



Ministry
of Defence

THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT ANNUAL REPORT 2015



THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT ANNUAL REPORT 2015

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

© Crown Copyright 12/2015
Published by the Ministry of Defence UK
This document is available at GOV.UK

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.



In 2016 we are launching the new Armed Forces Covenant brand, with one set of creative principles. By having one brand identity we are better able to engage all of our audiences across multiple channels with confidence and consistency. This is vital because we need to convey unity of vision and commitment – delivering our promise on behalf of the nation.

CONTENTS

Foreword	3
Executive Summary	5
Observations	8
Chapter 1 - Healthcare	17
Chapter 2 - Education	30
Chapter 3 - Accommodation	45
Chapter 4 - Inquests	57
Chapter 5 - Covenant Funding	58
Chapter 6 - Corporate Covenant	59
• Commercial Products and Services	61
Chapter 7 - Community Covenant	65
Chapter 8 - The Wider Covenant	68
• Terms and Conditions of Service	68
• Recourse	69
• Benefits and tax	69
• Family Life	72
• Transition	75
• Support after Service	78
• Recognition	86
• Participation as Citizens	90
• Changes in Defence	92
Annex A Commitments	93
Annex B Corporate Covenant Pledges	100
Annex C Successful Veterans Accommodation Fund Bids	105



FOREWORD

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

In my second annual report since becoming Defence Secretary, I am pleased to look back at the significant progress that the Covenant has made. While we have collectively achieved a great deal, I know there remains much to do to ensure the Covenant fulfills the nation's promise to support the brave men and women who serve our country, with honour and distinction. It is a long term aim, and this Government is committed to its long term delivery.

Our operations across the world this year, in Sierra Leone combating Ebola, capacity building in Afghanistan and Ukraine, and our training and air strikes over Iraq and now Syria, demonstrate that our Armed Forces community will continue to need the support that the Covenant delivers. Some thought that the Covenant would be less relevant following the end of combat operations in Afghanistan, but in fact our Armed Forces are engaged in over 20 operations worldwide, twice as many as five years ago. In an increasingly unpredictable and unstable world, the importance of a highly motivated, highly effective, deployable force cannot be understated. In return for this loyalty and commitment, we have a duty to ensure that our Servicemen and women are treated fairly. From the many visits to operational theatres, to bases around the country and to charities I have conducted, I know first-hand that it is all too easy to overlook the impact of deployments, movements, and uncertainty and challenge that service in the Armed Forces can bring. It affects not only those who serve, but also the family, from their children's education, to their partner's employment.

It is important that we get this right and deliver what is needed the most - that's why I asked each of the single Services to tell me what matters to our people and their families. In response to this feedback the Government launched a review into five key areas of Covenant delivery: healthcare, local services, spouse employment, education, and commercial support. I am pleased to report that the principles of the Covenant have now been embedded into the NHS constitution, and the Department of Health has established a process to track and monitor the delivery of healthcare to Service families; that the Department for Communities and Local Government will lead a review of the Community Covenant; and that this year we will also publish the first families' strategy, proposing a coordinated and coherent programme of support that is fit for 21st Century Armed Forces families. This builds on work to improve support on spouse employment and to update the schools admission code in respect of Service children. I am particularly grateful to Lord Porter of Spalding for his support; by working in partnership with the Local Government Association we can ensure a joined up, coordinated response to the challenges our Armed Forces community face irrespective of where they may be posted in the United Kingdom.

Improving commercial support has been a personal focus and I have written to every FTSE 350 company to encourage them to support proactively the Armed Forces and embrace the benefits of employing Veterans, spouses and Reservists. To help those posted overseas, the major mobile phone companies have agreed that Service personnel and family



Royal Mail CEO Moya Greene signing the corporate Covenant with the Defence Secretary Michael Fallon, in front of Royal Mail Reservists at Mount Pleasant Mail Centre in London

members can put their contracts on hold while they are away. The Royal Mail has also committed to encouraging use of the BFPO database, so that our Service personnel can access the financial and commercial services they need as citizens. More detail on these, and other measures, is set out in the report, but I am delighted with the positive action to strengthen the Covenant.

Our vision for the Covenant is to ensure that there is a network of practical support, embedded right across central and local Government, businesses, and charities, to meet the unique needs of the Armed Forces community. However, we know that this vision is only relevant if we can effectively communicate the Covenant to the Armed Forces Community and UK as a whole, and demonstrate that it is working through an objective assessment of performance. For the first time we have published metrics in the key areas of healthcare, accommodation and education. We will also deliver a coherent communications plan next year so that the Armed Forces community knows that the Covenant is there to support them and what it does, and so that society understands what the Covenant has achieved and how they can show their support. I have also arranged for a summary version of this report to be sent to every serving member of the Armed Forces.

As required by legislation, I have consulted the Devolved Administrations in preparing this report and I am grateful for their continued assistance and support. I should also thank my Ministerial colleagues from across Government who continue to champion the Covenant in their Departments; in particular the Chancellor who has continued his support of Armed Forces charities by committing, in addition to my Department's £10 million annual Covenant fund, a further £25 million over five years to support an aged Veterans' wellbeing fund; and a further £23 million to support Service charities as part of the Spending Review. Over £450 million of LIBOR fines have now been made available to support Service charities. As with previous years the report includes the unedited comments 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. We will use these comments to inform next year's programme of activity.

Successful delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant has no end date. The unique nature of Service life means there will always be elements of hardship and some disadvantage, but we have pledged to ensure that, through the Armed Forces Covenant, we will do our utmost for our people.

Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP
Secretary of State for Defence

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Fallon".

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Fulfilling our promises”

This is the fourth annual Covenant report and the programme of work to deliver the Covenant continues at pace. The volume of activity that surrounds the Covenant is testimony to the commitment, right across society, to support the Armed Forces community. There is passion, from the Prime Minister down, to get this right. The growth in support under the Corporate Covenant, a further 400 signatories this year bringing the total to over 770, underlines the national support for our Armed Forces and the desire to make a tangible difference. This year we have focused on how we strengthen delivery of our Covenant commitments to ensure that we are doing what we promised.

At the start of the year we consulted all three single Services to understand how they perceived they were being disadvantaged. The result has been a comprehensive assessment of delivery in five key areas, and a challenging package of work to check that our processes and procedures are working. The results were clear; the Covenant is working, but we need to make it clearer and easier for members of the Armed Forces community to access the support that’s available, and delivery isn’t uniform. We are aware that we need a mechanism to identify localised problems and address them.

Better metrics will help and for the first time the report includes assessments of our performance in a number of areas: in Healthcare where, in a recent survey, 66% of our people said that the standard of healthcare they received was a key reason that kept them in the Armed Forces; in Education where only 29% are dissatisfied with the effect of Service life on their children’s education; and in Accommodation, where 99% of our recorded UK Service Family Accommodation is at the top two Standards for condition. However, we also need to be able to measure how the Covenant is working at a local level, with clear evidence and an assessment of scale, taking action where it is appropriate to do so. MOD will continue to work with other Government Departments, the Devolved Administrations and relevant charities to identify and develop relevant data which can be used to assess the performance of the Covenant.

The Covenant Reference Group, which provides cross Government and external oversight of the Covenant, will consider this further next year. To address concerns regarding delivery of the Community Covenant we have hosted four regional MOD Community Covenant conferences to promote best practice and understanding within Local Authorities (LAs). We also hosted a smaller event at the Local Government Association annual conference. It is key that there is a dedicated Armed Forces Covenant champion, at the right level, within every local authority to drive the Covenant forward. We are building a database of names to help communicate key information and create a coalition of the willing. We have also announced plans to review delivery of the Community Covenant. This will provide clear evidence of best practice and a framework to help deliver the Community Covenant. It will also help inform a wider review on the effects of localism on the Armed Forces community.

We have given added focus to maximising employer support to the Armed Forces community. The Defence Relationship Management team, which is responsible for improving the MOD’s links with British companies and organisations, has given increased

focus to delivery and oversight of the Corporate Covenant. This has not only increased the number of corporate supporters, but developed closer relationships that lead to deeper commitments from the companies involved. This year we identified 16 gold award winners for the Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme; these organisations demonstrate the very best in support to the Armed Forces community. There have also been major steps forward in activities to support the employment of Veterans and to address corporate disadvantage. The Royal Mail, Vodafone, EE, O2 and Three made commitments to ensure that they were actively supporting Service personnel and families posted overseas, and Nationwide Building Society have also changed some of its services to recognise the unique nature of Service life. These are significant steps forward, and the challenge for next year will be ensuring that these commitments are upheld, and other service providers make similar levels of commitment.

More broadly this year's report seeks to give clearer focus to the actions we have taken to address the issues raised by the external members of the Covenant Reference Group in last year's report. It does not pretend that we have done everything, but it does try to highlight where there has been progress, for example tackling commercial disadvantage, and where there is more for us to do, for example access to Government data. These are broadly captured as points raised either collectively by the Families Federations, or by Cobseo on behalf of the charity sector.

We recognise the actions of individual charities to champion the issues closest to them and a continuing theme in last year's report, for both the Families Federations and Cobseo, was the need to ensure the Covenant is effectively communicated to the key target audiences. We have implemented a cross Government communications plan and reviewed our branding to ensure that the public and other stakeholders instinctively know what the Covenant stands for, what its key messages are, and what their relationship with it is. This is no different to any other leading brand.

The report includes not only the areas that we are obliged to report on by the 2011 Act (Healthcare, Education, Accommodation, and Coroner's Inquests) but all of the strands of activity that fall within the scope of the Covenant. The focus is how we holistically support all members of the Armed Forces community, and some of those highlights are set out below:

Service personnel - On the basis of single Service feedback, we have focused on tackling commercial disadvantage. We have continued helping Service personnel to get on the property ladder through the Forces Help to Buy Scheme. We've introduced a new Tenancy Loan Deposit Scheme to help Service personnel fund the cost of a deposit for private rented accommodation. We have also launched a new credit union service to allow Service personnel access to safe and affordable finance when they need it. The Armed Forces (Service Complaints and Financial Assistance) Act 2015 was introduced earlier this year which has reformed the internal complaints process to make it shorter and more effective, and has created a new complaints Ombudsman role. Serving personnel can contact the Ombudsman independently.

Reserves - We have changed the terms and conditions of service for Reserve personnel to provide pension contributions to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 2015, and improved our welfare support. We have introduced a new post-nominal for Reservists to recognise their contribution and through the Corporate Covenant to make Reserve Service, and

ultimately deployments, better for the individual and the employer; including greater flexibility around leave allowances to help meet training commitments.

Families – Recent survey results show a significant reduction, down five points to 43%, on the numbers of Service personnel citing the effect of Service life on a spouse's or partner's career as a reason to leave. We are focusing on spouse employment and launched a two-year Spouse Employment Support Trial on 1 October 2015. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has agreed to exempt spouses or partners and children aged up to 21 returning from overseas from the three month residence requirement for claims to income-based Jobseeker's Allowance. In July 2015, the Directorate Children and Young People, working with the Department for Education, issued advice to Head Teachers in England on why term time absence may be necessary for Service children due to a parents' deployment. We are currently developing the first Armed Forces Families Strategy.

Veterans – The Department for Health and NHS England have confirmed that funding of £6 million per annum is in place to continue support for the provision of enhanced prosthetic work for Veterans. Funding through The Royal British Legion is now in place to support Veterans with Service-related hearing issues. A strong Veterans' support network continues to be provided across the Devolved Administrations. Scotland's first Veterans' commissioner has published his first two independent reports, and the Scottish Government is leading work with partners to identify how this recommendation can best be implemented.

Commercial support – Through the Covenant, we want to ensure fairness and equity of opportunity for the Armed Forces community when accessing public and commercial goods and services. The Secretary of State has therefore agreed with Royal Mail that we should work together to ensure that service providers are using the BFPO shadow postcode system. Working with key members of the financial services sector we have published guidance to help Service personnel access financial services. We have also got agreement from four major mobile phone providers to allow Service personnel and their families to put their contracts on hold when they are posted overseas.

We pledge that across Government, we will continue striving to sustain and embed a network of support for the Armed Forces community through the Armed Forces Covenant that is the best it can possibly be.



Royal Bank of Scotland CEO Ross McEwan signing the corporate Covenant with Mark Lancaster, Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans. Back row left to right, Reservists Lt Col Julian McElhinney, Lt Barry McNally, Flt Lt Amanda Curtis

OBSERVATIONS

By external members of the covenant reference group

Naval Families Federation, Army Families Federation, RAF Families Federation

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

Introduction

Military personnel are routinely asked to perform tasks and respond to events that ordinary members of the civilian population are not expected to do. They can even be required to sacrifice their life for the benefit of others. This liability is in effect an unwritten contract that serving personnel accept when they join and it is reflected not only when they go off to war but in their everyday lives: Having to put the Service before their family, by often having little or no choice about where they live, the hours they work and what they might be expected – ordered – to do at the drop of a hat, for example. Service personnel understand that “contract” but their family members have no choice – it is imposed upon them – and it is this that makes our Service families unique. And it is why the principles that underpin the AF Covenant are so important and that the nation acts upon them: The understanding that our personnel and their families will not be disadvantaged by military Service and the lifestyle it often imposes.

The three Service Families Federations are grateful for the opportunity to comment on those elements of the Report relevant to the serving Armed Forces personnel and families we represent. We would begin by acknowledging the very good work that has been done in the last 12 months by so many different organisations to further develop the Covenant and we would particularly wish to note the encouraging engagement of other Government Departments, such as Health, Education, Work and Pensions and Communities & Local Government. Many of the Covenant initiatives are making a welcome difference for serving personnel and their families, including those serving overseas, and there is much in this report that is positive. Yet there is still much to be done if the Covenant is to be successfully applied and, crucially, sustained over the long term.

Communication

Communicating the Covenant and its components to Service personnel and their families remains problematic and we are particularly disappointed that a sizeable proportion of our people continue to say that they have little or no knowledge of the Covenant and the principles that underpin it. We acknowledge that the MOD understands the problem and is working to overcome it – and we welcome the intent to establish a long-awaited and badly needed coherent communications plan - but we all have a part to play in improving the level of knowledge and understanding: The single Services, ourselves, those in Government and LAs, and organisations in the private sector too. We would again urge

everybody involved in delivering the Covenant to use every opportunity to spread the message about its aims as widely as possible within the military community. Similarly, in last year's report we commented on the communication issues for those delivering the Covenant in both the public and private sectors and it is again disappointing to find 12 months later that there are still too many occasions when the tremendous support and commitment to the Covenant that is declared at senior executive levels within major organisations and companies 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 Covenant at all, or have no idea of the involvement and support that their organisation has signed up to. Many have not received training and don't appreciate how the Covenant affects their policies and procedures. This can lead at best to simple misunderstandings and at worst to poor customer service and unnecessary stress. We would ask once again 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 Covenant is communicated to everybody and to make sure it does not fade away at middle management and section head level. Equally, we would again ask the same of the many 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. Ultimately, success for the Covenant will come when it is embedded fully into an organisation's day to day business and is not just considered by a finite group of people with a discrete remit.

Delivery of Community Covenants

Our evidence continues to indicate that delivery remains patchy. In some regions the authorities are working collaboratively and to great effect to introduce and sustain initiatives that support the Covenant principle of removing disadvantage caused by military service. However, we are aware that in other areas the process is much less well organised. Many local authority staff tell us that they want to do as much as they can but that they are far from clear about the issues involved, what best to deliver and how. In our view, more help and some direction is needed to maximise the impact of the Covenant. Our own staff who lead on the Covenant for our respective organisations have already done much to help in this respect and will of course continue to do so. Equally, 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 LAs – particularly as more and more of our people will in the future be living within local communities and not "behind the wire". So we applaud the intent to review the Community Covenant and to help LAs develop their own plans, sharing more formally than hitherto examples of best practice and providing a framework within which to deliver. Equally, we remain concerned about the risk to sustaining the Community Covenant in the long term as LAs have to focus on other pressing issues within their areas of responsibility in the face of ever more challenging budgetary pressures. It is vital, therefore, that the Covenant message is pushed at every opportunity and that its delivery is kept in the forefront of policy at all levels. We would encourage LAs and Government Departments to formalise processes and systems now as far as possible in order to bake them into future budgetary provision and to further engage with the Families Federations to deepen understanding of modern military life and the issues families face.

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

Healthcare

The Department of Health, NHS England and the Devolved Administrations are all to be applauded for the improvements 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. Embedding the principles of the Covenant in the updated NHS Constitution is an important step in formalising processes and policies, and

creating a single point of access to good quality information should mean the individual is better able to access the most appropriate service for them. We also welcome the intent to identify specialist GP and Armed Forces champions in every Clinical Commissioning Group by summer 2016.

Education

Again, much has been done in the last year to improve understanding of the issues many families and their children face and we are obliged to the DfE for the work they have done, including support for Army families with school age children coming to the UK from Germany under rebasing and, more generally, to smooth the schools admissions process. However, we still hear from families where that process has not been applied appropriately and we note the intent to review the effectiveness of the changes, albeit not until next summer.

We are pleased to see that this report commits to improve awareness of the Service Pupil Premium amongst schools and Service families alike. We recognise that Service families are not always aware of the need to register their children as a Service child and we will continue to work with DfE to spread the message and encourage families to do so.

Accommodation

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation continues to improve service delivery on housing in some respects but it is well recognised that there are still issues, with housing maintenance in particular, that need to be resolved urgently. Too many families in family accommodation report they are dissatisfied with the repairs and maintenance service currently being provided. We are now one year into the new contract, the "honeymoon period" is well over and the contractor needs to deliver in full and be held to account to do so.

We acknowledge the intent to invest nearly £2bn on accommodation but are worried that this might fall at the first hurdle of efficiency savings to be achieved under SDSR. We are hearing more and more from single personnel on issues with Single Living Accommodation (SLA) and it is evident that many of these issues now need to be prioritised. There is still a shocking amount of SLA which is below grade 2 (just over 50%). We would have liked to have seen greater recognition of this within the report and would ask that an update is provided in the next report. The Government and the MOD are both keen to demonstrate how and why the Covenant is relevant to our single personnel – here's a real opportunity to prove it. To have to report in this day and age that only 31% of SLA is to scale 1 is bad enough but that 37% is still at scale 4 is disgraceful. This has real potential to become a significant recruitment and retention issue.

On the plus side, 5,000 personnel have already benefitted from the Help to Buy Scheme and we hope that the trial will prove successful and become policy.

Spouse/Partner Employment.

There is some very valuable work being done to support spouse/partner employment and we are pleased to see that the importance of appropriate training is recognised within that. We are encouraged by the MOD's continued efforts to understand the issues involved, 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 (but see our comments on childcare). 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

On childcare, we still await a MOD policy to be delivered and we are frustrated that the £20m Childcare fund has not yet kicked into action. Our evidence is that the variations in cost of childcare around the country, the cost of "out of hours" care and the limited availability at some of our remote bases is a growing concern, especially where both parents are serving and where parents are based away from wider family support. In turn, this is impacting on other important lifestyle issues – some spouses are not able to work because of childcare costs and availability, for example. We need to listen when our people start telling us that they cannot afford to remain in the Services because of the cost and availability of appropriate childcare.

Commercial Services

Last year we reported that many personnel had told us of the disadvantages they faced in the provision of commercial services due to service in the military, especially, as a result of overseas assignments. These included issues with obtaining mortgages, with insurance and with things like mobile phone contracts. We continue to provide evidence of these issues to the MOD and to the companies involved and we appreciate the considerable efforts made by MOD and the organisations concerned to remove such disadvantage wherever possible. But success is not always guaranteed and we would ask that pressure is maintained to remove disadvantage in this area.

Transition to Civilian Life

Families transition from military life as well as the serving person. The majority do so without any problem but some need support. There is valuable research underway into the issues that cause difficulty and we hope this will evidence what can be done to "nip things in the bud" and prevent them becoming bigger issues after leaving. The three Federations are working with the Forces in Mind Trust to explore how we might help more in this area.

Devolved Authorities and Devolved Authority

We would like to thank the Devolved Administrations for the excellent support they have put into place and for their continued efforts to remove disadvantage. And we acknowledge the particular sensitivities faced in Northern Ireland. We would merely highlight that devolution, and the potential for further devolution within England as well, has the potential to bring with it differences in service provision for our families across the regions – as health service priorities vary, for example. Communicating what services are

available where will be important for families accessing specialist support as they move around the country.

Conclusion

We conclude with a heartfelt “Thank You” on behalf of serving personnel and their families to everybody involved in delivering the Covenant. 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 communicate better the aims and intent of the

Covenant to all Service personnel and their families and to those charged with its delivery at desk level. Sustaining the Covenant in the long term and maintaining support for it will continue to need the commitment, support and hard work of all involved.

Cobseo - The Confederation of Service Charities, War Widows Association and Professor Sir Hew Strachan

We are much encouraged by this very positive report and welcome the considerable effort that has gone into delivering the objectives of the Covenant and the impact that this has had on the lives of members of the Armed Forces Community. We have, however, identified some issues that need to be addressed and some areas that need further work if the objectives of the Covenant are to be met. It is particularly disappointing to see that several of the issues highlighted in these Observations last year do not appear to have been addressed.

We do not underestimate the challenges of coordinating the delivery of the Covenant within a Government structure where responsibilities are increasingly delegated including to the Devolved Administrations, Local Government and a disaggregated NHS. The Devolved Administrations have, inevitably, embraced the Covenant in different ways that suit their own circumstances. We observed last year that there would be merit in formally reviewing the initiatives taken by the Devolved Administrations with a view to identifying best practice which might be embraced more widely across the UK. One issue which has already been identified is the need for some form of umbrella body to bring together the Service charity activity in each of the Devolved Administrations on the lines of Veterans Scotland. Work to encourage and facilitate this in Wales and Northern Ireland is already underway and may, in due course, be extended to the regions within England.

Delivery of many of the key areas in the Covenant is clearly the responsibility of Local, rather than Central, Government. The statement in the Report that two LAs in Northern Ireland have signed the Community Covenant is most welcome news and we would encourage wider support within the Province while recognising the inherent challenges. The Report acknowledges that success in the delivery of the Community Covenant is very mixed across the country with some LAs adopting and implementing the best practice policies included in the RBL manual with great enthusiasm; while others have yet to make much progress at all. There are clear challenges on both sides. Some LAs, anxious to establish links with service personnel from their areas, not least to help them to resettle when they transition out of service, can struggle to make such contacts. Data protection requirements may militate against the free flow of information, but in that case we need to find other ways, with the consent of those concerned, in order to facilitate information flow. Vital here is the training and education of front line staff and this is an area which would benefit from a coordinated UK-wide initiative to build on the regional conferences which took place earlier this year.

An equally important part of this process will be the need for some objective analysis of success in the delivery of the Community Covenant. This 'postcode lottery' is, perhaps, the most fundamental issue in gauging the success of Covenant implementation. Consequently we again urge the introduction of a mechanism - perhaps a review team - to establish exactly what is going on and where, so that best practice may be identified and embraced. The need for such a review is acknowledged in the Report which includes a proposal that this should be conducted by the DCLG and Local Government Association. While such a review process is warmly welcomed, there will be a need to ensure that the review is robustly and objectively delivered.

An important aspect of improving delivery of the Covenant is improving awareness of the Covenant amongst the members of the Armed Forces Community. Current approaches are not working and there remains widespread ignorance of the implications of the Covenant. The proposal that a shorter, more focused, version of the Report should be produced for distribution to serving Servicemen and women and their families is an excellent idea. However, given that most members of the Armed Forces Community are now Veterans and their families, we believe that there would also be merit in including them in the distribution of the shorter version. This will inevitably present an access to data challenge! The non-availability of appropriate relevant data, on data protection and other grounds, has been a major block to enhancing the support available to the wider Armed Forces Community. Acknowledged in the Covenant Reference Group by DWP and other Government Departments, it might be a suitable issue on which to make a significant change of policy.

Progress with a number of medical issues affecting members of the Armed Forces Community are covered in the Report and are most welcome. This includes the statement that the Department of Health has confirmed that funds for the nine Enhanced Prosthetic Centres for Veterans' focused support will continue. The guarantee that the funding will be dedicated to these centres is excellent news as the previous policy, which was subject to the NHS England financial prioritisation process, was causing considerable uncertainty. The ring-fencing of funds for these centres will ensure that they will now be able to recruit and retain staff and operate effectively in the future. We also welcome the Chancellor's recent commitment to fund the Direct Skeletal Fixation programme for serving personnel and veterans, based upon clinical need. The benefits to those with the most complex injuries can be life changing and the NHS evaluation of this pilot programme could have nationwide benefit.

The funding of the hearWELL project and the allocation of £10M of LIBOR funding for hearing aids is also welcome and addresses a major source of service-induced medical disadvantage. However, there remain concerns over the allocation of appropriate compensation by the War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme where compensation assessment still appears to be based on industrial rather than high impact induced hearing levels. Furthermore, a number of other medical issues that reflect disadvantage as a result of service are only addressed as on-going work in progress in the Report. These include non-freezing cold injury and asbestos induced mesothelioma. The latter case is particularly important as it affects an ageing community of mainly Royal Navy veterans who are at risk of dying before receiving their due compensation. Both of these issues deserve more focused attention.

The whole question of compensation for clinical negligence while serving overseas has been completely ignored in the Report despite representing a clear case of disadvantage. The issue has been brought into sharp focus during the year by the case of the spouse

of a serving Serviceman, herself a veteran, who, while based in Germany, was sent by the appropriate NHS foundation trust to the local German hospital for a straight forward operation. The consequence of the conduct of this operation was that she is now disabled, in constant extreme pain and has been forced to give up her job. The lengthy and unsatisfactory legal process that followed resulted in the family having to sell their house to pay the legal fees and they received no compensation for clear clinical negligence. Disappointingly, throughout this process, the MOD declined to offer the family any support whatsoever. While the details of this case are tragic and have been life changing for the family; equally important are the implications for other families serving overseas. If the MOD policy of refusing support to people in these circumstances is to continue, then it is vital that any serving Serviceman or woman and their families based overseas must have the policy clearly explained and must be given the option of returning to the UK for hospital treatment to avoid this potentially very significant disadvantage.

Some concerns were raised in last year's Report over the administration of the War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Schemes across the UK, including in the devolved Tribunals in Scotland and Northern Ireland. It is a source of major concern that appeals are not directly lodged with the Tribunals. They are now the only ones throughout Her Majesty's Court and Tribunal Service which require appeals to be lodged with the respondent organisation, in this case the MOD, rather than directly with the Court or Tribunal. Not only does this cause inevitable delay in dealing with cases, but it also creates a perception that the Tribunal lacks independence.

The recently announced production of a Strategy for Families is warmly welcomed. However, the key ingredient in the successful delivery of any strategy, is the provision of sufficient resources to deliver the relevant objectives. There is considerable doubt about the availability of the necessary resources and there would seem to be merit in reviewing the Families Strategy to ensure that the necessary resources have indeed been allocated. The work to develop a new Families Strategy has brought into sharp focus the state of the current Strategy for Veterans. This document is now significantly out of date as it was produced before the publication of the Armed Forces Covenant and is entirely MOD centric with little consideration of the part played in delivery of the Strategy by other Government Departments. We understand that there is some reluctance in the MOD to address this issue and this is seen as a seriously missed opportunity. The MOD led a valuable review of the current Strategy only last year which led to the production of a new Vision for Veterans but there seems little hope of delivering this Vision without a properly thought through and resourced cross-Government Strategy.

The eventual signing of the New Career Transition Partnership contract with Right Management is also warmly welcomed but many of the key delivery partners within the new structure have still to sign their contracts. In addition, uncertainty remains about the access to support for the new beneficiaries of the programme including the Wounded, Injured and Sick, Early Service Leavers and spouses. This has served to disadvantage a significant cohort of those recently embarking on transition to civilian life.

Concerns also remain about the provision of adapted houses for seriously injured Servicemen and women. The current policy requires that expenditure for the adaptation of a house must 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 a final place of residence. Our Observations last year suggested that the policy needs to be amended to provide more flexibility thereby ensuring that the injured individual is not disadvantaged.

Finally, this Report rightly highlights the many areas where significant progress has been made in delivering the Armed Forces Covenant. Those involved right across Government, including Central Government, the Devolved Administrations and Local Government should be congratulated for their efforts. There do, however, remain a number of issues which continue to inflict serious disadvantage on members of the Armed Forces community which really do need to be addressed if true meaning is to be given to the Covenant. The members of the Confederation of Service Charities, including TRBL, SSAFA, and the War Widows Association; as well as Professor Sir Hew Strachan, stand by to assist this process in any way that they can.

The Royal British Legion

The Legion began campaigning for the Armed Forces Covenant to be enshrined in law in September 2007, since then, as this report demonstrates, enormous progress has been made in the level of support and recognition that members of the Armed Forces and their dependents receive. The Royal British Legion welcomes the opportunity to comment on this year's Report, and on progress made in the last year on a number of Armed Forces Covenant issues which we highlighted.

The establishment of access to credit unions for Service personnel and the extension of the new Career Transition Partnership contract to Early Service Leavers were issues raised by the Legion and are positive developments. We also welcome the implementation, from April 2015, of the announcement on widow(ers) pensions, which was the result of a joint campaign of the Legion, the Forces Pension Society and the War Widows' Association. We look forward to further progress on commitments on tackling alcohol dependency and on improvements to the transfer of medical records of Service personnel. The Legion is happy to be able to administer the new LIBOR-funded schemes on mobility and hearing loss and is grateful for the opportunities being provided to the Armed Forces charity sector through the Aged Veterans Fund and the new Covenant Fund.

It is however disappointing that progress has still to be made on a number of other issues where breaches of the Covenant have been identified, and we look forward to continued discussions with government and resolution of these issues in the near future – namely, full disregard of military compensation when means testing to determine how much an individual has to pay towards their care costs; fair compensation options, comparable to those available to civilians, for veterans suffering mesothelioma; protection of the lifetime income of injured veterans by uprating military compensation on the principle of the 'triple lock'; and investment in research on 'what works' in treating veterans with Gulf War illness. The Legion has also asked the Office for National Statistics to consider the inclusion of a question on veterans in the 2021 Census, a move which would add considerably to the reliability of data in the sector and future planning.

We note and welcome the commitment to improving the effectiveness of Community Covenants, which continues to be a priority for the Legion. Along with our sister charity Poppyscotland, the Legion already works closely with LAs to monitor progress, provide guidance and training, and stands ready to assist further in ensuring commitments are met. From our experience we are not, however, convinced of the case for equivalents of Veterans Scotland to be established in Wales and Northern Ireland.

SSAFA

SSAFA welcomes the opportunity to comment on this Annual Report and, like others, is encouraged by progress. We have already contributed to the issues contained in the broader Cobseo comments which relate to specific pledges and issues and will not repeat them here.

Our one outstanding area of comment relates to the issue of measuring success and gauging progress of the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant. Whilst we welcome proposals to monitor implementation and ensure that commitments are met, there still appears to be a paucity of metrics to actually determine that progress is being made on the ground. We believe it to be vital, if we are to improve and sustain confidence in the Covenant in the Armed Forces and wider communities, that we can show that tangible progress continues to be made. For example, currently, many of the items in the "Table of Commitments" are non-specific and very broad but are described as "complete", but with no supporting evidence to prove this one way or another.

Consequently, whilst it is laudable to highlight progress through individual case studies, it would also be very helpful to have visibility of the broader and more detailed statistics that these assertions are based upon. In addition, we need to be more imaginative in determining how we might best measure the real and tangible impact of the Covenant and find ways to measure what we need to measure rather than only capture that information which is readily available.



CHAPTER 1 – HEALTHCARE

The MOD provides primary healthcare for all Service personnel, families registered with Defence Medical Services (DMS) in the UK, and mobilised Reservists. The NHS in England and the Devolved Administrations are 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 NHS secondary healthcare 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.

What we have done this year to achieve these goals

In line with our commitments last year, the MOD has continued to implement the recommendations of the 2012 Care Quality Commission (CQC) to deliver infrastructure improvements to MOD medical and dental centres. This includes the £1.9 million refurbishment of medical facilities at RNAS Culdrose, and we are working with the CQC to establish independent 3rd party inspections of our treatment facilities to ensure that we are delivering the highest possible standards of care. There is still more to do, and we will continue to improve our medical facilities wherever possible.

This year we have embedded the principles of the Covenant in the updated NHS Constitution, and its accompanying Handbook, which launched on 27 July 2015. In support of this the Armed Forces community health pages on the NHS choices website have been updated so that everyone has a single point of access to good quality information in order to access the most appropriate service for them. In addition dedicated advice is being given to all Service personnel rebasing from Germany to ensure that families know what they need to do; in particular, the need for early engagement with health services if any family member has complex health needs. It is important that the Armed Forces community makes best use of these services to understand how to ensure that the principle of 'no disadvantage' continues to be delivered by the NHS.

We believe that the changes made in December 2013, which provide clear and simple guidance to enable GPs to access Veterans' medical records, are starting to work. There has been a sharp increase in the number of records being requested and earlier this year the system was improved further so that when a Service leaver registers with a GP, their medical summary is automatically sent to that surgery. This summary includes information on vaccinations, allergies, current medication and significant past conditions and reduces the risk of gaps forming in an individual's care. To support this, the family doctors services registration form (GMS1) is being updated to ask everyone joining a surgery whether they have previously served in the Armed Forces. Additionally there are now specific codes that allow health professionals to identify Service families on their medical records. Public Health England (PHE) has also published the Military Family pathway document for health visitors and school nurses. Building on best practice and evidence the guidance not only aims to raise awareness of the needs and challenges children of Service families may face, but supports professionals in improving health outcomes for the child.

There is still more to do and this year NHS England and the Department of Health (DH) have started work with the Service welfare organisations and the MOD to develop a formal protocol which allows direct access by those organisations with the NHS Armed Forces Networks and NHS Regional Teams. This means that any concern or issue raised by a member of the Armed Forces community to the MOD, Service charities or welfare organisations, relating to NHS services in England can be discussed and resolved swiftly and effectively. The Chancellor has also allocated an additional £2 million from LIBOR fines to support the recommendations of the Chavasse Report, a study into improved access to elective orthopaedic care in England for both Regular and Reserve personnel and Veterans. The funding will be used to set up a pilot NHS Specialist Rehabilitation Unit in Stanmore.

In last year's report, Cobseo expressed concern about the provision of support for Veterans with Service-related hearing loss problems. Therefore we have launched the "hearWELL" programme¹ to focus on earlier and better detection of Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL)

¹ The hearWELL programme aims to complete a systematic review of screening systems and risk factors relating to acquired hearing loss and tinnitus; examine functional employment roles; exposure profiles; and risk factors associated with NIHL and tinnitus in Service personnel. hearWELL will also determine the reasons for poor compliance with hearing loss prevention strategies; model the cost effectiveness, acceptability and applicability of identified methods for early detection of NIHL and tinnitus detection in the Service environment; and undertake a pilot clinical trial to examine the efficacy and cost effectiveness of early detection methods.

and its consequences. A £500,000 initial research programme is underway, which includes a therapeutic intervention study into blast-induced hearing loss. Following its campaign, which brought this issue to the attention of Government, The Royal British Legion (TRBL) was also allocated £10 million from LIBOR fines to address service related hearing issues among Veterans. The Veterans Hearing Fund, which launched in November 2015, will last for five years to ensure that all Veterans, wherever they live, can access the very best hearing appliances that are clinically appropriate, where not otherwise provided by the NHS where they live. And to address their concerns regarding Veterans' mobility TRBL was allocated a further £3 million to ensure Veterans can access high specification wheelchairs where this is not provided by the NHS where they live.

The Government has also confirmed that funding (an on-going £6 million a year, embedded into the core NHS England budget) will remain in place to support the provision of enhanced prosthetic devices and services for Veterans who have lost a limb as a result of their service. The Veterans' prosthetics panel in England has now approved 468 applications since its inception, ensuring Veterans receive the very latest prosthetics such as next generation microprocessor knees. £6.7 million has been awarded over two years (2013 -2015) to support the nine disability centres in England providing Veteran specific services, and the Devolved Administrations have stated their intention to provide Veterans with Service attributable injuries requiring prosthetics, with prosthetics that match the quality of those provided to serving personnel. The MOD continues to work closely with NHS England and the Devolved Administrations and key partners such as Blesma (the limbless Veterans charity) to ensure that serving and Veteran amputees have access to the appropriate support both while serving and in transition to civilian life.

In last year's report we committed to publish the first report on the causes of deaths amongst Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts in 2015-16. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen resource issues, this will now be published next year. The 600,000 cohort has been identified, information governance arrangements completed and data is being gathered. In response to Cobseo's concerns on Non-Freezing Cold Injury we have reinforced the guidance issued to soldiers and the Chain of Command on protection and prevention of Non-Freezing Cold Injury and commissioned Prof David Bennett at Oxford, one of the UK's leading experts on the subject, to provide further insights into the development of the condition and how it can be prevented.

This study will report in three years to allow sufficient participants for this study to be scientifically robust. On Cobseo's concerns about asbestos induced Mesothelioma, the MOD is currently considering whether a lump sum can be provided for future Mesothelioma claimants and we will report on this in due course.

In last year's report, the Families Federations stressed that families serving overseas should, as far as reasonably practicable, be able to access the same level and breadth of treatment that their civilian counterparts in the UK can access. This statement related particularly to difficulties accessing dentistry/orthodontic treatment for children. We aspire to support all Defence personnel overseas with a level of care that is equitable to NHS standards and entitlement. Where we believe that treatment is not of sufficient standards, we will not hesitate to advise return to UK. This can sometimes be inconvenient to the patient and so we aim to balance medical and non-medical issues. Where shortfalls or problems arise, we act quickly to respond. This has included recently obtaining support from a commercial healthcare manager (Healix) to help manage the care of patients.

DMS have engaged with NHS England (and the other Devolved Administrations) under the agreement of the MOD/Dh/NHS England Partnership Board to transfer Cervical Cytology

to individual Healthcare authorities. This is in line with the services that the NHS provides for all UK personnel and supports the explicit strategy for the NHS to deliver healthcare services to Armed Forces Personnel.

To date NHS England, NHS Wales and NHS Scotland have transferred and fully integrated Cervical Cytology services into national services. NI is due to begin a transfer of services in the new year.

DMS continues to deliver cervical cytology to service personnel and their families overseas through a separate contract.

Out Of Hours (OOH) services is normally a service provided by Clinical Commissioning Groups in England. DMS in the past have contracted locally to provide OOH services for Service personnel. Over the past year DMS have worked with NHS England in order to transfer responsibility for OOH to NHS England. This has now been mostly completed.



Picture of the team winning the education, training and research awards at last year's National Military and Civilian Health Partnership Awards

The award winning Sussex Armed Forces Network (SAFN) is a multi- organisational group with membership from the NHS, MOD, Reservists, clinicians and Service charities. Initiated in 2011, the group's vision is to enable the community and local Clinical Commissioning Groups as a whole to provide excellent support to the Armed Forces community across Sussex, helping to deliver the commitments of the Armed Forces Covenant.

An integral part of the vision was to establish a network of champions who would be able to support and advise the Armed Forces community, but also collectively help individuals across boundaries. There are now over 100 champions in Sussex, from a range of backgrounds. Starting with mainly mental health organisations, membership has now expanded to include County Councillors, probation service, musculoskeletal services, mental health, substance misuse, charities and other statutory organisations' staff. The

network formed from these champions is helping to break down barriers and make vital connections throughout the community.

Two champion coordinators, who have experience in mental health and come from a Service background, support the network to enable the initial two day training programme, on-going learning, focused mental health events and other specific sector training that might be required. The experience, passion and knowledge they offer to the champions and network is invaluable, helping to ensure the model in Sussex is sustainable and embedded for the future. The team has also developed several products to aid local clinicians including a GP fact sheet and a specific needs assessment.

The wider network and champions have all been engaged in the development of the recent community Covenant funded pathway guidance documents, which cover employment; social care; rough sleeping; physical health; mental health and housing and include information on the local services offered by public, private and voluntary organisations.

As well as training for champions, SAFN has produced an eLearning package that can be accessed via their website and is open to anyone who has an interest and wants to raise their awareness of the issues faced by the Armed Forces community. The package initially covered mental health issues which has now been expanded to include carers and there are further plans to develop modules on education, families and housing.

Kate Parkin, Director, Sussex Collaborative, Lead Sussex Armed Forces Network

"It is very exciting and rewarding how the Sussex Armed Forces Network is moving forward. The learning, development and sharing across the network has reinforced cross-organisational working and enabled the breaking down of barriers to support individuals (Veterans, Reservists and their families) to be helped in a way that meets their specific needs."

For more information on the outstanding work SAFN is undertaking please visit: <http://www.sussexarmedforcesnetwork.nhs.uk/>

Mental Health

The Government is committed to improving the mental health of our Service personnel and Veterans. All Armed Forces personnel are supported by dedicated and comprehensive medical services, including mental health support. Diagnosis and treatment of mental illness in the Armed Forces is performed by fully trained and accredited mental health personnel. Mental health in serving personnel and Veterans is as good as, and in most areas better than, the civilian population. However, we are not complacent and continue to work hard to improve the mental health and wellbeing of serving personnel.

The UK Armed Forces Mental Health Annual Report provides statistical information and trends over time on mental health in the UK Armed Forces. The most recent report has revealed a steady increase in assessments for mental disorders at MOD Specialist Mental Health Services, from 1.8% of UK Armed Forces personnel in 2007-08, to 2.9% in 2014-15. It is unclear what proportion of this rise is due to the success of anti-stigma campaigns, and what proportion is a true rise in mental health disorders.

Our mental health services are configured to provide community-based mental health care in line with national best practice, primarily through our network of 16 Departments of Community Mental Health (DCMH) across the UK (plus centres overseas) which provide outpatient treatment. When in-patient care is necessary, it is provided in eight dedicated psychiatric units around the UK through a central contract led by South Staffordshire and Shropshire Foundation Trust. Close liaison is maintained between local DCMHs and the in-patient providers to ensure that all Service elements relating to inpatient care and management are addressed. These arrangements mean that the majority of our patients can be treated much closer to their parent units than when MOD maintained its own psychiatric hospitals.

This year we have committed £5 million of LIBOR money to Project ADVANCE Plus, a five year study into the psychological impact of battlefield injuries and severe battlefield trauma. Additionally Phase 4 of the Kings College for Military Health Research study, looking at the Armed Forces personnel (including Reserves) who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and the effect their deployment had on their health and well-being post-Service, will conclude in 2016. Research also continues in conjunction with the US Department of Defense into a possible Mental Health Screening Tool which may help assess whether personnel are likely to be affected by PTSD. This research will report by the end of this year, and MOD will then consider its content.

In last year's report, Cobseo expressed concerns over nationwide access to mental health support.

NHS England is completing an audit of the Veterans' mental health services put in place following the 'Fighting Fit' report by Dr Andrew Murrison MD MP in 2010. The aim was to capture and build on best practice and ensure that high quality evidenced based mental health services are available to all Veterans across England. NHS England is currently analysing the findings with a view to refreshing Veterans' mental health services from 2016. The Government provided an additional £1.68 million in 2015-16 to enhance mental health services for Veterans in England and this has been spent on reducing stigma and improving the management of complex care for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and/or dual diagnosis cases. A further £8.4 million dependent on the outcomes of the spending review) has been provided over the next five years to help NHS England reach the most vulnerable members of this community. Additionally Health Education England's (HEE) 2015-16 mandate, Improving Veterans' health commitments, aims to improve the learning and training packages available to GPs and health professionals raising awareness of, Veterans' health needs across primary, secondary and community care settings.

Working in partnership the Department of Health, Public Health England, NHS England, NHS Employers and Health Education England launched the NHS Reservists' champions and NHS Reserves' support programmes.

Healthcare Statistics

Regular Armed Forces personnel have continued to be satisfied with their access to and treatment received from Service provided medical and dental care (Table A1)

The majority of UK Armed Forces families continue to be able to access GPs (including nurses/midwife) and dental treatment (Table A2). Access to dental treatment was significantly² lower (87%), in 2015, for those who moved for Service reasons compared

² A statistical test has shown the difference is not due to random chance.

to those who did not move (93%) however, the reduction is relatively small and will continue to be monitored. [Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2015]

The ability to continue GP, nurse and midwife treatment at a new location if posted has continued to be high; however, the ability to continue dental treatment is lower. (Table A3).

Table 1: UK Regular Armed Forces Personnel Satisfaction¹ with Service medical care, 2010-2015, percentages²

UK regular Armed Forces Personnel satisfaction with:	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Access to medical care when needed	79	79	79	79	79	81
Medical Treatment	..	..	..	..	..	77
Medical Facilities	79	80	80	80	81	..
Way treated by medical staff	78	79	78	79	80	..
Effectiveness of medical treatment	71	72	72	72	72	..
Access to dental care when needed	..	..	..	..	..	83
Dental treatment	85	87	86	85	86	87

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2015 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

1. Refers to satisfaction over past two years
2. Excludes note applicable responses

Table 2: UK Armed Forces Families access to medical care¹, 2012-2015, percentages^{2,3,4}

UK Armed Forces Spouses/Dependants:	2012	2013	2014	2015
Access to GP (including nurse/midwife)	97	96	96	98
Access to dentist	88	89	90	91
Hospital or specialist services	..	..	..	98

Source: Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2014 and 2015 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

1. Refers to access over the last 12 months
2. 2012-2014 – excludes N/A
3. 2015 - Includes 'Yes, without difficulties' and 'Yes, but with some difficulties'; Excludes missing and 'No, I did not need to' responses
4. Break in time series due to change in response options and population reported on

Table 3: UK Armed Forces Families medical care if moved^{1,2}, 2012-2015, percentages

If moved in past 12 months:	2012	2013	2014	2015
Were able to continue with GP treatment ²	93	90	92	96
Were able to continue with dental treatment ²	79	70	74	75
Were able to continue with Hospital or Specialist Services ²	..	..	..	91
Previous wait time did not increase ^{3,4}	39	42	38	37

Source: Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2014 and 2015 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

1. Includes: if moved for own reasons and; if due to Service
2. Refers to whether spouses/dependants were able to continue treatment in new location if moved
3. Operation or consultant appointment
4. Reminder of responses are 'No', 'Don't Know' and 'not applicable'
5. Break in time series due to change in population reported on
6. Numbers based on a small subset: people who have moved and needed to continue treatment

Healthcare from a Devolved Perspective

Scotland

- The allocation of **Community Health Index (CHI)** numbers has been an essential element of providing equity of access to the NHS in Scotland for Serving personnel. In order to produce a more efficient and safer service the electronic synchronisation between the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system and the allocation of CHI has been progressed during the past year. Currently the testing of the system is in the final stages and will go live by the end of the year.
- **Scottish Care Information Gateway (SCI):** The installation of hardware to ensure that Military Health Centres have access to the same system as any Scottish GP is now complete and the additional training to extend the range of access is on-going. The aim is to ensure that the Military Health Centres have the same access to the system as any Scottish GP.
- **Roll-out of Veterans First Point model and LIBOR Funding:** The expertise and knowledge developed by Veterans First Point Lothian (a one-stop-shop drop-in centre for any Veterans' issue, providing clinical, welfare, housing and other support) informed the Scottish Government's mental health strategy commitment to explore the development of similar services in other areas of Scotland. NHS Lothian secured £2.5 million Armed Forces Covenant (LIBOR) funding to support the commitment and established Veterans First Point Scotland to work with local partnerships to explore how the strengths of the Lothian service could be delivered in other localities with evaluation, training and other support from the national hub. Over the last year, work has been taken forward in ten health board areas across Scotland to assist each local area establish key partnerships, identify premises, plan requirements and recruit and select staff. The first service in Tayside became fully operational in mid-September, with the others to follow.
- On **Specialist mental health services**, in partnership with NHS Scotland and Combat Stress, the Scottish Government recently renewed funding for the provision of specialist mental health services for Veterans resident in Scotland at the Combat Stress facility, Hollybush House, in Ayr. £1.2 million per year over three years to 2018 will fund a range of specialist clinical, rehabilitation, social and welfare support at the facility. Evidence based treatment programmes include an intensive PTSD programme; and trans- diagnostic programme; stabilisations and anger management programmes
- On prosthetics, Scotland provides a **State of the art National Specialist Prosthetics (SOTA) Service:** This is well established and working well through a single multi-disciplinary team approach across two specialist centres (Edinburgh and Glasgow) with links to all other limb fitting centres in the country. The relationship with the Personnel Recovery Unit continues to be very positive.

Wales

Priority care & Treatment Policy for Veterans

- The Welsh Government continues to remind those providing health care services of their obligation to offer priority treatment and care for Veterans whose health

problems result from their service. This commitment has been reiterated at regular intervals, for example in the Veterans' e-learning module produced for primary care staff.

- Champions for Veterans and Armed Forces have been established on every Local Health Board (LHB) and NHS Trust in Wales. They advocate for Veterans and Service personnel to ensure their needs are reflected in local service plans and will improve links between health and social care, Veterans' groups and the UK Government. Throughout 2014-15, Cervical Screening
- Wales has worked with colleagues in the Ministry of Defence to integrate the cervical screening service offered to Service women and their dependants into the mainstream cervical screening programme offered to all eligible women in Wales. Around 400 women's care will transfer into NHS Wales as a result; the women themselves should see no change in the service they receive. The new service went live on 1 October 2015, with a joint Cervical Screening Wales/Ministry of Defence review scheduled for November 2015 to ensure all is progressing as planned.
- In Wales, Veterans can access the Veterans NHS Wales service. Veterans who think they may be suffering from PTSD can refer themselves to the service or can access it through other organisations such as The Royal British Legion (TRBL), Soldiers Sailors Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) and the Veterans Welfare Service (VWS). This Service provides dedicated Veteran therapists in each Health Board area and additional local access to specialist outpatient care for Veterans with mental health problems, such as PTSD. It can also help signpost Veterans and their families to other support they may require, such as substance misuse services. The Veterans and Reserves Mental Health Programme (VRMHP), formerly known as the Medical Assessment Programme (MAP), continues to support referrals and self-referrals. It is available to all Veterans (including Reservists) and provides access to consultants with the knowledge and skills of a military background. Access and referral to the VRMHP is available either via a Service person's GP, Mental Health Professional or by self-referral via their LHB.
- The Welsh Government has improved access to psychological therapies during 2015-16. A national action has also been commissioned which will enable health boards to ensure consistent provision of talking therapies. The funding will support the delivery of therapies - such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and mindfulness - for people of all ages, and will include psychological therapies for Veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.
- The Welsh Government has also committed to ensuring that Veterans receive the same quality prosthetic limbs as Service personnel. LHBs and the three Artificial Limb and Appliance Centres (ALACs), situated in Cardiff, Swansea and Wrexham, are aware of this. The Welsh Government, working with the MOD, has also developed a transition protocol and pathway for injured/ill Service personnel leaving the Armed Forces and being discharged into Wales. A Wales-specific care pathway is included in the UK-wide transition protocol. The scheme includes the transfer of medical records from MOD to GPs.
- The Welsh Government has been fully involved with the strategic development of Veterans hearing Fund. The fund to ensure that Welsh resident Veterans will

have opportunity to access the fund. All applications for VHF will be completed and submitted by an audiologist further to assessment and confirmation that no statutory funding is available.

- There has been a significant improvement in the availability of NHS dentistry in recent years, particularly in the areas where the majority of military personnel and their families are based. Welsh Government is committed to improve access where difficulties remain.
- To ensure that no members of the Armed Forces are disadvantaged by being based in Wales, the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee were asked by Welsh Government to work with partners to develop a draft referral Pathway for serving personnel requiring secondary care, in line with their commitments under the UK Covenant.
- The MOD Fast-track process for Wales, is an all Wales service which prioritises access to treatments for Armed Service personnel who are actively serving but are currently graded as medically non-deployable (MND). The process aims to facilitate earlier return to a medically fully deployable (MFD) status.

Northern Ireland

- In **Northern Ireland**, “Delivering Healthcare to the Armed Forces - A Protocol for Ensuring Equitable Access to Health and Social Care Services” established that the Health service in Northern Ireland must be responsive to the different needs of different populations including those serving in the Armed Forces, their families and Veterans. It established a framework of assurance which ensures that serving members of the Armed Forces, their families and Veterans suffer no disadvantage in accessing health and social care services and have equality of access to these services in common with everyone living in Northern Ireland. Secondary Healthcare of Service personnel is provided under contract and allows for those entitled to access a fast track diagnosis and treatment pathway of 10 and 18 weeks respectively. This has the additional benefit of aiding the maintenance of personal security whilst accessing NHS facilities.
- The Armed Forces Liaison Forum (AFLF), consisting of representatives of each of the groups covered by the protocol was established to assess the effectiveness of the arrangements for identifying and meeting the health and social care needs of Armed Forces personnel, their families and Veterans.
- **Department of Health (DH) – Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) e-learning package.** HEE has taken over responsibility for the e-learning package from RCGP and is currently updating it. The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) is working with HEE to deliver options for sharing the e-learning package with its officials so that it can be tailored specifically for use with GPs across Northern Ireland.
- Throughout Northern Ireland there is a range of specialists and general health and social care services provided by voluntary organisations which members of the Armed Forces, Veterans or their families can access. The Veterans’ community, working locally with the MOD, has developed a ‘Northern Ireland Veterans Handbook’, which acts as a quick reference guide setting out the services available

to Veterans and their families across Northern Ireland. The UDR & R IRISH (HS) Aftercare Service has issued copies of this handbook to all GPs in Northern Ireland.

- On **IVF**, specialist fertility services for the Northern Ireland population are commissioned from the Regional Fertility Centre (RFC) in the Belfast Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust. Patients are entitled to a single cycle of In Vitro Fertilisation / Intra- Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection (IVF/ICSI) and, since April 2012, to associated Frozen Embryo Transfer (FET) services. NICE Clinical Guideline 156 on fertility treatment, which recommends three cycles of treatment, has been endorsed by DHSSPS. Where Service medical professionals feel there is a need, Service personnel can be referred for additional treatments in mainland Britain if required.
- Members of the Armed Forces, their families and Veterans benefit from service developments and improvements in community and inpatient mental health services, in line with the Department's Armed Forces Healthcare protocol published in 2009. The development of these services in Northern Ireland has been a Ministerial priority over recent years, underpinned with considerable investment particularly in the areas of community mental health services and psychological therapy services.
- The Psychological Therapies Strategy (published 2010) recommended that psychological therapies should be a core component of mental health services, including providing psychological care for people with PTSD. Recent investment has been focused on the training of existing staff in psychological therapies and the establishment of Primary Care Talking Therapies Hubs.
- Primary Care Talking Therapies Hubs bring together GPs, Mental Health Clinicians and Third Sector Providers into a single service consortium. These primary care hubs will improve access to low intensity psychological care and help deliver more effective intervention at an early stage. They are now being rolled out across each Trust area in Northern Ireland. The MOD continues to work with Combat Stress, the Departments of Health in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure that Veterans receive the best possible mental healthcare. The Health & Social Care Board has agreed a care pathway for Veterans in NI to access the residential treatment service in Scotland provided by Combat Stress.
- The UDR & R IRISH Aftercare Service continues to offer UDR & R IRISH personnel/ Veterans access to psychological therapy services provided through a local voluntary sector provider. Dedicated Physiotherapy services are additionally provided through contract services. In conjunction with the Northern Ireland Veterans Support Committee, they have recently teamed up with the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) and secured funding for research by academics at University of Ulster, Coleraine, to conduct local research into Veteran's mental health issues. This is a three year study, the anticipated benefits of which are an improved understanding of the numbers of Veterans residing in Northern Ireland, their needs and any gaps in existing services. An additional FiMT funded study by University of Ulster into the impact on personnel of counter-insurgency operations, which is not associated with the Aftercare Service is also running concurrently.
- On **prosthetics**, rehabilitation services in NI have been delivered since 2013 as part of the NI Regional Disablement Service who specialise in the rehabilitation of

patients of all ages, including Veterans, who have had an amputation of a limb or limbs.

- The specification for prosthesis prescription in NI is assessed on a systematic, incremental basis, but a final prescription is based solely on the best fit and best outcome for the client, commensurate with their assessed clinical need. All prostheses and the client's subsequent rehabilitation are assessed on clinical need.
- DHSSPS has been able to ensure that all members of the Armed Forces, past and present, who have been injured in Iraq or Afghanistan, are able, where clinical conditions indicate it appropriate, to access state-of-the-art microprocessor limbs.

Summary of 2015 Deliverables

The NHS in England **embedded** the Covenant principle of no disadvantage in its constitution.

NHS England made available a summary of their Serving medical history to the GPs of newly registered Veterans.

NHS England integrated the OOH services and cervical screening of Serving personnel in England, improving quality and consistency and ensuring no disadvantage.

The MOD **made** a number of improvements to DMS medical and dental centres, including the **£1.9m million** refurbishment of medical facilities at RNAS Culdrose, and new initiatives to better manage the DMS estate.

The MOD is **developing** a programme to focus on earlier and better detection of Noise induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) and its consequences; a **£500,000** initial research programme has begun.

The DH **confirmed that funding** of £6M per annum for nine enhanced prosthetic centres for Veterans focussed services will continue.

The Government provided an additional £1.68 million in 2015-16 to enhance mental health services for Veterans in England.

The Government, through LIBOR funds allocated The Royal British Legion £10 million to launch a Veterans' hearing fund and allocated a further £3 million to help Veterans access high specification wheelchairs. Both will provide services and equipment not currently provided by the NHS in the area where they live.

Public Health England, working with partners, launched the Military Families pathway guidance for health professionals, which aims to support Service families and recognise the specific needs which may arise, particularly around mental health and wellbeing.

DH, Public Health England, NHS England, NHS Employers and Health Education England launched the NHS Reservists' champions and NHS Reserves' support programmes.

The Government allocated an additional £2 million to establish a pilot NHS Specialist Rehabilitation Unit in Stanmore to provide improved access to orthopaedic care in England for Regular and Reservist personnel and Veterans.

The DH and NHS England updated the Armed Forces community pages of the NHS choices website to create a single point of access to good quality information.

The Government allocated £5million to Project ADVANCE Plus, a study which, over the next five years, will conduct research into the psychological impact of battlefield injuries and severe battlefield trauma.

2015 Report Commitments

The DMS will work with the Care Quality Commission to agree an on-going schedule of inspections that will include a cross section of DMS Medical Treatment Facilities on an annual basis in order to provide the DMS with external scrutiny and 3rd party validation.

DH and NHS England will work closely with HEE to provide a robust framework for the delivery of improved learning packages to identify specialist GP and Armed Forces Champions in every Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) by summer 2016.



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 mobility for Service reasons; and
- Service personnel should expect to receive appropriate training and education for both personal and professional development.

What we have done this year to achieve these goals

In line with our commitments in last year's report we have:

- Identified 36 childcare infrastructure projects within the UK, and four in Cyprus. Funding ranges from £8,000 to enhance the indoor and outdoor space at an existing facility in Tidworth, to £2 million to build a brand new facility in Cyprus. Work on these projects will start shortly.
- Further amended the code for the allocation of state-funded school places in England so that places can be allocated to Service families in advance of them moving into the area, and to prioritise Service children in the admissions process. We will review the effectiveness of these changes in Summer 2016 to ensure that Service families are not being disadvantaged through the interpretation of the schools admissions code.
- Allocated £20.7 million in financial year 2015-16 to support the pastoral needs of circa 69,000 Service pupils attending state schools in England through the Service Pupil Premium (SPP). This includes children of parents who have died or have been injured in service, and children whose parents have left the Services for other reasons or who divorce since first becoming eligible for the Service Pupil Premium. The MOD is scoping research on looking at attainment and progression of Service children. Any research work undertaken is likely to be completed in 2016, due to contract lead times.
- Promoted the SPP to schools by distributing the top 10 uses of SPP fundin to the Service Children In State Schools (SCISS) network. We have promoted the premium with Service families but more needs to be done and this will continue to be a priority next year.
- Issued further advice on Term Time Absence for Service children to Head Teachers in England, who are part of the SCISS network. The advice gives additional guidance on when the operational needs of the Armed Forces may legitimately prevent Service families from taking leave during the school holidays. Separate advice has also been provided to Service personnel detailing how they should present evidence when making a request.

- The DfE briefed all Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) and LAs (LAs) on the Covenant and the duties or provisions under it to support Service children and their families. Ensuring that schools understand how Service children can be affected in more ways than just the admissions process.

Our long term focus is ensuring that the unique needs of children from Service families are fully understood by education providers. We have therefore continued to promote the needs of service children through the SCISS network and support schools throughout the UK through the MOD's Education Support Fund (ESF). Now in its sixth year, the fund helps to mitigate issues caused by exceptional mobility and deployment. **Since the fund started in 2011 the ESF has supported over 700 applications with £21 million of funding.**

In 2015 grants were issued to 154 applicants to help over 24,500 children from Service families for a wide variety of initiatives including transition packs, counselling, nurturing support and a Service family support worker for a cluster of schools. Under the Education of Service Children Change Programme (ESCCP) we have also continued to facilitate familiarisation visits between LAs and schools within the UK receiving children from Germany. These visits have allowed teaching staff to get to know the pupils, and families to ask LAs and schools about the areas they are moving to. The ESCCP continues to develop based on feedback from this year's events. **During 2015, 1,200 children from Service families have successfully transitioned back to the UK.** The ESCCP is also assessing the most appropriate method of delivering the future operating model for MOD schools. Work is on-going with recommendations likely to be made in 2016.

In England the University of Winchester is undertaking a programme of work to improve our understanding of the factors that impact on Service children's progression to higher education, both locally and nationally. We are working closely with the University on this work with the aim of sharing any best practice or resources that the project develops. The work is in its infancy but is due to complete in summer 2016 and report soon thereafter. We have also worked with the State Boarding Schools' Association to develop a marketing campaign to encourage Service parents to consider state schools when looking at boarding options for their child. The campaign is underway this autumn, aimed at admissions in September 2016.

Alderman Pounder Infant and Nursery School. In 2014 we received funding from the MOD Education Support Fund for a project to excite and motivate children to be life-long learners, to have a passion for reading and to boost their self-confidence.

As a school with an increasing number of Service families we have become increasingly aware of the impact that Service life can have on children. Having already established a 'Pod Squad', which provides supportive small group time for our children from Service families, we wanted to go further. We had a vision for a library, with a difference!

Following the generous donation of a bendy bus from Nottingham City Transport and with massive support from friends (including those from the local barracks), parents, staff and their families, we have created an amazing reading experience for all our children – and parents. Our new 'bus' library has already enthused old and young about reading and has had an impact on other aspects of learning, such as creative writing. By placing the bus in the playground we have sent a strong message that reading is fun and hope to support our school community to build family patterns of reading together.



Children from Alderman Pounder Infant and Nursery School Chilwell, Nottingham

Getting 'lost in a book' can help any of us to detach from difficult situations and offer us a sense of peace during times of worry. Our experience is that when children become confident readers they become confident learners. A 'bus' has given an immediate 'wow' factor, appealing to all ages and both sexes.

The books have been arranged into 'zones' linked to our curriculum areas, such as transport, people who help us, poetry, plants, celebrations, etc. Each zone has a very different 'look', and many of the original bus features have been maintained, making it a library like no other!

By taking an inventory of current books in school and entering that information into a child-friendly piece of library software we have been able to target buying new books and will also be able to monitor children's reading habits.

Our bus, Bob 3715 (Books on Board, opened in July 2015) is the start of a new journey for all of us!



Children from Arden Forest Infant School

Arden Forest Infant School in Warwickshire received funding from the MOD to enhance our outdoor learning environment. "Children from Service families play an important part in our nurturing school. Our carefully planned provision ensures that Service pupils settle into our routines and make good progress that matches or exceeds that of their cohort."

The funding has made a significant difference to the provision we are able to offer. We have been able to provide bespoke, personalised

learning, ensuring that the pupils make progress in speaking and listening and creative skills. Through this provision they have accessed the new curriculum in a fun and creative way enabling them to develop their personal, social and emotional skills too. Pupils have thrived on the opportunity to learn outdoors. One pupil commented on how they “enjoyed learning outside because you get to grow things.” The equipment purchased has been an asset to the whole school and has complemented our curriculum tremendously.

Military Ethos Alternative Provision Programme – building a brighter future for our next generation. In 2014, DfE grant funded the programme with a total of £4.8 million. Over 50,000 pupils from 460 schools participated including over 16,000 pupils described by their schools as disengaged or having behavioural issues, and 1,300 pupils in Alternative Provision or excluded. The providers are Challenger Troop, Commando Joes, Cadet



Improving learning in the classroom

Vocational Qualification Organisation (CVQO, KSA, SkillForce, The Prince’s Trust and Training 2000. The projects use over 300 ex-Service men and women, working in close partnership with schools, employers, and their community, to help pupils to develop traits such as self-discipline, self-confidence, respect and leadership so they can thrive in school and beyond.



Building a community space

All projects reported examples of effectiveness in the classroom and beyond. Teachers, parents and pupils described how these projects have had a positive impact on the confidence, self-esteem, self-respect and inter-personal skills of those involved, the type of skills which will help pupils thrive in higher or further education and in the world of work. Teachers also described how pupils who had previously been disengaged were now actively participating in school life. The programme consistently achieves positive press coverage.

Matthew 37, applied to join the Army as soon as he was 18 and he was accepted as a foot soldier with the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment, based at Tidworth in Hampshire. He had some amazing experiences during his 19 years, with tours in Canada, Afghanistan, several in Northern Ireland and an exchange with American soldiers in Washington.

One of his postings was to work at Combined Cadet Forces (CCFs) in the Nottingham area, and this gave Matthew the idea of working with young people



Matthew Burrell (CVQO School Instructor)

once he left the Army. He came out in April 2013 and spent six months on the resettlement course offered to soldiers who have put in a minimum number of years. While on the course, the CVQO position was advertised and Matthew applied immediately and was delighted to be offered one of the positions.

The job has proved a great vehicle for Matthew to pass on just a few of the skills that he learned during his time with the military. These have included building shelters in the local woods, outdoor cooking and survival skills. The students have also been to an outdoor activity centre and visited local cadet units.

Matthew believes that the using military ethos really works for most of these young people, saying: "When one of the students was continually disruptive, they were removed from the course. This may seem harsh however it demonstrated to the other students that we meant what we said, and from then on everyone else's behaviour improved considerably. We are strict but fair and the students have come to respect this."

James Dawson
An ex-serviceman from Sheffield who was injured in the line of duty is being enabled, by funding from Help for Heroes, to help unemployed young people gain confidence and develop employability skills with the UK's leading youth charity, The Prince's Trust.



Twenty-nine year old James Dawson has gone from serving in the army to becoming a Team Leader on The Prince's Trust Team programme in Sheffield. The 12 week personal development programme, supported by Barclays, celebrates its 25th anniversary this summer and has supported 187,000 young people nationwide since it launched in 1990.

James is of one over 100 wounded servicemen and women to have benefitted from the partnership between Help for Heroes and The Prince's Trust. Now in its 5th year, Help for Heroes has awarded £537,755 to support the placements of Wounded, Injured and Sick (WIS) military personnel on The Prince's Trust programmes, benefitting over 1000 young people around the UK. In the army for over eight years, James received a medical discharge after suffering serious injuries to his leg. Back at a recovery centre in the UK, he was feeling anxious about the future.

"I was expecting to be in the army for at least the next 20 years, after the medical discharge I was thoroughly demoralised. I had no idea what to do next." It was during this time that James was approached by someone who worked for The Trust. Now responsible for delivering the Team programme for 16-25 year olds at Sheffield College, James and his teams have completed numerous community projects to improve their local area.

As a young person, James often found himself in trouble before enrolling in the army. Suffering from problems at home, he fell in with the wrong crowd. Whilst studying at sixth form, James was even offered an unconditional place to study science at Sheffield

University. However, he left education without ever taking up the place. “My life was perfectly laid out for me but I was rebellious, I went down the wrong track.” James feels this rebellious streak as a teenager coupled with his recent military career have helped him address issues facing young people he works with. Keen to pass on the knowledge he’s gained from his own experiences, James is determined to use what he’s learned to help disadvantaged young people create a positive future for themselves, crediting Team as the place to do so.

What more we plan to do

The Department for Education (DfE) acknowledges that there may remain some isolated issues of implementation over some of its policies. There is also a suggestion that some Service families are unaware of processes and provisions that have been put in place to support them. In response to this information, using the location data from Service family feedback, the Department for Education will:

- Work with MOD to identify local authority areas in England where issues remain and to target these specifically e.g. through working with RSCs and LAs to remind them of these changes and how they and their schools should respond;
- The DfE and the MOD will work with the Service Families Federations to help inform policy proposals and raise awareness of what they can expect from schools.
- Provide further opportunity, through programmes such as Military Ethos Alternative Provision, which employs over 300 Veterans and Troops to Teachers, to give Service leavers valuable career opportunities and provide schools with an insight into Service life and the needs of Service families;
- Work with Devolved Administrations to share our thinking, proposed activities and best practice. We will work directly with the Scottish Government to understand the impact on children moving between different education systems.
- Update the Pupil Information Profile document to reflect feedback from stakeholders and ensure the secure transfer of Service children’s data, particularly with regards to information transfer for children from Service families with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Cadets

The MOD sponsors four Cadet Forces (military-themed youth organisations) with around 131,000 cadets, 27,000 adult volunteers and 3,300 cadet units. The key benefits include the personal and social development of young people; raising awareness of Defence and the Armed Services; and raising awareness of career opportunities in the Services, both regular and Reserves.

The joint MOD/DfE Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP) achieved its target of establishing 100 new cadet units in English state secondary schools in March 2015, six months ahead of the September 2015 deadline. In the Summer Budget in July 2015, the Chancellor committed £50 million of LIBOR fines to increase further the number of cadet units in schools by around 145, bringing the total number of these units to 500 by 2020. These new

units will be targeted primarily at less affluent areas and areas where there is currently limited access to cadet provision.



Thomas Deacon Academy is a large inner-city comprehensive which opened in Peterborough in 2007. The school has 2,250 students in years 7-13, relatively high levels of social disadvantage and a higher than average number of students who speak English as an additional language.

CEO and Principal, **Julie Taylor** said;

“At a previous Ofsted inspection, we were rated as ‘requires improvement’, but at our most recent inspection this was increased two levels to ‘good’. The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) – along with the hard work and commitment of our staff and students, played a valuable part in this, as it has in so many aspects of our school right from the outset.

“The Thomas Deacon CCF, which has Army and RAF sections, was established at the same time as the Academy itself. The board at the time had looked at what worked well in the independent sector, and recognised that having a CCF could have a positive influence on the Academy’s ethos, and decided to build it into its culture from the start.

“It’s an approach that has been very successful. Thomas Deacon is now well known and respected in the local community for its CCF, and this has in turn helped to attract both potential students and their parents – so many that the school is now oversubscribed. Parents tell me that the CCF is synonymous with good standards of behaviour and discipline, which they find particularly appealing.”

Because of the Academy’s positive experience with its CCF, it is now partnering with three nearby schools which intend setting up their own units in the future under the Cadet Expansion Programme.

Education Statistics

Since 2012 there has continued to be no difference, in England, in the level of attainment achieved, at Key Stage 2 and 4, by Service children when compared to non-Service children who do not receive Free School Meals (Table 4).

In terms of educational attainment all children in England are disadvantaged when they move school (Table 6), however Service children are more likely to attend more than one secondary school when compared to non-Service children who not receive Free School Meals (Table 5).

Between 2011 and 2014 of the UK Armed Forces families whose child(ren) changed schools, just under a quarter had difficulties obtaining a place at the school of choice (Table 7). Obtaining a school of choice is more of an issue for those who move for Service reasons (28%) compared to those who move for other reasons (14%) [FAMCAS 2015]

In 2015 access to further, or higher, education was more difficult for those families who moved due to Service reasons than for those who did not move (Table 8)

Table 4: Education attainment for Service and non-Service children¹, 2011-2014, percentages²

% achieved acceptable level:		2011	2012	2013	2014
KS2 ³	Service children		75	79	80
	non-Service children		78	79	82
KS4 ⁴	Service children	63	63.6	63.6	60.3
	non-Service children	62	62.5	64.5	60.5

Source: Department for Education

1. Excludes pupils who receive free school meals (FSM) as service children are not entitled to FSM due to at least one parent being in work.
2. England only
3. KS2 – Level 4+ for reading, maths and writing
4. KS4 – 5+ A*-C GCSE including Math and English
5. Break in time series due to a methodology change

Table 5: Number¹ of Secondary schools attended, Service and non-Service children², 2013³, percentage

% attended:	Number of schools			
	1	2	3	4+
Service Children	78.9	17.7	3.4	0.2
non-Service children	93.1	6.4	0.5	0

Source: Department for Education

1. England only
2. Excludes pupils who receive free school meals (FSM) as service children are not entitled to FSM due to at least one parent being in work.
3. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 2013

Table 6: Secondary school¹ attainment² for Service and non-Service children³ by number of schools, 2013⁴, percentages

% achieved acceptable level:	Number of schools			
	1	2	3	4+
Service Children	67.5	50.6	40.8	20
non-Service children	66	46.2	31.2	24.4

Source: Department for Education

1. England only

2. KS4 - 5+ A*-C GCSE including Math and English

3. Excludes pupils who receive free school meals (FSM) as service children are not entitled to FSM due to at least one parent being in work.

4. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 2013

5. Statistically significantly different in attainment for pupils who attended two and three schools

Table 7: UK Armed Forces Dependents difficulty obtaining school of choice, 2011-2014, percentages¹

Last 12 months difficulty:	2011	2012	2013	2014
Obtaining school of choice	21	24	23	24

Source: Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2015 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

1. Of respondents who had children

2. Excludes 'not applicable' as assume 'not applicable' responses did not change schools

Table 8: UK Armed Forces Dependents access to education, 2015, percentages¹

2015	Moved ²	Not Moved
Difficulties accessing further/higher education	14	8
Difficulties continuing course	11	5

Source: Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2015 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

1. Remainder of responses are 'No', 'Don't Know' and 'not applicable'

2. Due to Service

3. Comparison with 2015 not possible due to methodology change

Education from a devolved perspective

Scotland

The Scottish Government chairs the Scottish Service Children's Strategic Working Group that supports the education needs of Service children in Scotland. Scotland received £1.1 million from the 2015 Education Support Fund. This included continued funding for the post of the National Transitions Officer (NTO), which enables a Scotland-wide perspective to be shared across LAs. The NTO's recent work has included: ensuring that all 32 LAs in Scotland now have a nominated representative for Armed Forces Families (Education Officer); that from the end of 2015, the common local authority management information system can be used to record where a child is from a Service family, and; developing information, issued to parents by schools, on the benefits of making a school aware that a child is from a Service family. Education Scotland is working with the NTO

to ensure that the Parentzone website is used to better effect for Service families, and has published a professional learning resource to support practitioners working with Service children. And Education Scotland links closely with SkillForce in Scotland, a charity that works in schools drawing on the skills of Veterans to inspire young people to succeed.

Education Scotland also works closely with the Combined Cadet Forces (CCF) in Scotland who are working with local schools to deliver parts of Curriculum for Excellence as part of the Cadet Experience Programme. As a result, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning visited a Cadet unit in West Lothian in June 2015 to see examples of the work of the Cadet Experience Programme.

All students who are family members of Service personnel who were ordinarily resident in Scotland when they were recruited but who wish to study elsewhere in the UK are able to access the standard package of tuition fee loans to cover higher rate fees up to £9,000 and student support from the Students Award Agency Scotland (SAAS). A new factsheet specifically aimed at Armed Forces personnel and their families, which explains who is eligible to apply and the funding available, was distributed to stakeholders at the beginning of April 2015.

Wales

The Welsh Government has drafted a new Special Educational Needs Disability (SEND) code. The Welsh Government has engaged with the MOD to understand the issues that mobile children from Service families may face. The first draft of the Code will be shared with stakeholders for comment by the end of December 2015.

In 2015, the Welsh Local Government Association working closely with Welsh Government's Standing Committee developed a toolkit and guidance to help schools support Service children and overcome any challenges they may face. Children of Service families may experience challenges as a result of mobility or deployment. To help schools and LAs better understand what life can be like for Service children in education in the Service Children in Education Guidance has been published. The first year's work culminated in the development of guidance for Armed Forces parents and guidance for schools that was launched in June 2015. The second year of the project aims to build on the successes of the first year, whilst continuing to raise awareness, and increase partnership working and information sharing.

- In 2014/15 the Welsh Government introduced the School Admission Code. It makes provision for the children of Armed Forces personnel to be admitted to an infant class school mid-term even if it means the class will breach the infant class size limit. This means the child will retain this excepted status for the duration of the Foundation Phase in school.
- Ex-Service Personnel wishing to pursue another career have the opportunity to do so via the Further and Higher Education Commitment Scheme



Mount Street Infants School, Brecon

Increasing community engagement

In 2015 the Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru project was established by the Welsh Local Government Association, funded by the MOD Education Support Fund.

The purpose of the project was to establish information regarding the number of Service Children in Wales and find out which schools were already working with the Armed Forces Community.

One of the schools the project engaged with was Mount Street Infants, Brecon. Brecon has a growing Nepalese community that is living and settling in Wales as part of the Ghurka regiment. The school actively engages with the community, inviting all mums in the school to come and try Nepalese food, try on traditional Nepalese dress and learn Nepalese phrases. As well as celebrating Christmas, Mount Street also celebrates Chinese New Year and 'Dashain' a big Nepalese celebration. In school, the children take part in dancing, tasting Nepalese food and making cards and decorations. The school has actively sought to appoint Nepali speaking Learning Support Assistants to support the pupils in their learning. This has been made possible by the MOD funding.

Northern Ireland

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, Wales or Northern Ireland when they study for a first full level 3 qualification, a first undergraduate or foundation degree, or a first HNC or HND.

In Service Education

A comprehensive educational 'offer' is now in place for serving members of the Armed Forces and for those in transition. All Service personnel are offered through-life learning opportunities that are an essential part of the recruitment and retention offer, whilst also supporting the transition back into civilian life during resettlement. The MOD is the largest provider of apprenticeships in the country and provides a range of opportunities to gain accredited training qualifications, either fully funded or partially funded through Learning Credits (both Standard and Enhanced).

The Navy offers over 250 accredited training courses. In 2015, approximately 10,000 accredited qualifications were gained by Navy personnel. 100% of new recruits undertook a Level 2 Apprenticeship and 75 non-graduate RN Officers registered for Foundation Degrees. In 2015, 2500 RAF personnel undertook RAF- managed Level 2 Intermediate and Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeships with a completion success rate of over 90%. There are now 19 different RAF- managed Apprenticeship programmes delivered at 15 RAF Ground Training Schools. The RAF also offers 60 different accreditation-based degrees from eight universities and has over 2000 people engaged in, or having recently completed such degree courses. Although existing accreditation is available to Reserves, one of the challenges for 2016 will be to develop specific accredited recognition of Reserves training. The period between formal courses is one of continuous development across eight generic education and training competencies, ranging from Leadership to Ethos to Military Skills. The scheme is resourced to support one intervention per person every three years – 11,000 interventions in 2015.

For Soldiers the Army's strategy is to develop professional skills that are underpinned by literacy and numeracy - functional skills - by starting with an apprenticeship and developing incrementally through the qualification framework as a soldier progresses through his/her career. At any one time, there are 18,000 soldiers on 40 different apprenticeships. For Officers the Army now offers Higher Education courses aimed at individual intellectual development. 2015 saw the start of the Higher Education Strategy and now has fully funded places for: 45 Undergraduates, 749 Postgraduates, two Fellowships, five PhDs and 400 University Short Courses which are all accredited towards Higher Education qualifications. The Army Skills Offer, to Regular and Reserve personnel and their current and future civilian employers, is that throughout a soldier's career the Army will provide opportunities for them to gain civilian qualifications through Army training and service. For the first two years of this initiative, it has been agreed that the Army will pay for these qualifications. These qualifications range from national Level 1-8 on the Qualifications Credit Framework (QCF) and include academic and vocational qualifications for pan-Army training and service.

Although the evidence suggests that the educational offer is well understood and utilised, a co-ordinated programme of work is underway to address inconsistencies in communicating key elements of that 'offer'. Measures have been taken to strengthen communications and engagement for the whole force. A Skills Working Group, with Whole Force membership and engagement partners (Defence Relationship Management (DRM) and the Defence Directorate of Communications (DDC)) has been established in 2015. This is intended to provide coherent messaging, with a new Head Office Policy for 'Skills Communication and Engagement' being sponsored by the Chief of Defence People. The Personal Development Pathway (PDP) component of the NEM Programme will guide and support Service Personnel throughout their career by proposing, for each career stage, a range of learning and development activities to maximise their value to Defence and a

future employer. On-going development will seek to ensure that members of the Armed Forces are able to respond and continually adapt to the changing job market thereby ensuring greater preparedness for transition. This is consistent with the recommendations made in The Transition Review carried out by Lord Ashcroft.

In Service Education Statistics

Since 2007, on average, just under half of regular Armed Forces personnel were satisfied with the opportunities to gain civilian accreditation and just over half were satisfied with their opportunities for personnel development (Table 9). Following a reduction in the satisfaction with opportunities for personal development the percentage satisfied has increased in the past year.

Table 9: UK Regular Armed Forces Personnel Satisfaction training and personal development, 2007-2015, percentages

Satisfied with:	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Opportunities to gain civilian accreditation for service training	42	42	45	50	51	46	43	42	47
Opportunity for personal development	42	44	49	56	57	54	52	52	57

Summary of 2015 Deliverables

Allocated funding from a £20 million budget to 40 projects aimed at improving the existing infrastructure for childcare support for Service families in the UK and Cyprus.

Amended the schools admission code for the allocation of state-funded school places in England, to ensure that children of UK Service personnel are not disadvantaged when applying for a school place.

Allocated £20.7 million through the DfE for Service Pupil Premium payments to support the needs of circa **69,000** Service pupils attending state schools in England.

Continued to provide support to schools throughout the UK through the MOD's **Education Support Fund**. The fund helps to mitigate issues caused by exceptional mobility and deployment.

Issued advice on **Term Time Absence for Service children** to Head Teachers in England.

Continuation of the Education of Service Children Change Programme, (ESCCP) one element of which ensures the smooth transition of Service children back into UK schools following rebasing from Germany.

2015 Report Commitments

The MOD will continue to work with colleagues in DfE to seek to resolve the issue of transfer of information for children from Service families with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

The MOD will make further announcements, once the costings have been agreed by DfE, on where and when work will commence following the distribution of £20 million of LIBOR money to support childcare provision.

The DfE will provide further opportunity through programmes, such as the Troops to Teachers programme, which provides a worthwhile career path for Service leavers and enables schools to have a better insight into Service life.

The MOD will share best practice and resources arising from a University of Winchester project aimed at supporting and improving understanding of the factors that affect children from Service families' progression at a local and national level, which is due to complete in summer 2016.

The MOD will continue working closely with the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and education authorities over the coming months, to understand the issues surrounding the admission of children and young people from Service families, either starting school for the first time or moving schools between different education systems.



CHAPTER 3 - ACCOMMODATION

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 while 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 while in Service.

What we have done this year to achieve these goals

Investing In Accommodation

MOD has continued to meet its commitment to Service families in the UK that only Service Family Accommodation (SFA) which meets or exceeds Standard 2 for Condition

will be allocated³. The overall condition of the SFA estate in the UK has continued to improve; since 2009. For the past two years 99% of surveyed properties have been at the top two Standards for Condition (1 and 2), with an increased percentage of SFA now at the highest Standard for Condition (1). This is illustrated at the table below:

Table 10: UK Service Families Accommodation (SFA)¹ surveyed condition²

	2010	2014	2015
Total SFA Stock (<i>Thousands</i>)	49.1	49.4	49.5
Standard 1 for Condition	23.4	24.8	25.7
Standard 2 for Condition	21.3	22.5	21.9
Standard 3 for Condition	1.2	0.2	0.2
Standard 4 for Condition	0.2	0	0
Not recorded ²	3.0	1.9	1.7

Source: MOD Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/442839/UK_Service_Family_Accommodation_2015.pdf)

Thousands of dwellings

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

1. Core stock are those properties that are expected to be required in the longer term
2. As at 2011, Northern Ireland represented 97% of the "Not Recorded" stock. 80% of this stock was assessed to be at Standard 1 or 2.

In 2014/15, £65 million was spent on upgrading and improving SFA in the UK. This resulted in 185 properties being upgraded to the highest Condition Standard and fully modernised throughout. This included new kitchens and bathrooms, double glazing, as well as internal and external improvements (such as new roofing and dry wall lining). Nearly 3,000 SFA properties also benefited from similar "lifestyle improvements" including just under 2,000 properties improved through work to address the root cause (generally structural issues) of damp and mould in properties (the "Mould Action Plan" also researched the causes of mould to ensure preventative action could be taken across other properties). Additional funding was also directed at energy efficiency measures in 'hard to heat' SFA through external wall insulation. These steps have improved overall energy and environmental performance.

³ Standard for Condition: All SFA is rated by Standard for Condition on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being the highest. This rating is achieved by assessing a property against 102 different attributes organised under 8 categories: Building Fabric, Health and Safety, Electrical, Security, Sanitary, Kitchen, Bedroom, and Energy Efficiency. (Source DIO Estate Condition Survey Assessment Methodology, 25 March 2002).



Refurbishment of SFA at Keogh Barracks, Ash Vale

As part of a wider £50 million redevelopment of Keogh Barracks Surrey, to support the Army Basing Programme, the refurbishment of 28 Service Family Accommodation (SFA) properties is almost complete. On behalf of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), CarillionAmey has delivered the project on time to the agreed programme, and within budget.

This improvement project has invested £2.5 million in Service homes in the area, with each home benefiting from a new modern kitchen that has been designed to maximise the space available in these homes. The bathrooms have also been fully refurbished with new suites, fixtures and fittings.

However, whilst these improvements are always popular with families, DIO also focuses on the latest sustainability standards. Therefore this project sought to improve the SAP (the Standard Assessment Procedure used by the Government to assess and compare the energy and environmental performance of dwellings) of the properties. In addition to replacing the roof, doors and windows, the exteriors have been clad with External Wall Insulation (EWI). This not only improves weatherproofing, sound resistance and helps to keep heat in, but this technology also reduces condensation on internal walls and helps prevent damp. These improvements have resulted in the average property SAP score increasing to 78, potentially achieving a CO₂ emission saving of 34,972 kg per annum – as well as providing better fuel economy and comfort for Service families.

DIO also improved the outside environment, installing updated fencing in the back gardens to provide privacy for the new patio areas, and adding new sheds for extra storage space. More parking areas have been created, and children can enjoy the new play park that has been provided for them.

Major RF O'Brien RAMC, Quartermaster, 4 Armd Med Regt, Keogh Barracks, Aldershot said:

"I previously lived in one of these SFA back in 1989. The refurbishment work carried out by CarillionAmey on behalf of DIO is amazing and looks absolutely superb. I would be very happy to be moving into one of these SFA if I were a young soldier today."

Accommodation Charges

As announced by Secretary of State in October 2014, the MOD will introduce a new charging system for SFA in April 2016 – the Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS). CAAS will be fairer, simpler and more transparent than the Four Tier Grading

system currently in place, and will calculate charges based on new and tested criteria. CAAS will still consider the condition, scale and location of the property, but will use modern, objective assessments that reflect modern lifestyles and need. These include assessing the condition of SFA against the Department for Communities and Local Government 'Decent Homes Standard' (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, particularly for kitchens and bathrooms. **The Government has committed that from April 2016 no Service family in the UK will be allocated Service accommodation that does not meet the Decent Home Standard.**

In last year's report, the Families Federations observed that Service personnel were concerned with the potential impact of an increase in accommodation charges during a period of continued pay restraint.

Charges will continue to be fair and affordable for Service personnel. Where accommodation charges rise under CAAS this is primarily due to incorrect application of the current system. We have introduced generous transition arrangements for Service personnel that spread any increases over several years and **the Government has committed that all additional receipts from CAAS will be re-invested back into Service accommodation.** Under CAAS accommodation charges will continue to be recommended by the independent Armed Forces Pay Review Body and will continue to be subsidised by the MOD to reflect the unique conditions affecting accommodation faced by our people⁴. Comparison with market rates shows that MOD currently subsidises family accommodation by 50% to 60% for Other Ranks properties and 38% to 48% of Officers accommodation.

The Overseas Offer

We have also enhanced the offer for Service families overseas by reducing Service accommodation charges by approximately 20% and waiving their contributions in lieu of council tax to MOD from April 16. This measure has been implemented as a part of a wider package to enhance the offer for personnel and their families serving overseas and on

average overseas SFA occupants will benefit by over £2,000 per annum. The waiver of council tax contributions will also apply to occupants of Single Living Accommodation (SLA) based overseas.

Single Living Accommodation

MOD also provides 145,500 single living beds spaces worldwide, of which 126,000 are in the UK. A further 1,962 new Single Living Accommodation (SLA) bed spaces were delivered through modernisation programmes during 2014-15. All were single rooms with en-suite facilities and at the top standard.

⁴For example, restricted choice over the location and style of accommodation; the frequency in which Service personnel and their families are required to move; and a lack of assured tenancy.

Single Living Accommodation (SLA) - 2015⁵

	UK	Overseas	Overall
Total SLA Stock (<i>thousands</i>)	126	19	145
Standard 1 Condition & Scale	39 (31%)	3 (18%)	42 (29%)
Standard 2 Condition & Scale	16 (13%)	2 (8%)	18 (12%)
Standard 3 Condition & Scale	24 (19%)	2 (9%)	26 (18%)
Standard 4 Condition & Scale	47 (37%)	12 (64%)	59 (40%)

Source: MOD Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)

⁵Based on SLA World Wide Audit data (2012). MOD is working on improving its management information for SLA.

Service Delivery

The MOD introduced the **National Housing Prime contract** on 1 December 2014. The contract is designed to deliver a 'one stop shop' for all UK-based SFA requirements from allocations to move appointments to repairs and improvements. The Department readily acknowledges the implementation of the contract did not go as planned, and that the level of service provided to Service families initially was well below that contracted. Following MOD intervention, there has been an on-going improvement in the level of repair and allocation services provided by the contractor to Service families. MOD continues to work closely with the contractor to improve performance.

The 2015 Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey reported that satisfaction with the overall standard of Service accommodation has remained static over the past few years at 58%. We expect improvements from the National Housing Prime Contract to improve the customer service experience for SFA occupants over the next couple of years.

Helping Service Personnel Onto The Property Ladder

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 2014 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. The Scheme is aimed at helping Service personnel who may struggle to enter the housing market as they move around throughout their military career, thus enabling them to set down roots and get onto the property ladder – giving their families the domestic stability that many of us take for granted. The Government has allocated £200 million to the scheme.

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. 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 5,600 Service personnel have already benefited**, to the value of approximately £85.5 million. The Defence Secretary has set MOD a target to double the number of recipients to 10,000 by October 2016.



SAC Mark Reynolds, 26, joined the RAF in 2007. He borrowed £9,500 for his mortgage and purchased a three-bedroom, semi-detached home on a new estate in Downham Market, Norfolk. He hopes to receive the key by mid-November once the build is complete. He currently works at RAF Marham as an aircraft technician.

SAC Reynolds, who got married in November, said:

“This will be the first property I have owned. We rented property together beforehand and realised that we wanted to get onto the property ladder. One of my fellow colleagues had used the scheme and explained that had found it useful, so with this in mind we decided to go ahead with it. We would have really struggled with saving a deposit if it wasn't for this scheme. With this scheme the money will automatically come out of our wages and we won't even have to worry about it. Owning our home is going to be a massive step forward for us. We have always wanted a place to call home and be able to tastefully decorate it to our own style.

If you are even thinking about buying your own house and have the monthly funds for a mortgage available, then do it. Myself and my wife parted with very little money for the solicitor's fees and were very surprised as to the ease of the application process.”

More broadly, and in recognition of some Service personnel wanting to own their own home when they leave the military, the Government has given Armed Forces personnel priority for Government-funded shared ownership schemes and access to the Help to Buy equity loan scheme. The priority status can also be transferred to bereaved spouses and civil partners of Service personnel.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has also recently launched the 'own your own home' website: <https://www.ownyourhome.GOV.UK/> which provides

advice about accessing Government funded affordable housing schemes. The website suggests specific products that would suit the applicant's circumstances based on the response to the relevant questions and includes a specific option for the Armed Forces.

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.

More broadly, and in recognition of some Service personnel wanting to own their own home when they leave the military, the Government has given Armed Forces personnel priority for Government-funded shared ownership schemes and access to the Help to Buy equity loan scheme. The priority status can also be transferred to bereaved spouses and civil partners of Service personnel.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has also recently launched the 'own your own home' website: <https://www.ownyourhome.GOV.UK/> which provides advice about accessing Government funded affordable housing schemes. The website suggests specific products that would suit the applicant's circumstances based on the response to the relevant questions and includes a specific option for the Armed Forces.

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.

Earlier this year the MOD also launched the **Tenancy Deposit Loan Scheme**. This allows Service personnel to apply for an advance of salary to fund the cost of a deposit, if they are choosing to rent a property privately. Repayments are made in 12 monthly instalments direct from salary. 68 Service personnel have benefitted from the scheme since its launch in July 2015.

Supporting Service Personnel in the Future

Accommodation continues to be seen as a core element of the military offer that attracts and retains Service personnel. However, the current offer does not satisfy a proportion of our people nor meet the demands of 21st century living. A revised Accommodation Model is being considered that will improve choice, helping more Service personnel live in the private sector and meet their aspirations for home ownership whilst still fulfilling the needs of the Services.

Once detailed proposals have been developed and agreed, the implementation of a Future Accommodation Model (FAM) will occur over a number of years with transition periods being included in the plan. There will be consultation with Service personnel as part of the transition and implementation period. The FAM will enable Service personnel to live within the private sector, allowing them more choice of where and with whom they live. Prior consultation has illustrated that Service personnel would like more choice about where they live and to own their own homes; FAM will make this easier. It is likely that, under a future model, there will be a mix of publicly and privately provided accommodation.

Housing For Veterans

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**. JSHAO works closely with the Service Charity Sector and the Devolved Administrations to develop tailored advice for Service leavers and Veterans.

DCLG has developed policies aimed at ensuring 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 recently discharged are entitled to retain their qualification rights regardless of how often they have moved from base to base. DCLG has also encouraged LAs to give sympathetic consideration to the housing needs of family members of serving or former Service personnel.

In last year's report, Cobseo observed that there was a need for a more integrated approach to the provision of housing for Veterans to ensure that they were not disadvantaged.

The MOD is driving a move towards greater collaboration between LAs and Veterans' Housing Charities. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is looking into sharing best practice in the provision of housing.

Cobseo also suggested greater policy flexibility was required to improve current provision of adapted houses for seriously injured Service personnel.

The provision of adaptations for injured personnel (to SFA and, where appropriate, private residences), is an important issue for the Department and policy supports this. Whilst the majority of adaptations are handled and delivered promptly, we recognise that there are more complex and challenging cases where delivery could be enhanced and streamlined. Process improvements are being made for SFA adaptations as well as the funding mechanisms for adaptations within private residencies for injured personnel transitioning to civilian life. This has helped to make the adaptations process react better and more effectively to meet the needs of our Service Personnel and their families.

Accommodation Statistics

The majority of Regular Armed Forces personnel and their families are satisfied with the value for money of their Service accommodation; however, less than 50% are content with the maintenance service received (Tables 12 and 13). The National Housing Prime (NHP) contract, awarded to CarillionAmey is being introduced in phases from November 2014. It is expected the contracting out of service delivery will lead to further improvements in the delivery of SFA. The trend of renters being less satisfied with maintenance is also seen in social renters; however, social renters generally have a higher level of satisfaction compared to Armed Forces personnel and their families (Table 14).

More than 99% of UK Service Family Accommodation properties for which information is available are assessed as Standard 1 or 2 (good condition or requiring minor improvements) (Table 15). In line with the commitment made in the Armed Forces Covenant, SFA below Standard 2 has not been allocated to For all social housing lettings in

England in 2014/15, 3% were to households where someone in the household had served in the British Regular Armed Forces. (Department of Communities and Local Government: CORE Lettings).

For all social housing lettings in England in 2014/15, 0.4% were to households where someone in the household had been seriously injured/disabled as a direct result of their time and activities serving as a reservist. (Department of Communities and Local Government: CORE Lettings).

Table 12: UK Armed Forces Personnel Satisfaction service accommodation, 2007-2015, percentages¹

Satisfied with:	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Standard of Service accommodation	48	50	49	54	57	56	57	58	58
Value for money of Service accommodation	58	58	60	63	65	67	68	67	67
Response to maintenance request for Service accommodation					43	42	41	41	40
Quality of maintenance for Service accommodation					42	39	40	39	40

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

1. Excludes not applicables

Table 13: Surveyed condition of Service Family Accommodation in the United Kingdom at 31 March each year, 2008-2015, percentage¹

Satisfied with:	2015
Standard of Service accommodation	63
Value for money of Service accommodation	75
Response to maintenance request for Service accommodation	45
Quality of maintenance for Service accommodation	42

Source: Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2015 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

1. Excludes not applicables

Table 14: Satisfaction¹ of Social Renters, 2013/14, percentages

Satisfied ¹ with:	2013/14
Accommodation	80.6
Tenure	80.5
Maintenance	66.6

Source: English Housing Survey, DCLG

1. Includes very and fairly satisfied

2. England

Table 15: Service Family Accommodation in the UK with a Standard 1 or 2, percentages

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
SFA which are Standard 1 or 2	93.9	97.0	97.0	97.5	98.5	99.6	99.6

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/service-family-accommodation-bulletin-index>

Accommodation From A Devolved Administration Perspective

Scotland

The Scottish Government has given funding to Housing Options Scotland to enhance its specialist Veterans' advice service project '*Military Matters*', increasing awareness of its services through a dedicated communications programme. The Scottish Government continues to give serving members of the Armed Forces, Veterans who have left the Armed Forces within the past two years; and widows, widowers and other partners of Service personnel for up to two years after the death of their partner, priority access to the Low Cost Initiative for First Time Buyers schemes. The Scottish Government has allocated £80 million to its Open Market Shared Equity Scheme in 2015-16, which is promoted to members of the Armed Forces.

The Scottish Government is working in partnership with the Scottish Veterans Garden City Association (SVGCA) to build 38 homes across six local authority areas to support physically and psychologically impaired ex-Service personnel. A grant of £1.3 million has been provided to SVGCA. 10 homes are already complete and occupied in Angus and the Highlands, with homes in Edinburgh and North Lanarkshire scheduled to complete in 2016. SVGCA expects to have completed all 38 homes by 2017.

Wales

The Housing (Wales) Act came into law in September 2014. The Act includes major reforms of homelessness legislation in Wales strengthening the protection for all groups, including Veterans. The new law has retained the priority need status given to people who are homeless on leaving the Armed Forces. The Code of Guidance for LAs on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness 2015 specifies that a person serving in the Armed Forces can establish a local connection with an area through residence or employment in the same way as a civilian. Service personnel and ex-Service personnel are also a priority group within shared equity, Low Cost Home Ownership and intermediate housing schemes such as Homebuy and Rent First.

LAs can also consider giving additional preference within their local allocation schemes to applicants who need accommodation as a result of leaving the Armed Forces, or to those who require suitable adapted accommodation because of needs created as a result of their Armed Forces service. The Code also highlights the importance of LAs working with the Joint Services Housing Liaison Office, the Veterans' Service and appropriate voluntary organisations such as The Royal British Legion to identify people leaving the Armed Forces and other Veterans who may be at risk of homelessness to provide early assistance.

£2 million of capital funding was allocated to LAs in 2013-14 through the Social Housing Grant Programme to support housing for personnel leaving the Armed Forces. The funding was directed at schemes that are on site or just about to start on site. This funding will provide up to 30 new affordable homes. The scheme was advertised through the MOD JSHAO, as part of their existing Referral Scheme, and 15 expressions of interest were received from those leaving or about to leave the Armed Forces. Nine Armed Forces Families have been allocated homes (three from the MOD list and six from the LAs Housing Register).

The Welsh Government Homebuy Scheme can help people buy a suitable home. Widows and widowers of personnel who have been killed in Service are also eligible for the scheme.

What more we plan to do

- From April 2016, the MOD will move 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.
- Introduce the Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS) from 1 April 2016, to replace the current Four Tier Grading (4TG) system for all UK based SFA.
- Continue to ensure the National Housing Prime (NHP) contract, awarded to CarillionAmey meets contracted standards.

Summary of 2015 Deliverables

We have not allocated Service Family Accommodation (SFA) below Standard 2 for Condition in the UK. The overall condition of the SFA estate has continued to improve, with over **99%** of recorded UK properties at the top two Standards for condition (1 and 2).

Spent £65 million on upgrading and improving over 5,000 properties. Some **185** SFA were fully modernised throughout.

Nearly **3,000** SFA properties also benefited from other "lifestyle improvements" (e.g.: new kitchens and bathrooms, double glazing and insulation), including just under **2,000** properties improved through work to address the root cause (generally structural issues) of damp and mould in properties.

Agreed to enhance the offer for Service families overseas by reducing accommodation charges by **20%** and **waiving** their contributions in lieu of council tax to MOD from April 2016.

Delivered 1,962 new Single Living Accommodation (SLA) bed spaces through modernisation programmes.

Continued helping Service personnel to get on or stay on the property ladder through the Forces Help to Buy Scheme. **Over 5,000 Service personnel** have already benefited, to the value of approximately £75.7M.

Introduced the Tenancy Deposit Loan Scheme, which allows Service personnel to apply for an advance of salary to fund the cost of a deposit, for private property rental.

2015 Report Commitments

From April 2016, the MOD will:

Move to the Government's Decent Homes Standard (DHS); no Service family will be allocated accommodation in the UK which does not meet the DHS.

Continue to ensure the National Housing Prime (NHP) contract, awarded to CarillionAmey meets contracted standards.

Continue to support Service personnel with the Forces Help To Buy Scheme.



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.

In recent years a number of measures have been introduced to improve the inquest process for bereaved families of Service personnel. These have included:

- Measures to tackle delays in cases coming to inquest, including completion of inquests within six months wherever possible,
- and flexibility to transfer investigations to another coroner.
- Publication of a “Guide to coroner services” booklet and leaflet providing guidance on the coroner system, how the inquest process works and how bereaved families can find help if they are not satisfied with the service they receive.
- An MOD-produced DVD which is sent to MOD witnesses to help them understand what happens during an inquest.

Inquests

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

In the year ending 31 March 2015, a total of 17 operational inquests and 32 non-operational inquests have been completed. These include a number of longstanding complex inquests.

CHAPTER 5 - COVENANT FUNDING

What we have done this year

We launched the new Covenant Fund in June 2015. Since 2011 the Government has committed over £150 million in LIBOR funding to support Covenant commitments. Last year we finalised the allocation of £40 million to support Veterans' accommodation. However, in 2014 the Government gave a long term commitment to provide £10 million per annum in perpetuity to support the Covenant.

A new standalone MOD grant team, with expertise from the Big Lottery Fund, has been set up to deliver a professional scheme that maximises best practice across the sector. Priorities for the fund will be agreed annually by the Covenant Reference Group. Priorities should fit within four overarching themes: removing barriers to family life; extra support after Service for those that need help; measures to integrate military and civilian communities and allow the Armed Forces community to participate as citizens; and non-core healthcare services for Veterans.

The three priorities for 2015-16 are: community integration; the coordination and delivery of support to the Armed Forces community; and Veterans in the criminal justice system. The new scheme opened to applications on 13 August 2015 for projects which aim to deliver impact against the agreed funding priorities. Over 300 applications were received and the first tranche of successful bids were announced in late 2015, with the second tranche due for announcement in mid-March 2016.

This year we also launched the Aged Veterans Fund, which has £25 million available over five years. It will fund projects that support non-core health, wellbeing and social care needs for older Veterans (born before 1 January 1950), including surviving World War 2 Veterans, those who undertook National Service and other voluntary enlisted Veterans who may need some focused support in relation to their health and social care needs.

This year we have also strengthened the governance process for managing the legacy £35 million Covenant (LIBOR) Fund and the £40 million Veterans' Accommodation Fund. Projects are required to report annually against the project objectives, and approval is required for any variations from these objectives. In March the CRG agreed the process for assessing and reviewing project risk. This ensures that projects are evaluated thoroughly against their deliverables and value for money measures. Where possible, and particularly for the larger bids, we endeavour to visit projects to get a better sense of the difference they have made to local communities. The 16 successful projects funded through the £40 million Veterans' Accommodation Fund will provide their first progress reports this year. A small number of the projects have already completed, including the replacement of windows at Pembroke House Care and Nursing Home for which The Royal Naval Benevolent Trust received £100,000. A full list of the supported projects is at Annex C.

Summary of 2015 Deliverables

Launched a new £10 million per annum fund to continue delivering Covenant commitments. Continued funding hundreds of legacy projects that support the Armed Forces community.

Launched a new Aged Veterans Fund, which has £25 million available to it over five years.

CHAPTER 6 - CORPORATE COVENANT

The Corporate Covenant is a public pledge by businesses and other organisations to support the Armed Forces community. The level of support will depend on the size and nature of the organisation, but typically includes policies that: encourage Reserve service; support employment of Veterans, and spouses; and increasingly, tackle corporate disadvantage. More than 700 organisations have signed a Corporate Covenant, and encouragingly that number continues to grow.

What we have done this year

Reflecting the concerns of the Families Federations and Cobseo last year we agreed to work closely with Corporate Covenant signatories to ensure that pledges were turned into tangible actions.

Responsibility for publicising the Covenant and working with businesses has transferred to the new Defence Relationship Management (DRM) organisation. DRM, which was created in April 2015, by the MOD to manage our relationships with up to 200 key national employers, while a network of Employer Engagement staff fulfil a similar role at the regional level. By working closely with organisations and building a long term relationship we are seeing a shift in dynamic; companies are beginning to be proactive in their support of Defence initiatives and coming to us seeking to reinforce their commitment. For example, The AA re-signed their Corporate Covenant in June 2015, in order to refresh and strengthen their pledges by communicating their support for the Armed Forces community through their internal and external publications and a commitment to conduct an annual review of their Corporate Covenant.



AA executive chairman Bob Mackenzie and Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, co-signing the AA's updated Armed Forces Corporate Covenant

Some of the key initiatives pledged by companies as a result of this work are set out below. The full list of Corporate Covenant signatories and their pledges is on GOV.UK, with new signatories since last year's report listed at Annex B.

Carillion has undertaken to recruit 300 Reservists by 2016 and is advocating Reserve service to their supply chain. Barclays continues to help Service personnel, including wounded, injured or sick, to transition to civilian life by providing them with work placement opportunities, education courses and skills sessions, designed to enhance their employability and prospects through their AFTER programme and are strong supporters of Reserve service, through introducing the new policy of 15 days special paid leave. On 9 November 2015 Tesco launched its Armed Forces Network which seeks to support Service leavers through their transition to a new career.

Jaguar Land Rover has employed over 120 Service Leavers in the last two years. The company recognises Service Leavers as an excellent talent pool participates in the full range of Career Transition Partnership activities. Recently ten Early Service Leavers have completed a bespoke six week training package that led to permanent employment.

Vodafone UK signed the Corporate Covenant in March as a sign of its growing commitment to the Armed Forces. It has long offered MOD personnel and their families discounted rates through its Vodafone Employee Advantage scheme as well as giving volunteers up to a week's paid leave for Reserve training. Over the last six months, they have introduced a wide range of further initiatives to support serving personnel, Veterans and their families better. This includes: setting up a dedicated Armed Forces Recruitment Portal which has already led to a number of Veterans joining the company; introducing a "buddy" system so that Veterans joining the company are aligned to a member of the Vodafone Armed Forces community to smooth their transition process; and introducing an improved policy for Service personnel who are deployed/posted overseas, which means they can apply for a contract break for up to two years for themselves and up to three family members moving with them



Vodafone CEO, Jeroen Hoencamp, signing the Corporate Covenant . Also pictured are (from left) Mark Francois, former Minister (Armed Forces) and Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff

Ricky Allen MBE works for Vodafone as an Enterprise Solution Architect.

"I'm an ex-regular," says Ricky. "I have completed 23 years in The Royal Signals, and I'm also a Reservist in 254 (SGIS) Signal Squadron, 15 Signal Regiment. Vodafone is really supportive, including my direct line manager. But I think the biggest thing that Vodafone supports with is time to complete my Reservist duties: being given that extra week so that you're not taking all your own annual leave is invaluable and extremely supportive. This allows me to balance a very busy work lifestyle with the Army Reserves and my family. That's worth its weight in gold to me and allows me to continue to support the Army Reserves in a meaningful way."

Commercial Products and Services

It is for the commercial sector to determine its approach to members of the Armed Forces community.

- The Government should work with the commercial sector towards a situation where they have as good access to commercial products and services, including financial services, as any other citizen.
- Providers of products and services should be encouraged to understand and mitigate the circumstances faced by this community, such as mobility and deployment, and to welcome and cater for its members as good and valuable customers.

What we have done this year

In line with our commitments, the key areas we have looked at, as set out by the Families Federations in their observations last year, are:

- **No claims bonuses and insurance:** Some insurers do not recognise no claims bonuses from overseas, and time overseas can also invalidate existing no claims bonuses. Members of the Armed Forces community also report that there are clauses in insurance policies that make serving personnel ineligible.
- **Credit ratings:** Some personnel have experienced difficulty getting a good credit rating for a range of reasons irrespective of their own personal credit history: British Forces Post Office (BFPO) addresses may not be recognised; identities may be difficult to authenticate; or a credit profile may be too thin to satisfy prospective lenders. This affects a range of commercial services, such as access to credit cards and mortgages.
- **BFPO postcodes:** Despite the introduction of a shadow postcode system to allow personnel and families overseas to receive post from companies in the UK at local rates, difficulties are still experienced where companies have not downloaded the BFPO postcodes or their systems are incompatible with BFPO data.
- **Banking:** Some banks deny access to savings accounts to Service families (children and spouses) posted overseas.

- **Mobile phones contracts:** The families of personnel posted overseas can be faced with high cancellation fees or refused a temporary suspension of their mobile phone contract when they accompany personnel overseas.

We have made addressing corporate disadvantage a key component of the Corporate Covenant; this has delivered change. Nationwide Building Society has pledged to acknowledge the specific housing needs of Armed Forces personnel and their families, tailoring their letting policies to allow personnel posted overseas to let their homes with no additional mortgage costs. Royal Mail has pledged to work with MOD to provide effective BFPO data to companies to enable them to resolve instances of disadvantage related to recognition of BFPO postcodes. And significantly, Mark Lancaster, the Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans recently secured an agreement from the four major mobile phone providers (Vodafone, EE, O2 and 3) to allow both Service personnel and their families to put their contracts on hold when they are posted overseas.

In April 2015, we consulted the single Services to provide a detailed assessment of the key areas of commercial disadvantage. To address this we have established a Financial Services Steering Group with representatives from the trade associations for the financial and commercial sectors. This group is committed to investigating and developing shared solutions to the challenges faced by the service community. The two key areas for action are:

- Company **policies** which disadvantage the Armed Forces community, for example restricting eligibility for their services to those who have lived at UK addresses for the last three years.
- Technical and compatibility issues around **data**, for example where company systems do not recognise BFPO postcodes.

We have also published an industry-endorsed myth-buster to help Armed Forces personnel and families access financial and commercial services, including credit and insurance. This document addresses common misconceptions around financial and commercial services and was published on GOV.UK in November at:

<https://www.GOV.UK/Government/publications/financial-top-tips-for-service-personnel>

The group has also provided advice to MOD on implementation and commercial challenges for companies seeking to better support the Armed Forces community. We will continue to work with this group to understand how companies can best support the Armed Forces and communicate these lessons to industry. Key deliverables for next year will be to:

- Deliver and continue to build upon the promises made by mobilephone companies to give Service personnel posted overseas a fair deal.
- Rectify problems faced by Service personnel in obtaining motor, home and travel insurance cover at a reasonable price.
- Encourage all financial services providers to update their computer systems to work with BFPO addresses.

- Work with commercial organisations delivering to BFPO addresses to ensure that Service personnel and their families always pay a fair price and have the same access to services as those living in the UK.
- Improve financial services identification and verification processes for Service personnel and their families.
- Strengthen and extend our relationships with Corporate Covenant financial services signatories to ensure that they are delivering their promises on the ground.
- Continue to educate Service personnel on the most effective ways for them to build a strong credit history and access financial services.

Early next year, we will publish new information on GOV.UK about our work to address commercial disadvantage, and provide the opportunity for Service personnel and their families to report particular examples of when they have been treated unfairly.

Defence Discount Service

The Defence Discount Service was launched to support the Armed Forces community as a whole and remains the only MOD endorsed scheme. It provides in-store discounts and promotional savings for the Armed Forces community. It also acts as a recognition card for the Armed Forces community. There are now almost 5,000 companies signed up, including Vodafone, New Look, National Express, Lloyds Pharmacy and Dorothy Perkins. This year there was an exclusive day, shared between the Defence community and the Emergency Services for 7,000 people at Alton Towers Theme Park. Following a joint campaign between the Defence Discount Services and the Welsh Government, which included a radio campaign, a large number of new Welsh members have signed up. Since the start of the campaign there has been a significant increase of 57% in membership in Wales. On the corporate side 116 local independent retailers have now signed up to the card. We hope to use similar campaigns in other parts of the UK next year. Further information regarding the Defence Discount Service is available online: www.defencediscountservice.co.uk

Credit Unions

The Royal British Legion had previously raised concerns regarding Armed Forces personnel's access to credit union services. Credit Unions are an alternative to banks, building societies and pay day lenders, and allow access to dependable savings and affordable loan facilities. At the end of March 2015, Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT) announced that the Government would provide £500,000 from LIBOR funds to establish 'a payroll deduction' system which will allow current and former Service Personnel in receipt of a military pension, to save and pay off loans. The payment will come directly from an individual's salary or pension at source.

The three selected credit unions selected are PlaneSaver Credit Union, London Mutual Credit Union and Police Credit Union. They are not endorsed by the MOD and financial decisions remain the choice of the individual. Where appropriate, independent guidance should be sought before making financial decisions or entering into an agreement.

Three credit unions were chosen due to the technical limitations of enabling payroll deduction from salaries, and from those in receipt of an Armed Forces pension. The three have agreed to work collaboratively and this working practice will reduce duplication of effort. They have also appointed a marketing manager to the Armed Forces who will be available for briefings on behalf of the three credit unions.

The official launch for Armed Forces personnel took place on 15 October 2015 with facilities for retired members in receipt of an Armed Forces pensions to follow later.

2015 Report Commitment

The MOD will continue to work through the Financial Services Group to understand how companies can best support the Armed Forces and communicate these lessons to industry.

In early 2016, the MOD will publish new information about its work to address commercial disadvantage, and provide the opportunity for Service personnel and their families to report particular examples of when they have been treated unfairly.

CHAPTER 7 - COMMUNITY COVENANT

The Community Covenant is a voluntary, non-binding, commitment by LAs to support members of the Armed Forces community in their area. Every local authority in mainland Great Britain, and two in Northern Ireland, have signed a Community Covenant. A further two in Northern Ireland have agreed to adopt a Community Covenant and are currently working through the details of implementation. Through the Community Covenant Grant Scheme the MOD has distributed some £30 million over four years to support LAs in this endeavour.

What we have done this year

It is clear from the feedback in last year's report that both the Families Federations and Cobseo feel that more needs to be done to embed and sustain the Community Covenant. In response, the previous Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans Welfare the Rt Hon Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry), wrote to the Chief Executive and leader at each local authority in Great Britain underlining the importance of the Community Covenant and inviting them to provide details of the actions they had taken since signing the Community Covenant. As well as providing a number of excellent examples of best practice, local authority responses have also enabled us to produce a list of local authority Armed Forces champions. We are using this to deliver targeted communications to this essential community.

In last year's report we agreed to run a series of Community Covenant road shows. The events in Bristol, Leicester and Manchester provided local authority delegates with a chance to hear from MOD and Department of Health policy officials, representatives of the Charities and Families Federations, and leading LAs. Local authority representatives shared real life examples of what they had done to support their Armed Forces community. Recognising the value of such gatherings, a fourth event was run in London in November. Speakers at this event included the new Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans, Mark Lancaster TD MP, and the new Chief of the Local Government Association, Lord Porter of Spalding, who also acts as the LGA Armed Forces Champion.

In advance of this conference Mr Lancaster met with Lord Porter to discuss how they could jointly review delivery of the Community Covenant. The Department for Communities and Local Government has agreed to work jointly with the MOD and LGA to take forward this work and the result will be published in March. We will work closely with the Families Federations and key Service charities to ensure that their views are reflected. Mr Lancaster has also met with the Chief Executive of the Local Government Ombudsman to discuss how they can support delivery of the Community Covenant. In June the LGO upheld a complaint from a Service family that Devon County Council wrongly decided to discontinue school transport after the family had to move home because of their service. From their experience the majority of complaints that they uphold under the Covenant stem from a lack of knowledge about the aims and scope of the Covenant amongst personnel implementing the policy. We have to improve this, and we will work with LAs to do so.

The MOD has also been working with the Families Federations to put together a detailed toolkit of information to explain the challenges our Armed Forces communities

face and how LAs can support them. We expect to publish the final toolkit in the New Year. The single Services have also agreed to run Armed Forces Induction Days for local authority Armed Forces champions. The aim is to familiarise them with Service life and provide detailed one to one guidance on Covenant issues. In March the Covenant Reference Group agreed that a minimum of £2 million from the future Covenant Fund would be available to support LAs and local Armed Forces community integration projects. The group recognised the value of continued funding to help embed the Covenant in LAs.

The Minister for Housing, Brandon Lewis MP, will also be writing to LAs to remind them of the importance of the Community Covenant before the end of the year.

To improve awareness about the Covenant in Wales, The Royal British Legion's Wales team has delivered awareness training on the Armed Forces community and the issues they may be facing to 18 LAs and over 400 frontline staff. This training has now been extended to include housing associations and we expect all Welsh LAs to have received the training by the end of 2015.

Cobseo has also expressed concerns at delivery of the Community Covenant in Northern Ireland.

Since the Covenant's introduction in 2011, the MOD has worked closely with Northern Ireland Government Departments, LAs, Service charities and interested groups to deliver the required services and support. In 2013 the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee reported that – less some specific areas – provision of support for Armed Forces in Northern Ireland was being achieved. Recent progress has seen two of the eleven councils sign a Community Covenant, and a further two agree to do so. All eleven councils have elected a dedicated Veterans' champion. The former Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans Welfare, the Rt Hon Anna Soubry, visited Northern Ireland earlier in 2015 to underline the Government's commitment to the Covenant there. The Northern Ireland Executive has an open invitation to participate in the Covenant Reference Group (CRG), and while that position is still open, in the interim, the Northern Ireland Office have appointed a representative to the CRG and the decision panel for the new £10 million per annum Covenant Fund. A Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) grant of £355,000 was awarded in August 2015 to support a three year project to conduct evidential research on the Veteran community in Northern Ireland. This will assist in identifying areas of concern, and provide the basis on which to target these in the future. The CRG will also consider application of the Covenant in Northern Ireland in 2016.

Play space – integration project

The Community Covenant's aim of bringing the military and civilian communities closer together could not have been more ably demonstrated than in the small village of Porthleven in Cornwall.

Porthleven is a beautiful village with a fantastic community spirit, but a lack of facilities. RNAS Culdrose is less than five miles away and provides employment for over 3,000 Service and civilian personnel most of whom have families who live in the local area. There has been a long standing relationship between the military and civilian communities and integration is generally good.

Porthleven School had a large outdoor space, but without facilities and equipment it was essentially useless. After much debate and consultation with children, parents and the

community it was decided to overhaul the school grounds and develop 'something for everyone' and the most inclusive idea was the development of a multi-use games area.

Mrs Leigh Yates from the School's Parent Teachers Association said 'We needed something to bring together groups in the surrounding communities, children, parents, families, etc. We have many children from Service families in our school and educational trust, we wanted to address some of the issues they experience. That's the core reason we applied for the Armed Forces community grant. We wanted something that reflects what service in the Armed Forces means to civilians and Service families - team building, sport and fitness, community and supporting each other'.



The first phase of the Multi Use Games Facility (MUGF) was opened by the Second Sea Lord, Admiral David Steele at a ceremony attended by the military families and the school's signing choir for deaf children.

The facility has had a very positive effect on the whole community. The school conducted its own fund raising towards the cost. Many of the ideas were from the children themselves and they learned the importance of contributing to their own success; their reward is an amazing facility which has exceeded all of their expectations. On completion of the second phase, the school hosted the Southerly Point Armed Forces Day as a thank you; over 2,000 people attended, the school had never had so many visitors. It was opened by the Warrant Officer of the Naval Service, WO1 Steve Cass, a former Porthleven school pupil and resident.

The facility has had a very positive effect on the whole area; the school sports teams now have somewhere to play and the facility hosted a football tournament with children from the other schools in the trust. It is also available for use by private groups and has inspired the creation of a youth group. It has enabled teenage children to experience different sports, team building activities and some have become mentors to younger children. There are several disabled children in the school and the MUGF was designed with them in mind so they can enjoy various sporting activities with the other children. RNAS Culdrose personnel donate their own time to assist with sporting and other events emphasising the growing relationship between the communities.

Leigh Yates was effusive in her praise 'To see the facility finished and being used, is a dream come true for us. We didn't expect such a hugely positive impact for our Service children, pupils, families, communities, 17 schools in the trust and the community groups that are using it. Our children are proud of their school and we can't thank the Covenant enough for this'.

2015 Report Commitments

The Department for Communities and Local Government will work jointly with the MOD and Local Government Association to take forward work to review the effectiveness of the Community Covenant. The result will be published in March 2016.

The MOD will work with the Families Federations to put together a detailed toolkit of information to explain the challenges our Armed Forces communities face and how LAs can support them. The final toolkit will be published in 2016.

CHAPTER 8 - THE WIDER COVENANT

Terms and Conditions of Service

Service personnel should be sustained and rewarded by Terms and Conditions of Service (TACOS) which recognise the freedoms and choices that they have voluntarily given up.

- These TACOS should be fair to personnel and wherever possible give flexibility to match family circumstances, whilst meeting the needs of the MOD and conforming to wider Government policy. They will be kept under regular review by the MOD.
- The terms under which individuals serve, such as enlistments and engagements, are binding in every sense.
- The conditions offered, in return for the commitments and risks to which Service personnel are subject, should be fair in terms of both the financial and non-financial package.
- The recommendations of an independent body should constitute an integral part of the process used to determine pay.

What we have done this year to achieve these goals

The New Employment Model (NEM) programme aims to update the offer to Service personnel to better reflect modern lifestyles, and to give Service personnel and their families greater choice. We want to address the key aspects of dissatisfaction cited through personnel surveys such as the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey and the Families Continuous Attitude Survey.

The NEM continues to make progress in a number of key areas. This year we introduced new career structures for regular personnel aligned to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 2015. New joiners will now be offered, in most cases, an initial engagement period of no less than twelve years. We have also continued the simplification of allowances and taken the first steps towards reforming Armed Forces pay by ceasing Accelerated Incremental Progression from December 2015. This was a source of dissatisfaction given the potential for individuals to earn more than someone more senior within the same rank.

A number of further initiatives that will help Service personnel with their lifestyle and career choices also went live in September and October 2015. Changes to leave policy were introduced that will give individuals greater flexibility, for example transferring parental leave between Service spouses. The concept of adapting unpaid leave policy to reduce an individual's liability for deployment is being trialled; if successful, this 'flexible duty' concept could offer greater opportunity for flexible working and therefore help the organisation better manage its talent and support a more diverse and inclusive environment. Over the coming year most of the key initiatives under NEM will begin to be realised.

2015 Report Commitment

The MOD will trial the concept of adapting unpaid leave policy to reduce an individual's liability for deployment during 2015-17.

Recourse

Members of the Armed Forces community should have means of recourse open to them, if they believe that they are not being treated in a fair and appropriate way.

- Established routes of recourse such as complaints processes or Ombudsmen should be sensitive to the particular circumstances of the Armed Forces community.
- In addition, for Serving personnel and those who have recently left service, there should be a responsive system for handling complaints relating to their service in the Armed Forces, overseen by the Service Complaints Ombudsman.

What we have done this year to achieve these goals

In line with our commitment from last year's report, the Armed Forces (Service Complaints and Financial Assistance) Bill received Royal Assent on 26 March 2015, to become the Armed Forces (Service Complaints and Financial Assistance) Act 2015. The Act reforms the internal complaints process, making it shorter with one, instead of two, levels of appeal and implementation is planned for 1 January 2016. The Chiefs of Staff fully recognise the need to improve the Service Complaints system: the provisions of the Act reduce the bureaucratic procedure whilst maintaining the integrity of the Chain of Command. The new process aims to improve user confidence by improving timeliness and through increased open communication throughout. The Act also provides for a new role of Service Complaints Ombudsman to be created. The Ombudsman will have significant new powers, including investigating whether an individual's complaint was handled correctly or whether there was undue delay in the process. The Ombudsman may also be able to investigate the substance of a complaint in some circumstances – however, the internal complaints process must be completed first. Nicola Williams, a former Complaints Commissioner in the Cayman Islands, succeeded Dr Susan Atkins as the Service Complaints Commissioner (SCC) in January 2015 and will be the first Ombudsman. Serving personnel will be able to contact the Ombudsman independently.

The new process will strike the right balance between maintaining the authority of the Chain of Command – which must be responsible for looking after its own people – and a strong, independent oversight through the Ombudsman. The reforms set out in the Act signal a step change in the process for handling complaints and in the powers of oversight, as the Commissioner becomes an Ombudsman with greater powers. The Ombudsman will add a more powerful, independent voice to the Armed Forces complaints system, holding the Services to account and in turn giving confidence to our personnel that their concerns will be properly considered. The Ombudsman will publish annual reports, in the same way as is required by the current role of the SCC, and these will be a valuable source of measurement that the new process is fair, effective and efficient. You can access SCC annual reports at: <http://armedforcescomplaints.independent.GOV.UK>

The Act also enables the Secretary of State to authorise financial assistance anywhere in the world in support of the Covenant.

Benefits and Tax

Members of the Armed Forces community should have the same access to benefits as any UK citizen, except where tailored alternative schemes are in place. They will also contribute

through taxation, but the taxation system may be adapted to reflect their particular circumstances.

What we have done this year to achieve this goal.

In line with our commitments from last year, we have agreed that Military spouses and civil partners reaching State Pension age from 6 April 2016 will be able to apply for the new national insurance credits to cover periods from 1975 that they have spent accompanying their Service partner on postings outside the UK. These new credits will help a person build qualifying years that will count towards entitlement to the new State Pension and Bereavement Benefits (until April 2017).

We have also made a number of other important changes including:

- Exempting HM Forces personnel who had served abroad, and from October 2015 extending this to their spouses or partners and children aged up to 21, where they travelled with them, from the three month residence requirement for claims to income-based Jobseeker's Allowance when they return to the UK. This enables payment of this benefit to be made to returnees immediately on arrival in the UK. This issue was raised by the Families Federations and serves as a good example of the positive collaboration between MOD and Other Government Departments in terms of supporting Service families.
- Allowing Reservists in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support or partners of a claimant in receipt of these benefits or Employment Support Allowance to attend up to 43 days training in their first year without needing to end their claim to benefit. Extending the training days in the first year of joining the Reserves means that unemployed people will be able to learn valuable new skills, including a new trade, which will help them move into work. Approximately 400 new Reserves a year will benefit from these changes.
- Inviting Families Federations to attend regional DWP Armed Forces champions meetings, to work more closely with the Armed Forces champions on issues arising specifically relating to the families, and also considering the possibility of the Families Federations delivering presentations to the Armed Forces champions. This is of benefit to the Armed Forces community as it makes sure the Armed Forces champions are aware of the specific issues being faced by the families, and they can then seek to address any DWP-related issues.



DWP North West Group Partnership Team was one of ten winners of the "Centre of Excellence" awards issued by the Veterans Council at their celebration event at the Imperial War Museum North. This is the Council's most prestigious award and their way of giving appreciation to those that have well and truly gone beyond their "call of duty".

Vicky Jeffers from the Jobcentre Plus North West Group Partnership Team receiving the "Centre of Excellence" award from Janet Gorry, from the Veterans Council.

The Merseyside Armed Forces Champion

“As a result of my attendance at the Wirral Armed Forces community Covenant Meeting, I was contacted by an Army wife who had returned to the family home on the Wirral from Germany following her husband’s deployment to Afghanistan.

She was looking for work and also trying to place her two children into a local school. Whilst in Germany she had been in charge of childcare on the base and was also a qualified teaching assistant.

By using my contacts via the Community Covenant Board I was able to place the children in the local primary school of choice and also got the Mum a job interview at the same school as a teaching assistant. She had an interview on the Friday and was offered a job starting the following Monday.”

This is a prime example of working with Armed Forces Partners via local authority and Community Covenant members in order to help spouse issues. Merseyside was the first City Region to have all its LAs signed up to Armed Forces community Covenants back in 2009-10.

In last year’s report, the Families Federations expressed disappointment that there was no commitment to extend the council tax discount for Service personnel on their second homes in Great Britain, when they are posted to NI and overseas. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) will be issuing a Council Tax Information Letter to LAs, reminding them of the Covenant and their existing powers, to grant a reduction to Service personnel posted outside the UK where council tax is still payable.

The Devolved Administrations are responsible for determining their own approach to council tax support for low income groups. The Welsh Government has therefore maintained full entitlements for all those eligible for a council tax reduction for 2014-15 and has committed to doing so until March 2017. 20 out of 22 LAs have also continued to disregard monies from War Widows and War Disablement pensions in full under the Council Tax Reduction schemes they have adopted for 2014-15.

In Wales, currently the first £10 a week of a war disablement pension is disregarded in the financial assessment, given part of the pension is to meet the costs of a Veteran’s care. This financial protection will be increased, from April 2016 when the Social Services and Well-being (Wales Act 2014) comes into force, a higher disregard to such pensions in the financial assessment of £25 a week. This increased disregard will apply to all forms of social care and support a Veteran receives. Although this does not fully disregard the compensation element of this pension it is a positive step which will provide a base from which we would hope this disregard could be increased further over the coming years.

Armed Forces personnel who live in Ministry of Defence provided accommodation are entitled to a 50% council tax discount on second homes that they own. These qualifying properties must be second homes, which are defined in legislation as unoccupied and furnished dwellings. Properties where the Armed Forces personnel live and to which the personnel return on leave are considered main residences and will not qualify for a discount. Individuals will need to apply to their local authority council tax Department to check eligibility and claim the discount.

Family Life

Service families give up certain freedoms and choices in order to support the Service. To sustain family life, family members should have the same access to childcare, training and employment opportunities as any other citizen.

- Support should be available to minimise the impact of mobility caused by Service, drawing on active monitoring by the Chain of Command.
- Support should also take into account the effects of postings to remote locations, often away from family connections, for example in promoting transport and accessibility measures.

What we have done this year to achieve these goals

In line with our commitments from last year, we have engaged with the SSAFA Adoption Support Team to help facilitate adoptions for Service families. We are also in the process of updating the MOD's adoption policy to reflect the latest developments. We will continue to work closely with the DfE to ensure coherence.

DWP and MOD intend to improve communication of job opportunities for spouses and partners via contacts with employers, Jobcentres and existing Service community nodes such as the Service Families Federations, HIVEs and Community Centres. Additionally, MOD and DWP are considering a formal scheme to record and recognise transferable skills. Spouses will also receive support with a Personal Employment Plan (PEP) via a Career Transition Partnership Career Consultant, to identify the training and qualifications required to achieve their desired employment outcome.

Additional things we have done

This year we have looked at ways to further support spouse employment. This includes:

- Engagement with senior industry representatives to explore ways in which employers can support spouse employment to exploit their mobility through short-term mobile roles.
- Options to extend the scope of employment insight days currently offered to Service Leavers, to include spouses.
- The MOD Career Consultancy Service is exploring ways of extending its services to spouses as part of their schedule of site visits.
- The launch of the two year Spouse Employment Support Trial which will run two pilots; one by the RAF at selected locations throughout the UK for 200 RAF spouses, and the other by Joint Forces Command for 240 spouses in Cyprus. The project aims to help spouses to maintain or enhance their employment options through education and training courses, as well as supporting them in finding employment. The programme will help spouses optimise access to employment at a level commensurate with their skills, knowledge and experience and in accordance with their aspirations and abilities. The project will offer grants of up to £879 to eligible participants towards the cost of training courses to help them find employment.

In 2013 we announced that where appropriate, Service personnel overseas would be allowed to apply for Royal Mail Shares. In preparation for the sale of Lloyds shares, the Chancellor has agreed that both Service personnel and families posted overseas will be able to participate in the sale. This is a demonstration of the Covenant in action.

UK Armed Forces Families Strategy 2015-2020

Whilst the MOD has made good progress in improving support to families, some inconsistencies remain in our policies and we know from surveys and feedback from Service personnel and Families Federations that dissatisfaction remains in some areas. Developing a UK Armed Forces Families' Strategy will enable us to review our approach and improve our understanding of family issues, with the aim of achieving a more contented workforce and thereby directly enhancing our operational capability.

The Strategy recognises the unique challenges that Service families face, including periods of separation from family members often at short notice, overseas, or on the back of a previous deployment; and being located away from the wider family network – all with little or no choice on the part of the Service person or their family. It is these additional pressures that are not experienced by the families of those in other professions (who could opt to change employer). Service personnel must be confident that they have the support of their family, and that their family is being appropriately considered, and when necessary, supported. The Strategy's vision is to create resilient and self-sufficient families, and it will do this by placing the Service family at the centre of our policy formulation and aligning our resources to best effect. In all the work that we do to support Service families we must consider how we can increase choice, promote resilience and self-sufficiency and, in line with the Armed Forces Covenant, ensure fairness. The Strategy will be supported by an action plan which will be reviewed on a 12-18 month basis and will detail how the priorities will be achieved and success measured.



The FANDF Committee

The Forces Additional Needs & Disability Forum (FANDF) celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 2014 and has evolved over the years from the Queen Elizabeth Group to the current forum. The FANDF is made up of forum members; Service families with a family member, either a child or an adult, with additional needs and/or disability and the Full Members' Committee who represent the forum members.

The FANDF is facilitated by the SSAFA Additional Needs and Disability Advisor (ANDA), who also has responsibility for the SSAFA Short Breaks. These breaks are for children of Service families with an additional need and/or disability. This allows them an opportunity to have a release from their day-to-day lives, experience new activities, build their confidence, and challenge themselves. They gain independence, make friends and enjoy new experiences, and of course have a huge amount of fun! The short breaks are available to all Service Families and go some way to compensate for the lack of local provision, which can differ greatly from one area to another.

The FANDF is an ideal place for families to raise awareness of issues affecting them and therefore highlighting the disadvantages they face because of Service life, especially due to regularly moving home. Currently, with the Armed Forces Covenant being a commitment by Government to ensure that the Armed Forces community is treated fairly, the FANDF has an important role in raising examples of disadvantage that families face with the appropriate people or organisations.



Families enjoying a break

The future challenges for the FANDF include working with MOD and outside agencies to help families with transferring their medical, educational and social care needs as smoothly and efficiently as possible on posting, as well as helping them to find suitable support networks when they leave their existing provision behind. Unfortunately localism does have an impact on Service families when trying to move health and social care packages or transferring medical treatment, because of the different funding and eligibility criteria in each local authority (LA) or Clinical Commissioning Group.

An example of where the FANDF has been able to help is when a family with an adult with a disability needed to move from one adapted property to another in a different location. However before the new property could be adapted the adult with disability required a new occupational therapists (OT) report. But because she wasn't currently living in the local authority (LA) and wasn't registered with a GP there, she was told she would have to go to the bottom of the waiting list. This potentially could have taken months for her to reach the top. As a member of FANDF this lady raised the issue with MOD representatives and the LA was contacted. The OT then agreed to do the assessment on the new property within a reasonable timescale.

FANDF, together with various MOD Departments, has also published the *Additional Needs and Disability - A Guide for Service Families*. This guide gives comprehensive information about MOD policy around additional needs and disability, guiding families to the appropriate people (both within MOD and externally) who can help them with any issues. It also gives families information on the Armed Forces Covenant and signposts

them to where they can get obtain further information about it. The guide is available in hard copy from the SSAFA ANDA or as a pdf. To receive a copy of the Guide please contact the Additional Needs and Disability Adviser at SSAFA on 0207 463 9315.

Transition

Support should be available for all Service personnel in order to assist their transition from Service to civilian life.

- Provision should include training, education, appropriate healthcare referral and job-finding preparation and assistance.
- It should also include information, advice and guidance on such matters as housing and financial management, and the availability of support from Government Departments and the Voluntary and Community sector.
- The level of support will be dependent upon individual circumstances.

What we have done this year to achieve these goals

In October, the MOD awarded Right Management Ltd the new Career Transition Partnership (CTP) contract. The new contract will provide a single consolidated programme to help support Service leavers translate their skills, experience and qualifications into a successful civilian career. Following engagement with our external partners, including TRBL, we have changed the contract, so that for the first time all Service leavers, regardless of how long they have served or their reason for discharge, will benefit from the scheme. In addition, a number of technological improvements have also been made to improve the resettlement process. For example Plotr, a revolutionary website aimed at 18-24 year olds, which analyses preferences for different aspects of the world of work, explains the individual's career character type in detail and presents career options which are percentage-matched to their personal qualities, interests and drivers. We want to encourage all Service leavers to use the CTP. Therefore, we have created four tailored programmes:

- Core Resettlement Programme – available to those who have served more than six years and all medical discharges (regardless of time served).
- Employment Support Programme – available to those who have served between four and six years.
- CTP Future Horizons – previously known as the Early Service Leaver Programme, is available to those who leave before the four-year point or those who lose entitlement to other programmes because of a compulsory discharge.
- CTP Assist – a specialised career service to help wounded, injured and sick personnel to achieve a sustainable and fulfilling career, regardless of time served.

The new contract also includes a Reservists Employment Support Trial. The two year trial will provide employment support for eligible Volunteer Reservists to assist in accessing the job market. It is designed to help Reservists remain in the Reserves by providing support to their civilian employment aspirations. The CTP has delivered resettlement services to members of the Armed Forces since 1998 and assisted over 200,000 Service

leavers with their transition to civilian life. In 2013-14 84 per cent of Service leavers using the CTP found sustainable employment within six months of leaving the Armed Forces. Further thought will be given to how we support and engage the family in the transition process as part of the new UK Armed Forces Families' Strategy.



Leading Hand Gillian Dowds has served for almost 10 years in The Royal Navy, and is due to discharge in late 2015. Gillian is planning to utilise her military experience in a project or change management role.

“I’m an Aircraft Controller currently based at RNAS Yeovilton. I joined The Royal Navy straight out of school at age 17, and having now served for 10 years, I feel ready to explore civilian life and to utilise my skills in the civilian job market. The timing is perfect for me, as I have no children and no mortgage, and I’d also like to travel.

The military provided me with some fantastic training that will be recognised in the civilian job market; I gained a Level 3 qualification in Management and Leadership and then used my Standard Learning Credits (SLCs) to convert that to a BTEC Level 5. I also used my SLCs to complete a European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) qualification, which is great for IT skills. Additionally, I was lucky enough to complete the Train the Trainer course, which I have now converted to a civilian-recognised qualification, giving me a BTEC Level 3 in Education and Training.

In terms of the soft skills gained during my military service, I think they will all be useful in civilian life! Every job advert I look at requires candidates with the ability to lead a team, and communication also seems to be a key attribute, which I think people in the military do really well – we are taught to be good communicators from day one. Time management also comes as a given with the Service personnel, along with the ability to build and maintain strong relationships. Additionally, most Service leavers have experience working in the most highly demanding environments in the world – whether it’s in the ice or the deserts in Afghanistan.

I think the level of support provided to Service leavers is second to none. I attended a Career Transition Workshop (CTW in November 2014) the facilitators gave me so much useful information, including a run-through of the CTP website, interview techniques, CVs and application forms, along with helping me identify my transferrable skills. That information is priceless.

I attended a recent CTP employment fair in Bristol which was very good – I spoke to about 26 different companies. Even though not all of them are looking for people with your skills, they give you some great advice and point you in the right direction. I have already received positive feedback from a number of organisations, and have connected with several via LinkedIn.

I'm planning to go into project management or change management and have used my Enhanced Learning Credits (ELCs) to complete PRINCE 2) and Lean Six Sigma courses. I'm hoping to enter into the business sector, and maybe do some night school or distance learning with my remaining ELCs to study for a degree in business."

What advice would you give to other Service leavers beginning the resettlement process?

"Attend the CTW as soon as possible to give you time to start researching your future career; there's so much open to you and although you may feel like 12 months is a long time, it flies by. And then make the most of the resettlement package; there's so much available to Service leavers, whether it's the CTW, CTP website with videos, tips and advice, events, company presentations, employment fairs or workshops like the Focus @ 4. Take full advantage of everything that's available to you and get involved."

Many of the areas covered by this Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report are relevant to the transition our people make between serving in the Armed Forces and returning to civilian life. It has been recognised that good progress has been made against the recommendations made in the Veterans' Transition Review. Of the 45 discrete recommendations 29 are fully in place and considered closed; a total of 16 are partially in place with further development planned and time-tabled. Throughout this report there are themes running which reflect the progress being made in supporting our Veterans through areas where they face the greatest challenges to making a successful transition.

The Welsh Government recognises transition from life in the Services to life in the community can be overwhelming. Working with the Transition Team in 160 Infantry Brigade and Headquarters in Wales which represents all three Services in Wales, to provide advice and information to Service Personnel and their families on Education, Employment, Health, Housing and Welfare issues, and to help Service Personnel prepare for transition back into civilian life.



Defence Secretary Michael Fallon speaking at the 2015 MOD welfare conference

Defence Secretary welcomes employment pilot for Veterans, Michael Fallon has backed the Veterans Employment Transition Support programme (VETS) that will provide mentoring, training and advice to Service leavers. Initiated by Barclays, the VETS is a partnership of leading companies and charities. It will support the Ministry of Defence and Career Transition Partnership (CTP) in helping service leavers as they seek to find employment, and provide mentoring, training and advice to Veterans, regardless of when they left the Armed Forces.

Through the partnership, Veterans will also be matched to work experience and job opportunities that best match their skills and career aspirations, while employers will get advice on how to recruit and then utilise the particular skills of Veterans.

The partnership will build on the work of the CTP which ensures that Armed Forces personnel are well supported when they leave service and can translate their skills, experience and qualifications into a successful civilian career.

Support after Service

The Covenant involves an obligation for life, and the commitment and sacrifices made by Veterans in the past, as well as their continuing value to society, should be properly recognised in the support they receive.

- In accessing services, former members of the Armed Forces should expect the same level of support as any other citizen in society.
- Pension schemes should be fair and appropriate to the particular circumstances of Service personnel. All Veterans will be able to access advice and in some cases additional support, from the MOD (Veterans UK), elsewhere in Government, and the charitable sector, although their access may be affected if they do not live in the UK.
- Those who have been in Service, or have a health condition relating to Service, should receive additional support which may include a financial element depending on their circumstances (e.g. through the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme or War Pension Scheme).
- Bereaved families should receive assistance commensurate with the loss that they have suffered, including help during the vital, but difficult inquest process.

Veterans

The Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans, provides the cross-Government lead for promoting action to support Veterans, and to develop specific services for them where their needs are different from the rest of the population. The MOD aims to ensure that all leaving the Service make a successful transition to civilian life, including understanding the support available to them as Veterans, which is based on choice and citizen empowerment, not dependency. The Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) provides help and advice to Veterans, their families and dependants. Welfare support is provided automatically to those medically discharged and those bereaved by Service, with an 'on request' service for all other members of the Veterans community. The MOD runs the Veterans Helpline (0808 1914 2 18).

What we have done this year to achieve these goals

In last year's report Cobseo expressed concern over the ability of Veterans to access the support available to them. Therefore, from October 2015 staff from the Veterans Welfare Service have been embedded into The Royal British Legion High Street drop in Centres.

The Service leavers pack compiled by Veterans UK also now contains information on the support provided by key charities such as The Royal British Legion and SSAFA. And where the MOD identifies potentially vulnerable Service leavers they get early access to the Veterans' Welfare Service to help them manage their welfare issues during transition. The MOD also contacts Veterans one year after leaving the Services to signpost where to go to obtain support, should they need it (e.g. the Vets UK website, or TRBL's Knowledge base). The MOD believes that the support for Veterans exists but it will look at ways to make it easier for Veterans to access the high levels of support available. We will report on this further in next year's report.

In last year's report Cobseo suggested that it might be worth evaluating how developments in the Devolved Administrations to support Veterans could be applied across the UK. This year the CRG discussed Wales and will discuss Northern Ireland and Scotland in future meetings. Further details on how the Devolved Administrations support Veterans are set out below.

The Start Up Loans scheme: <https://www.gov.uk/start-up-loans> was created by Government in 2012. The aim was to provide loans and mentoring support to 18-24 year olds who wanted to start a business, yet were unable to borrow from mainstream finance lenders. First loans were issued in September of that year. Due to the success of the programme the age limit was raised to 30 (in January 2013) then removed altogether in September 2013. As of 30th September 2015 32,814 loans have been made with a value of £176.1 million. The programme is now available to loan recipients of any age based all across the UK.

In July 2013 the Delivery Partner Ex-Forces was brought on to the scheme to focus on supporting Veterans and their families. To date they have provided around 450 loans with a value of £4.7 million.

Xerus aims to help integrate members of the ex-services into the construction industry. Founder, **Raymond Jude**, estimates that there are over 28,000 working age Veterans in Scotland who are currently unemployed, Xerus is his attempt at addressing the issue.

The company was established in 2014 with the support of £11,000 from the Start Up Loans Company. Raymond had previously worked in both the construction industry and the Armed Forces and strongly believed that the many unemployed ex-forces personnel had a wide range of skills that they could offer in everyday working life. So he decided to reach out and utilise their talents through his own company.

Quality is the primary priority at Xerus and largely through word of mouth they have managed to amass a diverse and wide ranging client list. Xerus offers a range of services from quotes, to the installation of kitchens. As well as this the company also utilises the skills of their ex-forces workforce to produce plans for constructions projects. Currently there are four employees working for Xerus with Raymond hoping to expand the team, including taking on some apprentices in the coming months.

Having served in the Armed Forces as a Warfare Officer for The Royal Navy surface fleet, including conducting an intensive training programme at the prestigious Dartmouth Naval Academy, Tom Dunn decided to return to civilian life in the hope of starting his own business.

Working closely with his friend Angus Sales and with the help of a £25,000 Start Up Loan, Tom set up Beard and Sabre, a cider manufacturer. The business currently make one type of cider, "Apple Smuggler", which is sold in a bag-in-box. Eventually Tom wants to go on to sell bottles and cider by-products such as vinegar, cider sweets and pomace fire-bricks as well as the development of their own orchard.



Tom's advice to anyone thinking about setting up their own business; "You need to take the jump otherwise it will always be something you 'would like to do' or 'think about'; before you know it you'll be at retirement and will have missed the opportunity." For him the freedom that being his own boss provides makes all the hard work worthwhile.

Veterans in the criminal justice system

What we have done this year

As set out in last year's report, the independent review into the rehabilitation needs of Veterans in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) by Stephen Phillips QC MP was published in December 2014. At the same time, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) also published a rapid evidence assessment into the needs of Veterans in the CJS which helped inform the Phillips review.

The rapid evidence assessment concluded that, in general, the needs of Veterans appear to be broadly similar to those of the general offending population in the CJS, although some specific areas of need may be more prevalent, such as mental health issues (e.g. depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and alcohol misuse. There is also some evidence to suggest that levels of physical health problems and disability might also be higher among Veterans in prison, though Veterans are less likely to have a drug problem.

The Government response to the review, also published in December 2014, set out a number of actions being taken forward by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and others to improve outcomes for this cohort, including improving identification of Veterans in the CJS and greater partnership working between agencies.

In January 2015, the MoJ introduced a new tool that asks all new offenders entering prison if they have served in the Armed Forces. In addition, our probation reforms are ensuring that for the first time in recent history, virtually every offender released from custody is receiving statutory supervision and rehabilitation in the community. Additionally, Liaison and Diversion services at police stations and courts assess offenders for vulnerabilities, such as mental health or alcohol misuse issues before making referrals to local treatment and support services. This assessment records whether an offender served in the Armed Forces, which can be used to inform referrals to specific services for ex-Service personnel. Furthermore, support to Veterans in the CJS has been agreed as one of the 2015-16 funding priorities for the £10 million p.a. Armed Forces Covenant fund by the Covenant Reference Group, which will review priorities on an annual basis.

In Scotland, all 14 Police Scotland Local Police Divisions have now identified a Veterans Champion and they have regular meetings with an Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) adviser. For any individual in custody, a question has been added to the Prisoner Vulnerability Assessment to ascertain whether the individual is serving or has ever served in the Armed Forces. This allows custody staff to make a referral to the ASAP adviser, or to provide the individual with the information to make a self-referral. The Welsh Government has produced a Pathway to Care for Veteran Prisoners. All prisons have a dedicated resource to help Veterans in prison access health services appropriate to their needs.

In each Scottish prison there is a Veteran in Custody Support officer (VICSO), to provide information and co-ordinate activities and services to meet Veteran's needs. Furthermore, the Scottish Prison Service have established a Scottish Veterans Prison In-Reach Group (SVPIRG) which aims to ensure that incarcerated ex-Service personnel benefit from the full range of services and interventions currently provided by SPS and partner agencies.

Building on the Pathway to care, in 2014/15, the Welsh Government working with the National Offender Management Service and other partners designed a whole-system approach to supporting Veterans who find themselves in contact with the Criminal Justice System in Wales. The ultimate goal is a consistent service for Veterans across Wales from police call out, through custody suites, court, probation, prison and resettlement into the community, which identifies and records Veterans systematically and signposts them to specialist Veteran support services, relevant to their individual, holistic needs. The whole-system approach will ensure Veterans will be signposted to specialist local charitable services at multiple stages of the offender journey through the criminal justice system and aims to ultimately reduce re-offending amongst this group.

In January 2015 HMP Parc created the Endeavour Unit; a wing specifically for ex-Service Personnel and first time in custody prisoners. Staff running this unit were specially selected, often being ex-Service Personnel themselves and understand the importance of creating a specific identity and positive culture which has engagement and motivation at its heart. An array of specialist Veteran support services in the community are being given access to the Unit so that their services can be provided to the prisoners and their families in preparation for release.

Veterans from a Devolved Administration perspective

Scotland

In the year since his appointment as Scotland's first Veterans Commissioner, Eric Fraser has worked with individual Veterans, charities, LAs and health boards to identify improvements in the support provided by Scotland's public services to the ex-Service community, culminating in his first two reports on *Transition in Scotland* and *Housing Information*, which he presented to Scottish Ministers and public service leaders earlier in the year. The Scottish Government is leading work with partners to identify how recommendations from both reports can best be implemented, including those on employability, health, housing and information provision. One of the Commissioner's longer term objectives is to change wider perceptions of Veterans, to encourage them to be viewed as real assets to our workplaces and communities. To achieve this, he is working with Scottish Ministers, the Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group on Armed Forces Veterans and partners drawn from the public, private and third sectors to challenge

the barriers which prevent ex-servicemen and women from realising their full potential and to promote the many strengths and skills they offer.

The Scottish Veterans Fund has now made almost £700,000 available to 87 projects since 2008 specifically designed to help and support Veterans across Scotland. Scottish Government funding of the scheme has also increased to £120,000 per annum from 2013-14. The Scottish Government has provided Veterans Scotland with capacity-building funding of £200,000 over three years in order to develop new and improved support for the 400,000 Veterans across Scotland and facilitate the exchange of good practice between service providers in the private, public and voluntary sectors. The Scottish Government will build on its existing excellent working relationship with Veterans Scotland by helping it to grow, expand and work better with the many ex-Service charities delivering support for Veterans in Scotland.

Wales

Key activities for Wales are as follows:

- A number of LAs have undertaken work to gain a better understanding of the needs of the Armed Forces Community in their locality. Public workshops and needs assessments have been undertaken to determine the scope of the work.
- Work is continuing with LAs supporting charities such as The Royal British Legion (TRBL), in the establishment of advice and information hubs and outreach locations. These locations are a tangible example of the Community Covenant in action as the establishment of a number of the hubs have been achieved as a result of joint working between the Legion and local authority partners via local Community Covenant groups.
- Increased recurrent funding from 2015-2016 for Veterans NHS Wales to ensure demand is met and waiting times minimised for those with mental health issues, to access the service. In addition to this the Deputy Minister for Health recently announced a £50m investment in programmes to tackle drug and alcohol abuse over the next year, ex-Service personnel will benefit from this funding.
- During 2014/15 The Welsh Local Government Association launched the Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru initiative. This provides guidance, advice and signposting on supporting Service children in education in Wales. It also looks at the potential issues affecting Service children as a result of mobility and deployment. The project was funded through the Community Covenant grant.
- The £2 million funding made available in 2013-14 to provide housing for Armed Services leavers in Wales has been allocated to LAs in Wales. To date this has helped 9 service leavers and their families find suitable accommodation, with other new build homes awaiting completion for occupancy by ex-Service leavers and their families.
- An awareness campaign to promote the benefits of signing up to the Defence Privilege Card for the Armed Forces community in Wales was launched in November 2014. The campaign ran until Armed Forces Day in June 2015, with a target of 25% increase in membership. The increase in Veterans signing up for a

card exceeded the target and at the close of the campaign stood at 57% with members reporting good savings made by using their cards.

- An information leaflet giving information on access to services and support has been developed in partnership with 160 Infantry Brigade & Headquarters in Wales, public sector bodies and representatives of the third sector. The leaflet has been disseminated across a wide range of organisations and fora in Wales.
- Specific projects include the provision of mentoring opportunities in Anglesey, working with TRBL on the information hubs, and in Wrexham, Colwyn Bay, Carmarthen and other locations, developments with First Choice Housing on the delivery of supported accommodation for ex-forces personnel. Further developments in other locations are currently being worked up
- In Wrexham this has culminated in the development of Ty Dewr (Brave House), an 8 bedded high support unit for Veterans, due to be opened in the Autumn, this has been developed alongside an outdoor gymnasium which will be open to civilians and Armed Forces personnel, hoping to achieve community cohesion by bringing the two communities together. Wrexham local authority has also gifted land which will form the foundation on which to develop a Community Self-Build Agency. This will give Veterans the opportunity to build their own accommodation. Work on this will begin shortly.
- The Welsh Government is working in partnership with the National Offender Management Service in Wales (NOMS) and applying the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Cymru principles to enhance the use of existing service provision through reconfiguration of key agency resources and improved co-ordination of organisational activity – The ‘Whole System’ approach. The proposal suggests the initial priority based on the needs identified should focus on the period between reception into prison custody to resettlement on release – the Veteran Prisoner Pathway. Initial discussions have also taken place to determine linkages with the Effective Services for Vulnerable Groups programme and what steps can be taken to divert ex-Service personnel from offending and re-offending.

Northern Ireland

Key activities in Northern Ireland include:

- A concessionary fares scheme that entitles those in receipt of a regular War Disablement Pension or Guaranteed Income Payment (and permanently resident in Northern Ireland) to free travel on public transport. Translink, the Government-owned and operated public transport provider in Northern Ireland has undertaken to promote its current range of promotional fares and offers directly to Armed Forces personnel and their families.
- A review of the UDR & R IRISH Aftercare Service. This bespoke service was due to come to an end in 2016. However, following the review, the Aftercare Service will continue to provide support and care to up to 63,000 Veterans of Operation BANNER (the operation in Northern Ireland from 1969 to 2007) and their

dependants through to at least 2020. Such bespoke provision does not exist for former members of any other Armed Forces unit and is unique to NI.

- Each of the 11 newly formed Council areas in NI has elected a 'Veterans Champion' who will work with RFCA NI to support the needs of Veterans in their area. This will help improve communication and awareness and thus the provision of support to those who require it most and will play a key role in promoting Covenant activity across the Province.
- TRBL has opened a 'Pop-in centre' in Belfast (December 2014), one of 16 across the UK. This aims to extend the charity's reach within the community and improve accessibility to advice and services across NI.

2015 Report Commitment

The MOD will look at ways to make it easier for Veterans to access the high levels of support available. We will report on this further in next year's report.

Pensions

What we have done this year

From 1 April 2015, changes to survivor benefits became effective in both the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 75 (AFPS75) and the War Pension Scheme (WPS). The changes ensure that widows, widowers and surviving civil partners now retain their pensions for life. Those who have already surrendered their pension due to remarriage or cohabitation can apply to have their pension restored for life should their subsequent relationship end. 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 prevents many earning their own occupational pension, which will have placed them at a disadvantage in trying to plan for their own financial future.

Last year Cobseo expressed concern about the time taken to process compensation claims. We believe the delay is due to the sharp increase in claims which, to ensure fairness to all, are dealt with in the order they are received. DBS Veterans UK has taken steps in response to the workload increase, including the appointment of several new Medical Advisors and Caseworkers. We expect to see an improvement in clearance times as a result.

Reserves

We continue to restructure and revitalise the nation's Reserve Forces in accordance with the plans set out in the 2013 White Paper, *Reserves in the Future Force 2020: Valuable and Valued*. Reserve Forces are an essential element of the Armed Forces which is delivering capability alongside their regular colleagues at home and overseas.

What we have done this year

In line with our commitments in last year's report:

- On 1 April 2015 Reserves became eligible for the new Armed Forces Pension Scheme 2015 for non-mobilised service, based on paid attendance. This means that Reservists can now receive pension contributions for all Reserve activity.
- Over £14 million is being invested to deliver a significant change in occupational health service to Reservists. There are programmes in place to make sure mental health briefings and preparations for Reservists are aligned with those for Regular personnel. In particular, Reservists are made aware of how and where they can get assistance for any mental health concerns during the immediate post deployment phase when they are away from their unit. To ensure greater parity between Reservists and Regulars and to restore the health and fitness of Reservists with injuries, we are also expanding rehabilitation provision to include rehabilitation for those injured during Reserve training.
- The MOD is currently in discussion with HM Courts and Tribunal Service to obtain data on the number of cases taken to employment tribunals by Reservists and we will continue to monitor this. We have also established a web-based portal for Reservists who feel they have been disadvantaged in, or when seeking, employment.

Although the recruiting environment is challenging, the number of people enlisting in the Reserve Forces is increasing. Official figures published in August this year showed that the trained strength of the Reserves at 1 September 2015 was 25,720; an increase of 2,410 when compared to 1 September 2014.

Defence has improved the offer to Reservists in recognition of their commitment to train and deploy when required on operations at home and overseas. As well as payment for attending training and performing duties, Reservists are now receiving:

- Accredited training and access to Standard Learning Credits;
- Occupational health checks and improved medical support;
- Improved access to welfare support; and
- Access to the Armed Forces Railcard, offering Reservists and their families 1/3 off rail fares.

Reserves now have access to the same equipment and technology as Regulars and receive high quality, challenging training, including more opportunities to train overseas.

Employer Support

The support of employers is essential to our plans to grow our Reserve Forces and we are seeking closer, open and tailored relationships with employers based on mutual benefit. Defence supports employers by providing:

- Transferable skills and civilian-accredited training from Reserve service;

- Longer notice of future training commitments and mobilisation plans through the systematic employer notification system so that employers can plan ahead;
- Financial assistance in the event of their Reservist employees being mobilised to cover additional salary costs, recruitment fees, costs involved in training and equipping replacements, and retraining for the Reservist employee on their return;
- Increased financial incentive payments to small and medium-sized companies when their employees are mobilised, in addition to the financial assistance provided to other employers;
- Recognition for supportive employers with Reservist-friendly policies through the Employer Recognition Scheme. In 2014, 10 employers received Gold Awards and 358 received Silver Awards. 123 Silver awards have been presented so far in 2015 and Gold award winners will be announced in January 2016.

The Defence Relationship Management organisation is building strong relationships with up to 200 national employers. Regional Employer Engagement Directors are fulfilling a similar role with key regional businesses and other organisations.

Reserves Day 2015, previously known as Uniform to Work Day, provided an opportunity to celebrate the commitment made by Reservists. It was also an opportunity for the hundreds of employers across the country to recognise their Reservist employees. Employers such as British Airways, Bentley, BT, Google, National Express, Rolls-Royce, Tesco, The AA and Vodafone, as well as a number of industry partners including BAE Systems, Carillion and Serco, all showed their support by holding events and seminars to promote the work of their employees who are Reservists, and also invited their employees to wear their Reservist uniform at work.



Defence Secretary Michael Fallon hosting a reception to thank the UK's Reservists and their employers

Recognition

The Armed Forces community is entitled to appropriate recognition for the unique service which it has given, and continues to give, to the Nation, and the unlimited liability which the Service person assumes.

- This recognition will include national commemorations and celebrations such as Remembrance Sunday and Armed Forces Day.
- The award of campaign medals and individual gallantry awards will continue to be used in recognition of individual sacrifice and meritorious service.

- The HM Armed Forces Veterans badge is available to all Veterans in recognition of their service.

What we have done this year to achieve these goals

In line with our commitment in last year's report, in spring 2015, the Defence Secretary announced the introduction of a new post-nominal for all Reservists who have served for 10 years or more. This recognises the tremendous and growing contribution Reserve Forces make to our national security. More broadly we have continued to support a comprehensive programme of remembrance in recognition on the enormous contribution made by our Armed Forces. The details of which are summarised below.

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 would be to deliver a truly national commemoration, worthy of this historic centenary; a commemoration that would capture our national spirit, in every corner of the country, from our schools to our workplaces, to our town halls and local communities. The centenary would 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 would still be remembered in a hundred years' time. The programme was to be built around the key themes of: Remembrance; Youth; Education. Significant events this year include:

- On 10 March 2015, a commemorative event was held at the Imperial War Museum (North) in Manchester to mark the centenary of the Indian Army's involvement at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle and we continue to work with partners to mark the contribution of other key events including the Caribbean regiments and the sinking of the SS Mendi.
- On Friday 24 and Saturday 25 April 2015, the centenary occasion of the Gallipoli campaign was marked by a high profile and significant programme of commemorations attended by The Prince of Wales, The Duke of Cambridge and Prince Henry at Cape Helles on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey; and by HM The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh at the Cenotaph in London.
- On 25 April 2015, The Royal British Legion Scotland hosted a commemorative event at Edinburgh Castle marking the 100th anniversary of the commencement of the First World War's Gallipoli Campaign, honouring the sacrifices of Scotland's men and women.

Over the next four years, further key dates will be remembered, including the end of the war, the anniversary of major military battles at Loos and Arras, the naval battle of Jutland, the tragic domestic incidents of the Gretna rail disaster and the loss of HMY Lolair. Cross-Government planning is also underway for two of the more significant national events in 2016 to mark the Battle of Jutland (31 May) and the Battle of the Somme (1 July) and future events will also be held to mark 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 last year's Remembrance Sunday ceremony at the Cenotaph and this will continue in future years.

As part of its on-going programme to commemorate the centenary of WW1, Scotland is commemorating three events in 2015: the Gallipoli Campaign, the tragedy of the Quintinshill rail disaster and the Battle of Loos. Whilst there have been acts of remembrance for those who died in these events. The Scottish Commemoration Panel is involved in a number of educational events and activities. On 18 November, the first educational engagement arranged by the Panel, in cooperation with key national bodies, takes place in Edinburgh. The event is aimed at senior secondary pupils studying history. The theme for 2015 is Recruitment and Conscription. Further information can be found at: www.ww100Scotland.com.

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. Over the remaining years of the commemorative period the Welsh Government will be focussing on events with a particular resonance for Wales, including the engagement of Welsh troops during the Gallipoli Campaign (August 2015); the 38th (Welsh) Division's engagement during the Battle of Mametz Wood (July 2016); the 38th (Welsh) Division's engagement during the Battle of Passchendaele (July 2017); and Armistice Day (November 2018), particularly the role of David Lloyd George.

World War Two

The Prime Minister recognised the requirement to commemorate two significant anniversaries, which feature deeply within the heritage of our Nation, namely Victory in Europe Day and Victory over Japan Day.

From 8-10 May 2015 the Nation formally marked the 70th anniversary of the VE Day, which was marked as a public holiday as the formal end of the Second World War. The PM led the tributes and wreath laying at the Cenotaph on 8 May 2015 and it was followed with a reception attended by Veterans at the Foreign Office. However, the main events were held across the country on Sunday 10 May 2015 and the national commemorations were led by a Service at Westminster Abbey, attended by Her Majesty The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. A parade led by Service personnel followed, with approximately 2,000 Veterans 'on parade'; HRH The Prince of Wales took the salute on Horseguards and accompanied the Veterans and their families at a reception in St James Park. The event was covered extensively by UK and international news outlets.

On Saturday 15 August 2015, VJ Day was commemorated to ensure the 'Forgotten Army' was appropriately marked by the Nation in a show of our thanks to the Veterans, widows and family descendants of both those who served, and military, civilian prisoners of war. The MOD supported a private service of commemoration at St Martin-in-the-Fields, which Her Majesty The Queen attended. The MOD led and organised a drumhead service and fly-past on Horseguards in the afternoon for circa 2000 Veterans, civilians and family members, supported by TRH The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall. Following the service the Veterans formed up to parade past the Cenotaph on route to a formal reception in the College Gardens of Westminster Abbey.

LIBOR funding underwrote elements of the day, including the infrastructure and the garden party.

Armed Forces Day

Armed Forces Day is a chance for the public to show their support for, and gratitude to the men and women who make up the Armed Forces community: from current Serving personnel to Service families, Veterans and cadets. Launched by the Government in 2009, the annual event takes place on the last Saturday in June.

There are many ways for people, communities and organisations across the country to show their support and get involved, from attending an event or joining the discussion online to throwing a party or local event. Last year, **more than 300 events** were held across the country by cities, towns, borough councils, associations and individuals. The 2015 national event in Guildford was **attended by around 40,000 people** and was supported by HRH the Duke of York and the Prime Minister. We expect an even bigger crowd at the 2016 national event in North East Lincolnshire, as it is one of the most popular locally-organised events in the country.

The Online Armed Forces Day community is vast and continues to grow, **with more than 1.3 million followers on Facebook** and a very active and discursive community. This year there were more than **13,000 mentions of the #SaluteOurForces** picture campaign on social media, and on the day itself, **Armed Forces Day was the number one trend on Twitter in the UK.**

Afghanistan – End of Combat Operations

On 13 March 2015, the Government formally and publicly paid its respects to the contribution of those who served and supported the 13 year period of operations in Afghanistan from October 2001 to 31 December 2014. The Government marked the occasion with a Service of Commemoration, Reflection and Remembrance at St Paul's Cathedral. The service was attended by Her Majesty The Queen and Members of The Royal Family, the Prime Minister, bereaved families, current serving personnel and injured Veterans. The reflective, commemorative service was followed by a fly-past and a tri-Service parade through the City of London. The parade route to the formal reception at the Guildhall was lined with a supportive general public.

In addition, Camp Bastion Memorial Wall, Helmand Province, honouring the British Service personnel who died on operations in Afghanistan was deconstructed at the end of operations and elements of the original memorial were placed in the foundations of the new Bastion Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum. A formal Service of Dedication to unveil the Bastion Memorial was attended by HRH Prince Henry of Wales and the Prime Minister on 11 June 2015. This event was primarily for the families of those whose names are inscribed on the memorial, however, it also provided an opportunity for Serving personnel to pay their respects to their Service colleagues who died on operations. These were two high-profile events that gained significant media coverage to endorse the services of our Armed Forces under the recognition umbrella.

In last year's report, Cobseo stressed that we needed to be clearer about the place of Merchant Navy Veterans within the Armed Forces community. In response we would like to be absolutely clear that Members of The Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Merchant Navy deserve recognition for their service to this country in successive conflicts. All

those who have served on a civilian vessel whilst it was supporting HM Armed Forces are recognised as Veterans. It is therefore appropriate that this group is recognised and supported by the Armed Forces Covenant. This is a sign of the nation's gratitude.

Members of The Royal Fleet Auxiliary are eligible for the HM Armed Forces Veterans badge, whilst the Merchant Seafarers Veterans badge is available to qualifying members of the Merchant Navy. Civilian seafarers can also qualify for appropriate Campaign Medals such as the Atlantic Star, Arctic Star and South Atlantic Medals, which recognise the outstanding service of all those who served on the dangerous convoys of the Second World War and subsequent operations."

In last year's report, the Families Federations suggested that 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 MOD is aware of this issue which we understand relates specifically to access to social housing. The Government will continue to work closely with the Families Federations to look at options to address this concern.

2015 Report Commitment

The MOD will continue working with the Families Federations to gather further evidence on the inclusion of divorced spouses in the categories of the Armed Forces community and report on the subject in next year's report.

Participation As Citizens

The Armed Forces community should be able to participate as citizens to the same extent as any UK citizen, subject to the necessary constraints on the activities of public servants.

- This includes taking a full part in the electoral process.
- Members of the Armed Forces community who are not UK citizens should be able to access routes to citizenship as easily as others seeking citizenship, unaffected by any Service overseas.

What we have done this year to achieve these goals

Following discussions with the Home Office the MOD introduced an allowance to enable the cost of Foreign and Commonwealth personnel registering a birth as British to be funded at public expense. This applies to children born from 1 April 2015 on an accompanied overseas assignment. We have amended our policy guidance to reflect this change. We are unaware of any other major issues in this area.

We understand that some personnel may have experienced difficulties receiving their postal vote forms in time for this year's general election. We will review this and look to identify where changes are necessary next year.

Statistics

Over three quarters of regular Service personnel believe they are advantaged in relation to family life and ability to participate as a citizen (Table 16). In comparison over a third of Service families felt advantaged in relation to housing whilst just under a quarter felt disadvantaged in relation to education (Table 17).

Over half of Service families believe service life has a positive effect in relation to job security and their pride in their spouse/civil partner. However, over half also feel service life has a negative effect on the amount of separation from their spouse/civil partner, their career and their children. (Table 18)

Table 16: UK regular Armed Forces advantages/disadvantages compared to general population, 2015, percentages¹

Feel compared to general public: 2015	Advantaged	Disadvantaged
Family Life	84	59
Participation as citizens	80	38
Childrens education	74	34
Tax	74	36
Benefits	63	29
Family healthcare	57	23
Housing	56	25
Commercial products and services	41	12

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

1. Respondents were only offered the option to state that they felt advantaged or disadvantaged.

Table 17: UK Armed Forces Families advantages/disadvantages compared to general population, 2015, percentages¹

Feel compared to general public: 2015	Advantaged	Disadvantaged
Housing	35	18
Education	15	24
Healthcare	17	18

Source: Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2015 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

1. Available responses: advantaged, neither, disadvantaged, don't know

Table 18: UK Armed Forces Families positives/negatives of Service life, 2015, percentage¹

Feel about aspects of Service life: 2015	Positive	Negative
Pride in spouse/civil partner being in the Services	82	3
Job security	56	19
Knowing other military families	46	11
Opportunities for travel	35	21
Service Provided Facilities	33	17
Family income/allowances	33	27
Prospects of buying/renting own home	24	30
Social support for family	21	22
Effect on my children	19	44
Effect on spouse/civil partner relationship	18	34
Frequency of house moves	9	38
Effect on my career	8	54
Separation	7	58

Source: Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2015 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-index>)

Available responses: advantaged, neither, disadvantaged, don't know

2015 Report Commitment

Following reports of the late delivery of postal vote forms to personnel serving overseas, for this year's general election, the MOD will review the process and identify where any changes are necessary next year.

Changes in Defence

The Armed Forces will always need to evolve to meet the challenges they face. That will inevitably lead, from time to time, to turbulence and uncertainty in the lives of Service personnel and their families.

- Such changes should be managed in a way which treats individuals fairly and minimises uncertainty wherever possible.

What we have done this year to achieve these goals

In line with our commitment in last year's report, in May 2014, the Defence Secretary announced the launch of a review of the exclusion of women from ground close combat roles. The review would look at whether females could serve in ground close combat roles in The Royal Marines General Service, the infantry, The Royal Armoured Corps, the Household Cavalry and the RAF Regiment. It also aimed to identify the benefits and risks of changing this policy and to make recommendations. An initial report was submitted to the Defence Secretary in late December 2014. Since then it has been agreed that further research is required before a final decision can be made. A steering group has been formed to oversee the delivery of several strands of work which will focus on physiological issues and implementation considerations, with a timeline running to mid-2016.

2015 Report Commitment

The MOD will undertake further research on the exclusion of women from ground close combat roles and report to the Defence Secretary by mid-2016.

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 2014 and those that were recorded in the table at the back of that report as “to be completed”.

Key to progress status

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

Terms and Conditions of Service

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Development of a New Employment Model.	UK	

Healthcare

Commitment	Applies to	Status
The Scottish Government will explore with NHS Lothian and other NHS Boards how the Lothian Veterans' First Point service could be extended to other areas of Scotland.	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	
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.	UK	
Seek to obtain funding for a study into support for the bereaved and the families of those who have been injured.	UK	
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	
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	
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.	UK	
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.	UK	
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.	UK	
Defence Statistics will publish the first report on the causes of deaths amongst Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts in 2015-16.	UK	
The MOD will continue working to improve healthcare for Reserves when not mobilised.	UK	

Education

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Improvements to the Army's education programme: establishing a single personal development fund ⁶ .	UK	
Development of a new strategy to address the impact of mobility on the education of Service children and young people.	UK	
Allow training in Service Children's Education schools overseas to count towards Qualified Teaching Status for Service partners. ⁷	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	

⁶ This project is closed due to uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) and Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). A development fund may be funded separately as part of the New Employment Model (NEM).

⁷ The drawdown of Germany and closure of all except one of the MOD schools in Germany has prompted a review of the future operating model of MOD schools overseas. The project has therefore been closed due to the uncertainty of what the future operating model may look like.

into force to ensure it is removing disadvantage to Service personnel in achieving their school of choice in England where possible.		
DfE and MOD will continue to review the use of the Service Pupil Premium and publish examples of best practice to ensure that it is addressing disadvantage to Service children's education.	ENG	
Review the Education Support Fund 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	
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	
In the 2015 annual report, the MOD will report on how LIBOR money has been distributed to support childcare provision for Service families.	UK	
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.	UK	
The MOD will engage with a research provider to investigate the relationship between the Service Pupil Premium (SPP) and children from Service families attainment and to produce quantitative and qualitative data on SPP use and improve understanding of its impact.	UK	
The MOD will continue work to promote the SPP to improve awareness amongst Service families.	UK	

Accommodation

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	

Guidance issued by the Scottish Government when the social housing provisions are introduced for the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 will encourage social landlords to give fair and sympathetic consideration to applicants leaving the Armed Forces.	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 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 LAs to prevent and relieve homelessness.	WAL	
The Welsh Government will develop guidance to ensure LAs work with the Armed Forces and Veterans' welfare services to provide help before Veterans become homeless.	WAL	
The MOD will not allocate SFA properties below Standard 2 for Condition in the UK.	UK	
The MOD will introduce a new charging system for Service Family Accommodation (SFA), a key element of the New Employment Model Programme.	UK	

Terms and Conditions of Service

Commitment	Applies to	Status
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.		
MOD will, from 1 Apr 15, provide an Armed Forces Pension scheme that will recognise all paid service in the Reserve Forces, including paid service in the Volunteer Reserve.	UK	

Benefits and Tax

Commitment	Applies to	Status
The 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.	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	
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	
The MOD will work with the Department for Education to ensure that the implications of service life are taken account of in the adoption process.	UK	
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 Families Federations and HIVEs in accessing Jobcentre services and Armed Forces champions. ⁸	UK	

Commercial Products and Services

Commitment	Applies to	Status
The MOD will work with the Financial Services Sector to address any potential disadvantages associated with service overseas.	UK	
The MOD will work closely with the organisations who have signed the Corporate Covenant to ensure the delivery of their pledges.	UK	

⁸ This commitment is closed. DWP can no longer use the Families Continuous Attitude Survey as the DWP related questions have all been removed.

Transition

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Work with the Forces in Mind Trust to support Veterans and their families	UK	

Support after Service

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Implement changes to Service pensions reflecting unique role that Service personnel fill	UK	
The MOD will from 2015 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 MOD will provide a contribution to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme for every day of paid service in the Reserve Forces.	UK	

Recognition

Commitment	Applies to	Status
The MOD will undertake a review on the introduction of a post-nominal for Reservists.	UK	

Participation as Citizens

Commitment	Applies to	Status
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.	UK	
The MOD will hold a series of regional events during 2015 with LAs, to discuss Community Covenant issues and help spread best practice.	UK	
The MOD will work closely with LAs to ensure the spread of best practice and tackle issues such as access to social housing.	UK	

Changes in Defence

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Managing the return from Germany to the United Kingdom.	UK	
The MOD will launch a new £10M consolidated Armed Forces Covenant Grant scheme from Apr 2015	UK	
The MOD will launch a new £10M consolidated Armed Forces Covenant Grant scheme from April 2015	UK	

Recourse

Commitment	Applies to	Status
The MOD will work to achieve Royal Assent for the Armed Forces Service Complaints and Financial Assistance Bill.	UK & Overseas	

The Covenant and Wider Society

Commitment	Applies to	Status
Sharing Service facilities with civilians.	UK	

ANNEX B CORPORATE COVENANT PLEDGES SIGNED IN 2015

1st Line Defence	Atmosphere Control International Ltd
2d3 Sensing	Atos Origin
3GS (UK) Limited	Auctus Management Group Ltd
A & P Group Ltd	Automobile Association Ltd
Accenture Plc	B&S Project Management And Consultancy Services
Action Coach (Vision Support And Challenge (Vsc) Coaching Ltd)	Bae Systems
Active Adventure North Wales	Balfour Beatty Plc
Advanced Systems Understanding	Bank Of America Merrill Lynch
Advantage Technical Resourcing Ltd	Barr-Jones Associates
AECOM	The Baton
Aerossurance	Battle Stations Activities Limited
Aggie Weston's	Beeswift Ltd
Aggreko Plc	Benchmark Recruit
Agots Limited	Black And White Hospitality Limited
Airborne Systems Limited	Blyth Construction Utilities Ltd Campbell House
Airbus Group UK	BNY Mellon (Bank Of New York)
Alchemy Global Limited	Bodiam Ltd
Alcumus Group	Boeing
Aldershot Town Football Club Limited	Bouygues Energies And Services
Alexander Hughes London	Box-It UK Limited
Alternative Construction Education (ACE) CIC	Bradford Bulls Foundation
Altran UK Ltd	Bradford Bulls Northern
Ambe Medical Group Ltd	Bridgend Association Of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO)
Amec Foster Wheeler Ltd	Brightred Resourcing Ltd
Anderson & Brown Ltd	British American Tobacco Plc
Anglian Water Group	Broadgate Search Ltd
Anglo American	Brockenhurst College
Antalis Limited	Brompton Academy
Approach Training Safely Limited	Buckinghamshire New University
Arcanum Information Security Ltd	Bureau Veritas
Arena Racing Company	Business Network (SW) Ltd
Armed Forces Reunions	Butterfly Hospice Trust
Ashfield Homes Ltd	C4 Resilience Ltd
Ashford School	CAE UK Plc
Astons Estate Agents	

Caledonian Modular	Derbyshire Alcohol Advice Service
Cammell Lairds Shipyard	Derwent London
Cart Shed CIC	Devon Air Ambulance Trust
Catena	Diesel Dynamics Limited
CE Security	Digby Landscaping & Maintenance Limited
Central Laundry Ltd	Distance Learning College And Training
Centre For Micro Business CIC	Domestic & General
Cerco It Training And Solutions Ltd	Doosan Babcock
Cheshire West And Chester Council	Dorset Healthcare University NHS Foundation Trust
Chesterfield Special Cylinders Ltd	Drivers Direct Recruitment Agency Ltd
Christopher James Financial Solutions Ltd	Drug And Alcohol Charities Wales (DACW)
Chubb Fire & Security Limited	Drumgrange Limited
Church Of England	Duncan Little Hypnotherapy
City Building LLP	Dunster House Ltd
Clearly Stated Ltd	E H Thorne (Beehives) Limited
Clinton Training Ltd	East Midland Central Station Ltd
Clive Emson Auctioneers	East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust
Coleg Cambria (Formerley Deeside College)	East Of England Energy Group
Commando Joes Fun And Fitness Ltd	East Yorkshire Motor Services Ltd
Communications Audit UK Ltd	Edgar Brothers
Computerised Training Systems Ltd	Elite Academy Of Security Training Ltd
Conops Global	Elite Bodyguard Limited
Conservative Party	Elite Military Consultants Ltd
Cool Vine Ltd	Endorse Hr Ltd
Corporate Risk Associates Ltd	Enterprise Engineer Services
Cottonfrog	Erewash Borough Council
Countrywide Telecoms	Evolution Forces Families Ltd
Coveris Flexibles UK Limited	Ex Forces Energy
Crispin Rhodes Ltd	Exeter Golf & Country Club Ltd
Crovax Intelligence (Crovax Resources Europe)	Exfor+
CSS Global Consulting Ltd	Explosive Learning Solutions Ltd
CTTS Group	Express Direct Training Ltd
Currie European Transport	Express Security
D J Rees Decorating Services Ltd	EY LLP (Ernst & Young)
Daly Telecom Ltd	FGH Security Ltd
Dark Blue Inc Limited	Fieri Leadership And Development
Dawnfresh Seafoods Ltd	

Fife College	Hughes Brothers
First Line Response Ltd	ICI Institute
Forces 4 Ltd	Ilasco Specialist Protective Solutions
Forces Insurance Limited	Info-Assure Ltd
Forfusion Ltd	Ink Global
Freedog (Alfa Bounce Ltd)	Institute Of Supply Chain Management (IoSCM)
Future Inns Hotels	International Career Institute
Future Sales Factory Limited	Inzpire Limited
Gates Macbain Associates Ltd	Isle Of Wight College
Gentoo Group	Itap Ltd
Gilbraith (TS) Limited	Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd (Babtie)
Glasgow Taxis	James Taylor Construction
Glasswall Solutions	James Troop & Company Ltd
Glide Utilities Ltd	Jankel Armouring Limited
Global Infusion Group	Jigsaw Medical Services Ltd
Global Resource Management Ltd	JP Morgan
GLP Solicitors	Kash The Flash Gym
Google	Kenaz Training Limited
Goughs Solicitors	Khulisa
Graham Construction	Kidwells Law Solicitors Ltd
Greggs Plc	Komplete Group Ltd
Griffin Tax Free Ltd	Konecranes (UK) Ltd
Guardian Global Resources	Kreston Reeves (Canterbury)
Guarding UK Ltd	Laing O'Rourke Plc
GWS Media Ltd	Land Securities
Hampshire Constabulary	LCS Ltd
Hampshire Fire And Rescue	Learndirect Ltd
Hangar 22 Limited	Leeds Beckett University
Harlequins Rugby Union	Leicester Office Furnishers
Harris Systems Limited	Level Peaks Associates
Hasta UK Ltd	The Lightbox
Heinrich Derek Ltd - T/A Hunter Maclean & Austerby White	Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue Service Lindum Group Ltd
Help 4 Homeless Veterans	Liverpool Veterans
Help For Heroes	Lloyds Banking Group Plc
Highway Traffic Management Ltd	Lloyd's Of London
Hospital Solutions Ltd	Lockton Companies LLP
Huggable Heroes	London & Country Mortgages Ltd

London Vape Company	RPS Group Plc
LV=	RPS Npower Plc
Mactaggart Scott & Co Ltd	Saab Technologies UK Ltd
Magnesium Software Ltd	Score Energy Ltd
Major Technical Recruitment Limited	The Self Storage Company
Manone Medical	Sencus Ltd
Manufacturing Technologies Association	Sevenside Housing
Marine Electronic Systems Ltd	Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Marston's Plc	Shell
Matchtech Group Plc	The Shrewsbury And Telford Hospital NHS Trust
Maxaura Ltd	Shropshire Housing Group
Mccormack Training Ltd	Shropshire Towns And Rural Housing
MCL Autoservices	Sigma Studies
Mears Group Plc	Skillforce Ltd
MEL Group	Skillforce Scotland
Mercury Electronic Warfare Ltd	Sodexo Ltd
Plymouth Studio School	Sovini Trade Supplies Limited
Portakabin Limited	Specialist People Services Group Ltd
Premier Oil Plc	Sporting Force
PricewaterhouseCooper LLP	St John's Beaumont School
Project Fortis	Staffordshire University
Protection Vessels International Ltd	Stagecoach Group
Provelio Ltd	STR Limited
Qioptiq Ltd (St Asaph)	Sunray Engineering Ltd
Ramco UK	Suntino Renewable Energy Limited
Reach For More Coaching	Survival Recruitment Services
RecruitME	Sutton House Limited
Redrok (UK) Ltd	SWA Fortis Ltd
Reepham High School & College	Ta Plastic Supplies Ltd
Regency It Consulting	TalkTalk Telecom Group Plc
Re-Org	Tauber-Hands Ltd T/A Speech House Hotel
Rjd Technology Limited	Team Off-Road-IT
Rochdale Circle CIC	Techmodal Ltd
Rochdale Hornets Sporting Foundation	Tibbee Limited
Rooftents Ltd	TMS Support Solutions Ltd
The Royal Artillery Centre For Personal Development	Toro Risk Solutions
Royal Bank Of Scotland (RBS)	TQ Education And Training
Royal Mail Plc	

Traffic Labour Supplies (TLS) Ltd
Transline Group
Transport Training Academy
Turner Facilities Management
Turning Factor Ltd
UK Power Networks
University Hospitals Of Leicester NHS Trust
University Of Dundee
University Of St Mark & St John
Urgo Ltd
Vantage Point Global
Vector Aerospace
Veolia Environmental Services
Veterans Funerals
Vickers Energy Group
Vodafone Group Plc
Walsall College
Ward Security Ltd
Wargrave House Surgery
Water Coolers Direct.com Ltd
Wates Group Limited
Waves Training Solutions Ltd
Wessex Reserve Forces' & Cadets' Association
West Midlands Ambulance Service
Westminster Security
Weston College
WH Management Group
White7 (UK) Ltd
Whitehouse Construction Co. Ltd
Whiteley Read Engineering Ltd
Wigan & Leigh College
Willsons Group Services Printing
Wiltshire And Somerset Colleges Partnership
WNW Digital
Wolferstans Solicitors
Worksmart Contracts
Worshipful Company Of Carmen
Wye Valley NHS Trust
Xi Systems Ltd
XMR-Ex Military Recruitment
Yodel

ANNEX C SUCCESSFUL VETERANS ACCOMMODATION FUND BIDS

Annex – Successful Veterans Accommodation Fund Bids

Pembroke House Care and Nursing Home – To replace the old wooden sash windows that were beyond repair, at the care home in Kent.

Veterans Aid – To extend the existing hostel in London and provide additional bedrooms to meet known demand.

Erskine - To improve the quality of living environment across all 5 Veteran care homes in Scotland by meeting current best practice guidelines in lighting design for elderly and dementia residents in a long term care environment.

Riverside ECHG – To provide temporary supported housing in Tees Valley, which will form a pathway into independent living for Veterans in housing need.

Houses for Heroes Scotland – To provide housing for disabled Veterans in Scotland, through a shared ownership consortium.

Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund - To adapt the kitchens and gardens in the homes of 20 wheelchair-dependent, lifetime disabled Veterans and their families, based on need throughout the UK.

Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund – To replace the windows at Forge House in Sussex to improve tri-Service accommodation of elderly Veterans and widows.

Blind Veterans UK – To redevelop outbuildings at an existing centre in Wales and create 5 apartments purpose built for people with sight and/or limb loss.

First Choice Housing Association – To provide an accommodation pathway in Wales for Veterans with a housing need, from supported housing through to independent living.

Royal British Legion Industries – To provide affordable independent living in Kent, for single Veterans.

Royal British Legion – To extend the Maurice House care home in Kent, to provide a dementia care unit.

Ghurkha Homes Limited – To provide clusters of homes for aged Ghurkha Veterans and their spouses/families, across the UK.

Stoll – To refurbish bathrooms for disabled Veterans at properties in London.

Stoll/Riverside ECHG/Haig Housing Trust – The consortium will provide 85 units of temporary, supported and independent accommodation in Aldershot. These units will form a pathway for Veterans in housing need to pass through on their way to independent living.

Riverside ECHG/Haig Housing Trust – The consortium will provide 65 units of temporary, supported and independent accommodation in Colchester for WIS and vulnerable Veterans moving to independent living.

Haig Housing Trust – To provide additional accommodation for Veterans in Morden and Edinburgh.

