NATO Summit, held in Newport Wales on 4/5 September 2014, Heads of State and Government from all 28 Allies agreed an Armed Forces Declaration. The declaration reaffirmed support for the men and women serving in our Armed Forces and their families, during and after their service, now and in the future, given the immense sacrifices they make. It committed Allies to enhance the sharing of best practices and lessons learned in support of our Armed Forces personnel and their families, including on our national approaches to providing medical care to injured personnel and support to families.

The declaration was a UK initiative, it was a personal priority of the Prime Minister, and was delivered following significant UK lobbying within NATO. The declaration is a visible reminder of the value that NATO Allies attach to members of the Armed Forces.

Families

Partner Employment

The MOD has continued to support work to mitigate against the disadvantages faced by spouses of Service personnel in gaining employment through the Partner Employment Project.

It has been sponsoring two career assistance programmes designed for Service partners. The Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) Lifeworks for Families⁷ and the University of Wolverhampton 'Supporting the Unsung Hero'⁸ programmes were rolled out in October 2013 for 2 years. LifeWorks is a vocational assessment and employability course and Unsung Hero is a business start-up programme that uses a workshop and mentoring

7 <http://www.rblilifeworksfamilies.co.uk>

8 <http://www.wlv.ac.uk/supportingtheunsunghero>

to help spouses start a transferable business, that they can work at regardless of their location. Around 250 spouses have already benefited from these two LIBOR funded programmes, with extra workshops being delivered in Germany and Cyprus in 2014. In addition RBLI are developing a remotely accessed programme, which will enable them to reach more spouses



The RBLI Lifeworks For Families programme.

Indre Olive attended the course in Brompton in March this year and it wasn't long after, in May that Indre managed to land her dream job. Very modestly, Indre attributes her success to her experience on the course, *"You have made a tremendous change in my thinking and life. I would have never got this job without you teaching me about myself."*



Anne Crawford attended the Gutersloh course in May 2014, the first course held in British Forces Germany (BFG). Anne had only arrived in Germany from Canada a matter of weeks earlier and so was unfamiliar with the 'mainstream' job market in BFG. During the course Anne found herself potential roles to apply for and RBLI worked through matching her skills and attributes to an administration role for the local SSAFA. Anne was shortlisted for interview. As the interview was scheduled for after RBLI had left Gutersloh but they

continued their support through Skype. She got the job and is an example of how RBLI can continue to support in as many formats as required.



Adolphus Dennis attended a course in Tidworth. Completely new to the military way of life, Adolphus previously worked in the Caribbean on cruise ships and because of his background had missed out on a basic education. The course helped him to recognise the academic standards required to gain fulfilling employment within the UK and also increased his motivation to go and gain relevant qualifications. Shortly after attending the course, Adolphus spent some time researching his options and enrolled on

education courses that would bring his skills up to date and also a welding course to get into work in the meantime.'



Supporting the Unsung Hero Programme'. Armed Forces Dependants' Business Start-Up Programme

Jen Ives, is the Managing Director for Grippy Leads. Her business has grown since winning an award at Crufts. "Orders for my dog leads and collars have taken off and I have had to adopt a more serious approach to business. For me the Armed Forces Dependants' Business Start-Up programme has given me the opportunity to meet other like minded people, access the support network and make business connections. I have made a few sales to delegates on the course, their recommendations are great for promoting my business and I value their opinions,"

The circumstances of Service life have meant that since marrying her husband eleven years ago Jen has accompanied him on tours which saw them move to Chatham, Waterbeach, Wimbish, briefly back to Chatham, and Brisbane, Australia. She and her husband returned to the UK in 2011 for a short term posting to Shrivenham, Oxfordshire. It was during this latter posting that the first Grippy Leads prototypes were produced. The unique design worked so well that Jen went on to create more and started to sell them at local dog shows, all the time with Pablo, the family's Boxer dog as a willing model. More recently, she attended Crufts and won an award. "I also felt really proud when the Friends for Life winner was photographed wearing one of my leads and a matching collar". The practical design of the Original Grippy is also proving to be of huge benefit to wheelchair users and those with arthritis and grip strength problems which is fantastic. The user can shorten the lead quickly and easily by simply selecting a loop lower down the lead - and it won't slip through the hand. The company has featured in national press such as Tatler, the Sunday Express magazine, Your Dog and Dog's Monthly.

Jen has seen much success since she started to exhibit at trade shows. "I manage Grippy Leads as my full time business now. I value the business mentoring sessions I receive on the Dependants' Business Start-Up Programme and the support from fellow delegates is a great boost when juggling the needs of my family and service commitments become that little bit too overwhelming",



X-Forces was launched as a social enterprise in July 2013. With a mission to support those from the Services community, including Service leavers, Veterans, spouses, Reservists and ex-cadets, X-Forces has now set up over 200 entrepreneurs in their own businesses.

X-Forces provides four pillars of support – Training Workshops – Funding – Mentoring – Corporate Engagement.

X-Forces is the only specialist Startup Loans Delivery Partner for ex-Service personnel and the wider Forces' community. The seed funding is backed by treasury and is a government initiative.

Experienced GP, Dr Lucy Evriviades, 38, met her husband, Demetrius, a surgeon in the RAF for 22 years, in a hospital, and is mum to four children aged nine, seven, four and one. With a longstanding interest in skin and a postgraduate diploma in dermatology, Dr Lucy's pursuit

of her own aesthetics clinic had been held back by the circumstance of service life. With the support of X-Forces, Dr Lucy's clinic is now flourishing. Dr Lucy's business is Arden Aesthetics, a medical aesthetics clinic offering treatments such as wrinkle relaxing injections and dermal fillers, as well as prescription-only skin care treatment products and general skin care advice. Aesthetic treatments are growing in popularity, though seldom delivered by medical professionals as qualified and experienced as Dr Lucy.

A key focus of work has been to develop an option to extend employment support to Service spouses through the new Service leavers resettlement contract being re-let next year. The Services will then have the capability to draw upon this support for their spouses to receive career consultation, job readiness and self employment support; and training grants to assist spouses in obtaining a portable career. British Forces Cyprus will be trialling this provision from October 2015 to approximately 240 eligible personnel based there over a two year period.

Access to appropriate childcare has been highlighted by serving personnel and their families as a consistent barrier to spouses gaining sustainable employment. Whilst childcare is a challenge for many working families, we appreciate that the nature of Service life (regular changes of status caused by Service personnel being away; dislocation from family support networks; and the location of some military bases) can make it an even greater challenge for Service families. The DCYP is reviewing what childcare support personnel currently use to help identify best practice.

Jobseeker's Allowance

The DWP and the MOD continue to work together to ensure that the special rules in place for spouses and civil partners in relation to Jobseeker's Allowance are widely known and understood. DWP has updated the joint leaflet about Jobcentre Plus services and the various special rules and arrangements DWP has in place to support Service personnel and families. This is now available externally on the gov.uk website and highlights the role of Jobcentre Plus Armed Forces Champions and how to access them. The DWP will use the results from the 2014 Families Continuous Attitude Survey to gauge the experiences of Navy, Army and RAF personnel, Family Federations and HIVEs in accessing Jobcentre services and Armed Forces Champions. This will give tangible information on whether steps to enhance the understanding of the special rules in place for spouses and civil partners in relation to Jobseeker's Allowance have had the desired effect.

Adoption

Service personnel considering adopting a child must contact an appropriate registered adoption agency; typically a Local Authority service or a charitable Voluntary Adoption Agency. Service families can experience additional challenges due to the length of the process, frequent family moves, living overseas or spousal deployment. These difficulties are more about the process of assessing the applicants, rather than a view that Service families are not suitable to be adoptive.

For these reasons, MOD has an agreement with SSAFA to deliver an MOD adoption service through a SSAFA Voluntary Adoption Agency. All UK Service personnel (in the UK or overseas) are entitled to use any adoption service, but the SSAFA adoption service has an understanding of the unusual nature of Service life, for example, they provide training over weekends which Service personnel find easier to attend. As a registered voluntary

adoption agency the adoption service is separate from the MOD and has the same status as any other voluntary adoption agency. Local Authorities and adoption agencies are keen to place children with SSAFA approved adopters and SSAFA works in partnerships with many Local Authorities. Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014 SSAFA supported 190 Service families in the adoption process.

Service personnel will be entitled to suitable Service Families Accommodation from the time they are approved for adoption, in order to provide time for preparation prior to the placement of a child (including for the trial placement period). There are also additional leave entitlements for Service personnel who are adopting.

Support to the adoption process does not end there. We need to ensure that it is responsive to the unique circumstances of Service families. While shortened assessment periods are helping the majority of families to adopt quicker, for Service families where the partner is deployed, or routinely away this can create challenges beyond their control. We will therefore work with the Department for Education and the Department for Communities and Local Government, to ensure that the impact of Service life is taken account of in the adoption process.

Transition

In 2013, the Prime Minister asked Lord Ashcroft to conduct a review of the Armed Forces transition process, the findings of which were published in February 2014. The report was most welcome, not least as it confirmed that the majority of Service leavers make a successful transition to civilian life, begin new careers, and enjoy good health. It also highlighted that the media and public perception that the majority of Veterans tend to have some kind of physical, emotional or mental health problem as a result of their service is not true, and is potentially damaging.

The report made 43 distinct recommendations on how the transition process could be improved. Officials from across Government considered the review in detail, carefully analysing all recommendations; the majority were viewed positively and, where possible and practical, are being implemented. Many are now in place either in full or in part, such as the provision of a 24hr helpline, resettlement advice for Early Service Leavers and financial education schemes. Some recommendations are in the process of being developed through current work strands such as the NEM, while time is being taken to investigate the remainder to understand how best to progress them, such as producing a Veterans' app for advice and information or developing and maintaining contacts with Service personnel on transition. Progress in implementing the Ashcroft recommendations was a key focus of the discussions at the charities summit in October 2014.

Veterans



Vision

The future security of the Nation rests upon its willingness to entrust its sons and daughters to military service in the knowledge that their commitment is valued. Nearly 1 in 10 of all adults in the UK are Veterans and the services and support they receive should be no different to anyone else. However, in certain circumstances it may be appropriate to take account of any specific needs created as a result of their service and to reduce the impact of any disadvantage as a result of service to the absolute minimum. Additionally, their commitment and sacrifice to the Nation should be recognised by all through acts of commemoration and remembrance.



There is, for the first time, a shared vision for Veterans that has been endorsed by key Government departments, Devolved Administrations, the Local Government Association

and UK Service charities. The majority of Service leavers do well but a small proportion face challenges after their Service life. The shared vision for Veterans provides a focus for driving coherence amongst those with responsibilities for, or interests in, the UK's ex-Service community. It builds on the principles enshrined in the Armed Forces Covenant to create an overarching vision for Veterans that embraces the full opportunity for them to achieve, to contribute and be recognised in society.

The Vision

Those who have served in the UK's Armed Forces draw upon the skills and experience gained from service to lead fulfilling civilian lives in which their service to the Nation is appropriately recognised and supported where necessary by the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.

There are many organisations that provide help and support to UK Veterans, from Government, Local Authorities, independent bodies and the charity sector. Veterans UK aims to be the first stop for Veterans. The organisation, which is part of the MOD administers the Armed Forces Pension Schemes serving around 900,000 members of the Armed Forces community. It also administers compensation payments for those injured or bereaved through service and provides a package of welfare support for Veterans via a national Veterans Welfare Service and Veterans helpline facility. They can be contacted via their website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/Veterans-uk> or their helpline: 0808 1914 218.

In his 2014 autumn statement, the Chancellor announced that the Government will provide £5M to support the Ghurkha Welfare Trust. This will make a significant impact in Nepal by enabling the setup of a third care home for Ghurkhas who are destitute. This reflects part of the Government's contribution to the Ghurkha 200 bicentenary in 2015.

The Welsh Government has undertaken work to explore the value and viability of introducing an Identity Card for Veterans in Wales. As a result, the Welsh Government is working with the MOD to deliver a campaign to promote and publicise the existing Defence Privilege Card across Wales. The aim of the campaign is to inform Veterans of the scheme and encourage them to apply to take advantage of the benefits available. The campaign will also encourage Local Authorities and other Public sector partners to recognise the Defence Privilege Card as proof of Veteran status in accessing services, and encourage business in Wales to sign up to the Defence Discount Service.

In Northern Ireland, a Veterans support forum (along the lines of COBSEO in Great Britain) has been set up to bring together MOD representatives and Service charities and Veterans support organisations to help pool information and resources and to ensure that those in need can be sign-posted towards the most effective help. Discussions are also on-going with Help for Heroes, Combat Stress and the Forces in Mind Trust as to how all three can expand their services in Northern Ireland. Their proposals will be presented at the next meeting of the Veterans Support Forum. Separately, the Forces in Mind Trust has agreed to fund research that will look at what more can be done to address the collective needs of Veterans in Northern Ireland.

In Scotland Eric Fraser CBE has been appointed as the Scottish Veterans' Commissioner to help raise the profile of Veterans within Scottish society. He will be working with UK Government Ministers, individuals, charities, Local Authorities and Health Boards to identify areas in Scotland's public services that might provide greater support to Veterans

and remove the barriers that prevent ex-Servicemen and women from realising their full potential.

As part of this the Scottish Government has published guidance on housing ex-Service personnel to assist social landlords⁹ and gathered examples of approaches taken by social landlords to support ex-Service personnel and prevent disadvantage through their allocation policies¹⁰. The June 2014 Housing Act now gives priority for social housing to those in greatest housing need. Veterans or ex-Service personnel who find themselves homeless, threatened with homelessness or who are living under unsatisfactory housing conditions and whose needs can not be met by other housing options will receive priority for social housing.

The Scottish Government has also increased funding for the Scottish Veterans Fund to £120,000 per annum from 2013-14. They have given a further £200,000 over three years to Veterans Scotland, in order to develop new and improved support for the 400,000 Veterans across Scotland and to facilitate the exchange of good practice between service providers in the private, public and voluntary sectors.

Veterans in the Criminal Justice System

On 11 January 2014 the Government announced it would hold an independent review into the rehabilitation needs of ex-Service personnel convicted of criminal offences and given a custodial or community sentence. The aim is to identify properly the reasons for ex-Service personnel ending up in the justice system, to look at the support provided to them and how that support can be improved. The review was chaired by Stephen Phillips QC MP and is due to reported back to the Secretary of State for Justice in autumn 2014. The report and the Government's response to it are due to be published.

Alongside the review, the Ministry of Justice is carried out a Rapid Evidence Assessment of the published material about ex-Service personnel in the Criminal Justice System and analysed data from two broader prison and probation surveys.

In Wales, Veterans are identified as a priority group within the All Wales Criminal Justice Board's Reducing Reoffending Strategy, which was launched in March 2014. Key objectives within the Strategy include the proper identification of Veterans in the criminal justice system and ensuring Veterans are signposted to appropriate rehabilitation and resettlement services.

A new Armed Forces and Veterans Champion has been appointed in Police Scotland. One of the first initiatives developed following the appointment has been a referral service where every individual presenting at a police station in Scotland, whether as victim of a crime, a witness or an alleged perpetrator of a criminal act is asked if they are a Veteran. If an individual confirms Veteran status, and it is appropriate, they are referred to the Armed Services Advice Service (ASAS) for support and signposting to other agencies that provide additional advice and assistance to Veterans.

9 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/16342/management/socialhousingaccess/allocations/Guide/decidingtoallocate/armedforces>

10 <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/16342/management/socialhousingaccess/allocations/Guide/decidingtoallocate/practiceexamples>

Reserves

The publication of the White Paper, Reserves in the Future Force 2020: Valuable and Valued, in July 2013 committed Defence to delivering changes to the offer we made to reservists in recognition for their commitment and service.

We recognised that in the course of their service, Reservists gain leadership and life skills. We committed to improving the recognition of these skills to ensure benefit for them, their employer and society.

We understood that the rewards offered to Reservists needed to be equal with those offered to Regulars, in particular paid leave and pensions, when in like-for-like circumstances.

Healthcare for Reservists needed to be extended with changes to occupational health and rehabilitation and an increase in the level of direct welfare support provided to them and their families.

What have we done to reduce the disadvantage to Reservists?



- Since publication of the white paper, steps have been taken to ensure that Reservists are not disadvantaged as a result of their service, such as:
- The introduction of the Defence Reform Act provides better protection in civilian employment, allowing Reservists a right of access to an Employment Tribunal without the usual two year qualifying period of employment in cases of unfair dismissal.
- Additional payments can now be made to small and medium-sized enterprises when their employees are mobilised, making employing Reservists easier and more attractive and providing appropriate recognition of those employers.
- The corporate covenant has been introduced to in part, encourage employers to develop HR policies that support and encourage their employees to be a part of the Reserve Forces.



- An entitlement to paid annual leave for Reservists has been granted, recognising that Reservists deliver capability for Defence.
- Access to the Standard Learning Credits Scheme has been extended to all members of the Reserve Forces, providing financial support for a range of learning activities. This, along with the accreditation of skills obtained from Reserve service with recognised civilian qualifications, enhances the individual and their employer.
- The offer of an HM Forces Railcard has been extended to Reservists and their families by Working with the Association of Train Operating Companies,.
- Welfare officers in Army Reserve units and Whole Ship Coordinators in Royal Navy Reserve units have been established in order to deliver a more consistent and accessible level of direct welfare support to Reservists and their families. The RAF is increasing awareness of the welfare services it provides through enhanced pre-deployment briefings.
- The Covenant continues to apply to members of the Armed Forces and their families even after they have left service. This is applicable to Veterans of the Reserve Forces, as well as Regular personnel.

What next for Reservists?

We recognise that there is still more to be done to support Reservists. The government therefore intends to implement the following, amongst other plans:

We will provide a defined contribution to the future Armed Forces Pension Scheme for all paid service in the Reserve Forces. This will come into effect from April 2015.

Improving healthcare for Reservists when not mobilised, including access to full occupational health and dental assessments immediately before mobilisation and improved access to mental health support. Provision of rehabilitation will also be extended to those injured during Reserve training.

Whilst the changes to Employment Tribunal access will reduce the disadvantage to Reservists in the workplace, we will continue to monitor this. This will be done through



Minister for Reserves, Julian Brazier meets reservists during visit to The Royal Wessex Yeomanry

our web-based portal for Reservists who feel they have been disadvantaged when seeking employment.

The devolution settlement in Northern Ireland and the constitutional position of the Channel Islands means that the new legislation on employment tribunals has not yet been adopted. We are reviewing this on an ongoing basis.

The Welsh Government is committed to supporting Reservists and has endorsed the Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers (SaBRE) Statement of Employer Support. The Welsh Government Reserve Forces policy is held as an exemplar to other employers. Reservists who are employees of the Welsh Government are supported by a comprehensive policy which offers a minimum of 12 days paid special leave to attend training or undertake voluntary operations and has committed to positively consider requests from Reservist employees for any additional support to undertake this important role. The Welsh Government continues to encourage public sector organisations across Wales to ensure their policies and practices support Reservists.

In Northern Ireland, from April 2015, each of the new Local Authorities (the 11 "super councils") will nominate both a non-elected official and a councillor to membership of the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) in Northern Ireland, the latter will also act as a local Veterans' champion.

Department for Work and Pensions Armed Forces Champions

DWP Armed Forces Champions identify Service leavers, Reservists and spouses/partners of Service personnel to ensure they are provided with the most appropriate help according to their circumstances and also to help them navigate through the benefit system as they make a claim and begin their jobsearch. Champions also work across Local Authority boundaries to make sure that people get the best possible service. For example, Armed Forces Champions for Chesterfield are working in collaboration with the NHS, Royal British Legion and Chesterfield Football Club, who've set up an ex-Service/Armed Forces Hub. The Hub is a one-stop-shop of help and support for Service leavers to attend and have the opportunity to talk to various organisations to see what help is available to them. Organisations involved include, Combat Stress, Veterans UK, local councils/housing association, local law centre.

Recovery

Following the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions visit to Tedworth House Recovery Centre in June 2013, there has been ongoing engagement between DWP and Help for Heroes on a number of initiatives to support the employment ambitions of wounded, injured and sick Service personnel, Veterans and their families. Good progress has been made in some key areas, for example:

- DWP and Help for Heroes explored options for a Jobcentre Plus presence at drop-in clinics at the Support Hub 'one-stop welfare shop' at Tedworth House Recovery Centre. Given the limited number of Veterans who are likely to require DWP support services, it has been agreed that this support would be best provided at a Jobcentre Plus office. A number of local support actions have been agreed and implemented under this initiative.
- It was agreed that from January 2014, Help for Heroes could refer people direct to the Work Choice Programme during terminal leave before discharge. (Work Choice is a voluntary programme designed to help people get and keep a job if they are disabled and find it hard to work).
- DWP has provided Help for Heroes with detailed Employment and Support Allowance guidance on 'volunteering' and 'work experience', as well as guidance developed by Government on conducting evaluations with regard to employment programmes.

As part of a coordinated programme looking at the recuperation of injured Service personnel and Veterans in Scotland, Scottish Disability Sport (SDS) has been working closely with the Armed Forces and Help for Heroes to formalise the delivery of sport to military personnel, including through the Personnel Recovery Centre in Edinburgh.

SDS has also recently filled the Scottish Battleback post based in Edinburgh. Part of the remit of this position is to develop and maintain professional relationships with wider charity, recovery centre staff and the local military and civilian sports communities in order to enhance the physical, cognitive, psychological and social aspects of recovery.

Pensions

Armed Forces Pensions for Life

With effect from 1 April 2015 changes will be made to both the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 75 (AFPS75) and the War Pension Scheme (WPS). The changes will ensure that widows, widowers and surviving civil partners will now retain their pensions for life, thereby fulfilling the Government's ongoing commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant. For those who have already surrendered their pension due to remarriage or cohabitation, should that relationship end they can apply to have their pension restored for life.

These changes recognise the unique commitment made by Service families, who have often had to cope with long and uncertain separations while their spouse or civil partner has deployed on operations. The mobile nature of Service life has prevented many earning their own occupational pension, which will have placed them at a disadvantage in trying to plan for their own financial future.

Pre-2010 Armed Forces Credits

DWP and MOD have worked together to introduce a new measure into the Pensions Act 2014 which will allow Service spouses and civil partners to apply for National Insurance

credits for the years prior to 2010 that they have spent accompanying their Service partner on postings outside the UK. The credit will be administered by Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and help a person gain qualifying years that provide entitlement to the new State Pension. Currently spouses and civil partners are able to apply for credits for tax years from 2010/11 in order to gain entitlement to contributory benefits such as Jobseeker's Allowance.

Only people reaching State Pension age from 6 April 2016 only will be able to apply for the new credits. DWP and MOD are working on the finer details of the scheme and further information on how and when to apply will be provided at a later date.

2014 Report Commitments

The MOD will undertake a review on the introduction of a post nominal decoration for Reservists.

The MOD will work with the Department for Education and the DCLG to ensure that the implications of service life are taken account of in the adoption process.

The MOD will work closely with Local Authorities to ensure the spread of best practice and tackle issues, such as access to social housing.

The MOD will hold a series of regional events during 2015 with Local Authorities, to discuss Community Covenant issues and help spread best practice.

The MOD will launch a new consolidated Armed Forces Covenant grant scheme from April 2015.

The MOD will work to achieve Royal assent for the Armed Forces Service Complaints and Financial Assistance bill in early 2015.

The MOD will work closely with the organisations who have signed the Corporate Covenant to ensure the delivery of their pledges.

The MOD will work with the Financial Services Sector to address any potential disadvantages associated with service overseas.

The MOD will receive a report on women in combat roles later in the year.

The MOD will from 2015, provide a defined contribution to the future Armed Forces Pension scheme for all paid service in the Reserve Forces.

The MOD will continue working to improve healthcare for Reservists when not mobilised.

The MOD will continue to monitor the effect of changes to employment tribunal access to assess whether they are reducing the disadvantage faced by Reserves in the workplace.

The DWP will use the results from the 2014 Families Continuous Attitude Survey to gauge the experiences of Navy, Army and RAF personnel, and their families as reported by Family Federations and HIVEs in accessing Jobcentre services and Armed Forces champions.

MOD and DWP will work on the finer details of a new scheme to allow military spouses and civil partners to apply for National Insurance credits for the years prior to 2010 that they have spent accompanying their Service partner on postings outside the UK.

Annex A 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 2013 and those that were recorded in the table at the back of that report as “to be completed”.

Key to progress status

Completed since December 2013	
To be completed before 2015 annual report	
To be completed post 2015 annual report	

Terms and Conditions of Service

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Development of a New Employment Model	UK	

Healthcare

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Midlands Medical Accommodation Project	UK	
The Scottish Government is considering the potential to extend the Lothian-based Veterans First Point model to other regions	SCO	
New arrangements for members of the Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Marines Reserve and Territorial Army to receive a common standard of occupational healthcare	UK	
Work to implement all the recommendations in the Care Quality Commission review of the Defence Medical Services	UK	
Establish a unified Defence Primary Healthcare Service, with the interim organisation in place from April 2013	UK	
Seek to obtain funding for a study into support for the bereaved and the families of those who have been injured	UK	
The Scottish Government will establish a fully operational national prosthetics service to meet the needs of Scottish Service amputees	SCO	
The Welsh Government will complete work on improvements to prosthetic services for Veterans in Wales	WAL	
The MOD will extend rehabilitation services to members of the Reserve Forces who are injured during reserve training.	UK	
DWP Officials will work with Help For Heroes on a number of initiatives to support the employment ambitions of wounded, injured and sick Service personnel, Veterans and their families	UK	
The Veterans Information Service will be enhanced by linking it with the Royal British Legion knowledge database	UK	

The MOD will commission research to understand the reason for higher rates of harmful alcohol usage in order to articulate the impacts of high alcohol use on the individual, associated peer groups and the organisation	UK	
The MOD will commission a study of the causes of death of Veterans of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan	UK	
The Scottish Government will support the development of a network of groups across Scotland to provide safe and effective support to Veterans with mental health problems	SCO	
The Welsh Government will review the uptake by veterans of free cycles of IVF treatment	WAL	
The MOD will develop its systems further so that a summary of the individual's service medical care will be included with their NHS record when a former Service person registers with a civilian GP	UK	

Education

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Improvements to the Army's education programme: establishing a single personal development fund	UK	
Improvements to the Army's education programme: senior soldiers to gain teaching qualifications	UK	
Development of a new strategy to address the impact of mobility on the education of Service children and young people	UK	
Promote uninterrupted Special Educational Needs provision	ENG and WAL	
Allow training in Service Children's Education schools overseas to count towards Qualified Teaching Status for Service partners	ENG	
MOD and DFE will continue to monitor potential issues following the new Schools Admissions Code coming into force to ensure it is removing disadvantage to Service personnel in achieving their school of choice in England where possible.	ENG	
DFE and MOD will continue to review the use of Service Pupil Premium and publish examples of best practice to ensure that it is addressing disadvantage to Service children's education	ENG	
Review of the Support Fund for State Schools with Service children to ensure that it continues to be used to mitigate the effects of exceptional mobility and deployment on schools, academies and free schools within the UK	UK	
MOD will continue to work with the relevant education departments to ensure that the specific needs of Service children are recognised in particular with the new academies and free schools in England	UK	
MOD will work with the relevant education departments to seek clarification on how higher education will be funded, identify if this will disadvantage Service children posted to them and seek to address disadvantage if it does exist.	UK	
The MOD will ask Ofsted to report on the use of Service Pupil Premium in schools	UK	

The Welsh Government's Standing Committee for Service Children will produce an overview document on education in Wales which will contain information about the curricular difference between England and Wales	WAL	
The MOD will work with the Department for Education to monitor the impact of raising the participation age on Service children and young people	UK	
The MOD's Education of Service Children Change Programme will look at Service children's educational needs in the UK and overseas from Early Years Foundation Stage through to Further Education	UK and OSEAS	
The MOD will extend access to the Standard Learning Credit scheme to volunteer Reserves from April 2014	UK	

Housing

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Develop an alternative approach to the provision of accommodation for Service personnel and their families	UK	
Next Generation Estates Contract programme	UK	
Improvements to Defence Infrastructure Organisation Customer Care	UK	
The Scottish Government will consider whether giving Local Authorities more flexibility and responsibility to determine their own approach to meeting need would help social landlords to address the housing needs of former Service personnel and ensure they are not disadvantaged	SCO	
Establish a Single Living Accommodation management information system to provide critical information on the condition of the estate and inform key investment decisions	UK	
MOD will continue to look for opportunities to mitigate further the impact of years two and three of the planned pause on improvements to Service Family Accommodation	UK	
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	
The MOD will enhance support provided for families living in UK SFA in line with the SFA Service Delivery Improvement Action Plan	UK	
The MOD will establish a Ministerially-chaired Board to oversee progress against the Service Delivery Improvement Plan	UK	
The MOD will remove Crown exemption so that Service personnel are afforded the same statutory rights as tenants in the private sector	UK	
The MOD will develop a Home Purchase incentive scheme to improve the availability of advice on housing issues and home ownership.	UK	
The Welsh Government will bring forward proposals in its Housing Bill to strengthen the duties on Local Authorities to prevent and relieve homelessness	WAL	
The Welsh Government will develop guidance to ensure Local Authorities work with the Armed Forcers and Veterans' welfare services to provide help before Veterans become homeless	WAL	

Benefits and Tax

Commitment	Applies to	Status
DWP and MOD will work together to see what more can be done to enhance the understanding of the special rules in place for spouses and civil partners in relation to Jobseeker's Allowance	UK	
The MOD and DWP will update the leaflet about the role of the Jobcentre Plus Armed Forces Champions and DWP will make the information available on the internet	UK	

Responsibility of Care

Commitment	Applies to	Status
The MOD will support reservists with a more consistent and accessible level of welfare support, equivalent to that of regulars	UK	

Family Life

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Balance demands on Service personnel and their families through a New Employment Model	UK	
Review of public transport issues affecting Service families living in remote areas	ENG	
Childcare Sufficiency Assessments: MOD will gather evidence of the needs of Service personnel in relation to childcare provision in the UK	UK	
The Welsh Government will consult on extending eligibility to a Blue Badge to people who have cognitive impairments but cannot apply for Personal Independence Payment	UK	

Commercial Products and Services

Commitment	Applies to	Status
The MOD will work with the Families Federations to ask their members whether they have experienced problems related to insurance		

Transition

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Work with the Forces in Mind Trust to support veterans and their families	UK	
Take forward research into the transition of those leaving the Armed Forces	UK	
Depending on the evidence provided, the Government will review the need for halfway housing for former Service personnel.	UK	

Support after Service

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Implement changes to Service pensions reflecting unique role that Service personnel fill	UK	
MOD will engage with bereaved families' groups to identify where the Government can provide new or enhanced means of support to bereaved families	UK	
MOD will work with the Office for National Statistics to add a Veteran's identifier to their integrated household survey in order to collate broad data relating to Veterans in the UK.	UK	
The Welsh Government will consider the recommendations in the report into the utility of establishing a residential centre for Veterans in Wales.	Wales	
The Ministry of Justice will issue new statutory guidance on how the coroner system should operate in relation to bereaved relatives.	UK	
The findings of the Soldiers Sailors and Airmen Families Association study of the support given to bereaved families will be published.	UK	
The MOD will provide a contribution to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme for every day of paid service in the Reserve Forces.	UK	
The MOD will work to improve the Ministerial and Veteran's fora to address current issues of support for the Service and ex-Service community in Northern Ireland.	NI	

Participation as Citizens

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Improving the ability of Service personnel to vote	UK	
Foreign and Commonwealth Citizens – Time spent in service outside the UK	UK	

Changes in Defence

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Managing the return from Germany to the United Kingdom	UK	

Recourse

Commitment	Applies to	Status
The Government will consider the Service Complaints Commissioner's proposals for changing her role and respond in due course.	UK	

The Covenant and Wider Society

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Sharing Service facilities with civilians	UK	

Annex B Corporate Covenant Pledges

1st Gear MTC	Blackpool Transport
3Sun Group	Blind Veterans UK Ltd
4ex-Military Jobs Ltd	Blue Light Card
8 Build Ltd	BMT Group
A4e Ltd	Boatwork Ltd
ABF The Soldiers Charity	Bright Light Management Ltd
Academies Enterprise Trust	Britannia Construction
AccouTax Ltd	British Forces Resettlement Services (BFRS)
ADM Shine Technologies	British Heart Foundation
ADS Group Ltd	Britplas Ltd
AEI Cables	Brundsdon Financial Services
AESSEAL plc	BT
Agility Defence & Government Services, Europe	Bubble Production
AgustaWestland	Building Heroes
Air and Ground Aviation Ltd	Butler Specialist Services Ltd
Alabaré Christian Care & Support,	BV Associates Limited
Aldershot Town FC	BVCA (British Private Equity and Venture Capital Association)
Alex Smiles Ltd	c2c Rail Ltd
Allocate Software	Canterbury College
Alpha 1 Security Services (GB) Ltd	Capita
Alternate Forces	Cardiff Blues Rugby Club
Amazon	Carillion
Amey	Caterpillar Shrewsbury
ANatech Resource Ltd	CDL Sprinkler Protection Ltd
ao.com	Cervus
Arise Virtual Solutions	CGI UK
Armed Forces Group Preston	Chapman Ventilation
Armed Forces Legal Action	Cheltenham Standard
Army Family Federation	China Fleet Trust
ARNO	China Fleet Trust Country Club
Arqiva	Circle2Success Ltd
Artisan Country Crafts	Clarks Wood Co Ltd
ASDA Stores Limited	COBSEO
Associated Telecom Solutions	Cohort
Astute Facilities Management Ltd	Combat Stress
Atkins	Commercial Contract Engineers/Fix Auto Rochdale
Attwell International Ltd	Community Impact Bucks,
Automobile Association	Complete Forensics
Babcock International	CompTIA
BAE Systems	Converge
BAM Nuttall Ltd	Corps Security
Barclays	Corsham Institute
Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce	Cotswold Style Magazine
Basingstoke College of Technology	Council of the Reserves Forces and Cadets Associations CRB
BCB International Ltd	Problems Lts
Be Training Academy Ltd	Creed Foodservice
Best Training & Development Ltd,	CTN Communications
Big Word	CVQO
Bird and Co Solicitors LLP	Defence Medical Welfare Services
Birketts LLP	Deloitte
Bishopsgate Financial Consulting	Denchi Power Ltd

DHL
 Dogfi.sh Mobile Ltd
 Drumturk Ltd
 DWF
 DX Network Services Ltd
 Dyke House College
 DynCorp
 Eddie Stobart
 Education for the Military Magazine
 Elddis Transport (Consett) Limited
 Elior
 Elliott Group
 Equal Approach
 Equiniti
 ESS Support Services Worldwide
 Everton in the Community
 Ex-Mil Recruitment
 Ex-Military Careers
 Experian
 Expert Logistics
 Farani Javid Taylor Solicitors
 Fastnet Estates Ltd
 FDM Group
 Finmeccanica UK Ltd
 Finning UK & Ireland
 First Choice Housing Association
 First Military Recruitment
 Fluid Transfer International
 Footprint Sheffield Limited
 Force Recruitment Ltd
 Forces Regroup
 Force Select
 Forces Financial trading branch of Police Mutual Assurance Society Ltd
 Forces Mobile
 Forces Recruitment Services
 Former Forces Support
 Forth Valley Rugby Ltd
 Forward Assist Recruitment Ltd
 FSI Europe
 Fujitsu
 G4S
 General Dynamics
 General Electric
 George Bence & Sons Ltd
 Get Licensed
 GKN plc
 Global Resource Management Ltd
 Gloucester Rugby Limited
 Greenwich Hospital
 Groundwork
 Harrison Clark Rickerbys Limited
 Hartley, Thomas and Wright
 Herefordshire Council
 Hewlett Packard
 Hilary Meredith
 HS Marston Aerospace
 HSBC
 Hudson Law
 Hudson Property
 Hull Veterans Support Centre
 HZL
 Idrach
 Illec Building Solutions
 Inlingua Cheltenham
 Insignia Resourcing Ltd
 Interserve
 ISS Facility Services
 J G Fenn
 J1 Consulting Ltd
 Jaguar Land Rover
 JMHA (J&M Residential Lettings Ltd)
 JobOppo Ltd
 John Dollin Printing Services Ltd
 John Gillman & Sons (Electrical) Ltd
 JS Facilities
 KBR
 Kennedy Scott
 Kier Group
 Kingston Chamber of Commerce
 Komatsu UK Limited
 KPMG
 Kuehne + Nagel Limited
 Lancashire County Cricket Club
 Landmarc
 Leaver's Link
 Leidos
 Lenwell
 Liebherr Sunderland Works Ltd
 Lions Telecom Services Lts
 Liverpool FC Foundation
 Lockheed Martin UK Ltd
 Logistics Employment Network
 Lorien Resourcing
 Lotus F1 Team
 Lowell Group
 Magnum Services Europe
 Manor by the Lake
 Manpower
 Manroy Engineering Ltd
 Marketing Cheshire
 Markey Group
 Marlborough Communications Ltd
 Marriott Lock Ltd
 Marshall Aerospace and Defence Group
 Martin and Co Rochdale
 Mass Consultant Ltd
 MBDA
 MCM Facilities Management
 Merlin
 Mid Wales Manufacturing Group
 Military Wives Choir
 MKC Training Services
 Molson
 Montpellier Public Relations
 Morson Human Resources
 MPCT
 MT Aves and Son
 Music 4 Heroes
 NAAFI
 National Express
 National Grid
 Nationwide
 Nexor Ltd

North of England RFCA
 North West Ambulance Services NHS Trust
 North West of England and Isle of Man Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association NSC
 NVM Holdings
 OAKAS Limited
 Odin Estates Ltd
 Omega Global Resource Solutions
 OppO Recruitment Ltd
 Oracle Corporation (UK)
 Ormiston Academies Trust
 Oxfordshire County Council
 Park View School
 Pathfinder Magazine
 Penna Plc
 Persimmon
 Personalised Training - Erudition Schools Trust
 Pertemps Limited
 Pinnacle PSG
 Plymouth University
 Police Mutual Assurance Society Limited
 Portsmouth Aviation
 Premier Forest Products Ltd
 Prima Dental
 Printwaste Ltd
 Prolinx Ltd
 Proludic Ltd
 Protective Security Training and Consultancy
 Provide
 Purple Food Services
 QinetiQ
 Quadratek
 Quanta Training Ltd
 Queen Alexandra Hospital Home
 Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College
 Quest Magazine - Bulldog Publishing Ltd
 RAC Motoring Services
 RAF Benevolent Fund
 RAF Families Federation
 Rare Adventures
 Raytheon
 Reboot Ventures Ltd
 Recruit for Spouses
 Remploy
 REN
 Renishaw
 Repknight Ltd
 RFEA - The Forces Employment Charity
 Rhondda Cynon Taf
 Riverside
 Rochdale Boroughwide Housing
 Rochdale Hornets Rugby Football League Club Society
 Ltd Rochdale online
 Rochdale Style Magazine
 Roflow Ltd
 Rolls Royce
 Routeways Centre Ltd
 Royal Air Forces Association
 Royal British Legion Industries
 Royal College of Psychiatrists
 Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity
 rpc Group of Companies
 RRG Rochdale (Toyota)
 Ryder
 S Smith and Sons Carpets Ltd
 Salute my Job
 Schroders plc
 Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
 SEA
 Security Management
 Sedgefield Racecourse
 Selex ES Ltd
 Serco Group
 Service Childrens' Support Network
 Sheffield Chamber of Commerce
 Shrewsbury Town FC Community Sports Trust
 Skanska UK plc
 Smiths Group Plc
 Sodexo Defence
 Soldier On!
 Solvings Lts
 Sonic Communications (Int) Ltd
 South Central Ambulance Service
 South Oxfordshire District Council
 SP Services
 Spencer Rail
 sr it services
 SSAFA
 Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce
 Standard Life
 Steria Ltd
 Studio MB Limited
 Sunstone
 Systems Consultants Services
 Systems Devices UK
 Tayabali Tomlin Accountant
 TBD Associates
 Telespazio
 Telling Blaisdons Ltd
 Tercel Medical Group
 Tesco
 Thales UK
 The Military Mutual
 The Northumberland Church of England Academy
 The Officers Association
 The Poppy Factory
 The Royal British Legion
 The Royal College of Nursing
 The Trades Brigade
 The Weir Group
 The Will Associates
 The William Wilberforce Trust
 Top of the Range
 TQ Training
 Trafford Council
 Tragus
 Train2Protect
 Triforce Recruitment Ltd
 TSYMCO Limited
 TTC Ltd The Training Continuum
 TVS Supply Chain Solutions
 TylerBale Communications
 Ubi-Tech
 Ultra Electronics

United Biscuits
United Utilities
University of Wolverhampton
UNSWIS
Vale of White Horse District Council Vedette Consulting Ltd
Vestey
Veterans Council
VINCI plc
Virgin Media
Walker Technology College
Whipton Surgery
Wilson James
Wisdom Communications (GB)
Working Transitions
World Pay
WSX Enterprise Limited
X-Forces
XRE Ex-Forces Recruitment
Y Goldberg & Sons Ltd
Yarnfield Park Training & Conference Centre

370 as at 5th December 2014

Annex C Successful Libor Fund Bids

30th Signal Regiment - To provide a Skate Park that will provide a safe 'fenced' outdoor facility for young soldiers and dependants.

30th Signal Regiment - To provide a Children's Indoor Play Area in the Station Community Room.

Adjutant General's Corps Regimental Association - A replacement caravan to offer affordable holidays to members of the Corps.

AF&V Launchpad Ltd - To provide accommodation to veterans in Liverpool and help them secure employment.

Against Violence & Abuse - To allow the Royal Navy working with AVA to gain in-force experience to tackle these issues.

Alabaré Christian Care and Support - To provide re-settlement and employment for homeless veterans in Wales.

Army Family Federation - To continue providing Federation services.

Army HQ on behalf of three Services' Central and Benevolent Funds - To recreate the Bastion Memorial Wall at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

Army Welfare Service (AWS) - To carry out a comprehensive update of Army children's and young people's play park facilities.

Big White Wall - To offer ten evidence-based, self-management 'Guided Support' programmes for the Armed Forces community.

Blind Veterans UK - To provide care, training and support for ex-Service personnel with sight loss, and their families.

British ex-Services Wheelchair Sports Association - To support the purchase of daily use and sport wheelchairs.

CAIS - To support family and carers of veterans in North Wales.

CAIS - To develop and fund a support wellbeing network for veterans in Wales for the next two years.

Cathcart Old Parish Church - To develop four community based resource centres for serving members of the armed forces, those in transition, Veterans and their families.

CESSAC - Renovation costs.

Charitable Housing Association - To improve and update accommodation to meet modern tenant expectations and standards.

CHICKS - To provide children affected by service due to injury or bereavement, with a chance to benefit from a free week of respite.

Combat Stress - The addition of a community psychiatric nurse trained in addictions management to 14 UK wide Veterans Community Outreach Teams.

Combat Stress - To complete phase two of a 24 hour telephone helpline for help with mental health issues across the UK.

Combat Stress - To provide a 24 Hour Helpline for veterans providing welfare advice, support and guidance.

Cruse Bereavement Care - To further develop and raise awareness of the services Cruse Bereavement Care offers to bereaved Military families across the UK.

Dame Agnes Weston's Royal Sailors Rests - To employ two Community Workers and to refurbish the Braeholm family centre.

Dame Agnes Weston's Royal Sailors Rests - To upgrade the facilities for various family groups around the country.

Dame Agnes Weston's Royal Sailors Rests - To expand the welfare support they offer to Naval and Royal Marine families across the UK

Defence Medical Welfare Service - To provide forces personnel across the UK with additional hospital welfare and psychosocial support.

Dhekelia Youth Centre - To build a youth shelter and multi use Games Area.

Felix Fund - Normalisation breaks for Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams.

Felix Fund - to provide therapeutic 'normalisation' breaks for Personnel returning from dangerous and stressful operations overseas

Forces Support - To establish a second team of 2 full time support workers assisted by trained and supervised volunteers, who will help meet the growing demand for their work.

Gardening Leave - To provide horticultural therapy for serving and ex-service Armed Forces personnel.

Hasler Company - To support the cost of respite breaks at Centre Parcs facilities across the UK for those family groups with extraordinary special needs, who are part of the Naval Service Recovery Pathway and assigned to Hasler Company.

Help for Heroes - To provide mental health support, through a telephone helpline, face to face assessments and bespoke, low-intensity and holistic treatments, delivered by qualified practitioners.

HMS Neptune Welfare Fund - To refurbish a holiday cottage in Scotland to ensure that the facility can be used by injured servicemen and their families.

Horseback UK - To provide a safe place for wounded servicemen and women.

Houses for Heroes Scotland - To build low-rent houses in Scotland for wounded service personnel and their families.

HQ Joint Educational and Training Services - To provide essential support to families and Service personnel operating out of RAF Akrotiri, British Forces Cyprus.

Innsworth Station Welfare Centre - Refurbishment costs.

Kent County Council - To train Veterans to use a 'community toolkit' of physical tools to create community nature projects (e.g. park benches) and an 'inner toolkit' of resilience and leadership.

Musical In Hospitals - To provide 120 concerts for former Service personnel in specific care establishments.

National Memoriam Arboretum - To instigate a programme of improvements.

Navy Family Federation - To continue providing Federation services.

North East Hampshire Domestic Violence Forum - To develop a resource (toolkit) for use by Armed Forces and civilian services responding to disclosures and suspicions of domestic abuse involving serving or Veteran families.

North Somerset Citizens Advice Bureau - To pilot an information, advice and mentoring service offering practical help to Veterans, Reservists and Serving personnel and their families to fully integrate into civilian society. With a particular focus on mental health.

North Yorkshire County Council - To offer specific group sessions in coping with stress, anger Management and dealing/tackling Domestic Abuse.

Oxfordshire Mind - To pilot an innovative and bespoke 8-week group programme, which will help improve the mental health, wellbeing and social integration of spouses and partners of Service personnel.

Queen Alexandra Hospital Home - to upgrade the kitchen facilities to improve the lives of disabled veterans.

Queen Alexandra Hospital Home - to carry out essential repairs and improve the lives of disabled veterans.

Queen Alexandra Hospital Home - to improve accessibility for disabled veterans.

Queen Alexandra Hospital Home - To fund the provision of services, and upgrade of some its facilities.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham Charity - Contribution to 18 bedroom 'home away from home' for families of military patients.

RAF Benson Community Primary School - To develop the outside learning space at the School, where 99% of the children are from Service families.

RAF Family Federation – To continue providing Federation services.

RAF High Wycombe - To convert an unused 2 storey block of flats, previously utilised as a workplace, into a facility to provide early years full time and sessional childcare, and a youth/ play centre for children and young people.

RAF Honington - To establish a Community horticultural therapy area.

RAF Widows Association - Training for 30 trustees / regional organisers.

RBL - To provide families of serving and ex-Service personnel with the chance to enjoy a free week long break. Whether recovering from an illness, bereavement, or other life affecting events.

RBL Scotland - To assist and promote and to insure quality of care to Veterans in Scotland.

Reading Force - To expand their reading programme to every Service family in the UK.

Riverside ECHG - To employ a baker who will concentrate on the therapeutic value of baking bread, by introducing relevant training to single homeless ex Forces Veterans in temporary accommodation.

Rothiemurchus Lodge - To upgrade various parts of the lodge in Scotland and increase its attractiveness to service personnel and their families.

Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund - To produce a booklet for Service families on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Royal Air Force Association - To improve training for its members and volunteers who take on welfare officer roles.

Royal British Legion Industries - To support delivery of a programme of LifeWorks™ for Families across garrison towns. RBLI will deliver vocational assessment and employability training for military spouses.

Royal Marines - To provide a Families and Veterans' Centre (FVC) at RM Poole.

Royal Marines Barracks Chivenor - To complete renovations of a children's play area.

Royal Navy - Upgrade play parks across Royal Navy estates.

Sailors Children's Society - To purchase 2 new caravans to expand their programme sending Royal Navy families on holiday.

Scottish Veterans Residence - To provide temporary supported accommodation for veterans in Glasgow, which will help with the transition to civilian life.

Seaforth Counselling - To set up a counselling service for Naval and Marine personnel and their families, across the UK.

Service Children Support Network - To develop a new project to recruit and train five Service Families Support Coordinators for Buckinghamshire.

Shore Leave Haslar - To support their therapy programme based in the Memorial Gardens at the former Royal Hospital Haslar in Gosport.

South Clyde Councils (East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, Inverclyde) and partner agencies - To establish a standard, Veterans and service leavers community pathway hub.

South West Scotland RnR - To provide a 5 day adventure / activity holiday for recovering combatants in a relaxed, welcoming, enjoyable and fun atmosphere at The End House, on the banks of the Solway estuary.

Spinal Injuries Association - To provide further welfare and well-being support – via visits, telephone and email – to veterans across England.

SSAFA Forces Help – To provide breaks for family members with additional needs / disabilities.

SSAFA Forces Help - To fund groups facilitated by social work professionals for example, the siblings of Wounded Injured and Sick, or bereaved Military personnel.

SSAFA Forces Help - To train 200 volunteers in mental health first aid who will then be tasked to train others.

SSAFA Forces Help - To develop a minimum of 200 separate mentoring relationships offering one to one individual support through a volunteer mentor to wounded, injured and sick

Service leavers out of Personnel Recovery and Assessment centres.

The Beacon – To provide a therapeutic training programme for homeless Veterans in Catterick. **The Bridge for Heroes** - To provide face-to-face mental health support to serving personnel, veterans and their families in Norfolk.

The British Forces Foundation - To provide a series of 'Covenant Homecoming Shows' for serving personnel and their families from units committed to operations.

The Calvert Trust - To provide adventure holidays for disabled personnel and their families.

The China Fleet Trust - To upgrade holiday apartments in Cornwall to better suit wounded and disabled personnel, veterans and their families.

The Not Forgotten Association - Provide injured serving/Veterans the opportunity to take part in three activities: cataran trail; canoeing on the River Spey; and a historical tour of Malta.

The RAF Benevolent Fund - To enhance its service providing serving members of the RAF and their spouses/partner with free couples counselling through Relate.

The RAF Benevolent Fund - To build 3 play parks at RAF Benson, Cosford and an indoor play area for young children at Cranwell.

The RAF Benevolent Fund - To upgrade 40 bathrooms for guestrooms at Princess Marina House which provides recuperative breaks to serving or ex-serving members of the RAF family, their partners and adult dependants.

The Warrior Programme - To continue funding a motivational training programme for Veterans moving into civilian life.

Tickets For Troops - To fund a website overhaul, purchase office equipment and cover marketing costs.

UDR & R Irish Aftercare Service - To setup a welfare support network and advisory service for veterans and their dependants in Northern Ireland.

UK4U - Funding to sustain the donation of Christmas boxes for Service personnel deployed on operations overseas.

University of Wolverhampton - To fund the introduction of a Business Start-Up Programme for dependants of serving Armed Forces personnel.

Veterans Aid - To improve the delivery of their 'Homeless ex-Servicemen's mental health treatment and care programme'.

Veterans Council - To establish a dedicated "one stop shop" that provides a single, easily-accessible pathway into bespoke mental health, health/social care and transitional services tailored to the Armed Forces Community.

Veterans F1rst Point - To establish a number of mental health support centres in Scotland, for veterans.

Veterans Outreach Support - One-stop assistance to Veterans and families at a monthly drop-in at the Royal Maritime Club (RMC) Portsmouth.

