



THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT AND VETERANS ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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Presented to the House of Commons pursuant to section 343A
of the Armed Forces Act 2006 (as amended)



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ISBN 978-1-5286-2997-3

E02691747 11/21

Printed on paper containing 75% recycled fibre content minimum

Designed by Design102

Printed in the UK by HH Associates Ltd. on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office



ARMED FORCES

COVENANT

The Armed Forces Covenant

An Enduring Covenant between
The People of the United Kingdom
Her Majesty's Government
– and –

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

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty.

Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families.

They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

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

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution.

This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.

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Ministerial foreword

We are delighted to introduce this year's annual report on the Armed Forces Covenant. For us, this year's report is notable for four reasons.

Firstly, it is the first to be presented as the Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Annual Report. The new name reflects that this report is a joint effort between our two departments. Together with our partners across the UK, we provide comprehensive and joined-up support for all members of our Armed Forces Community, from Service people to family members to veterans. The support we provide to families in particular is being strengthened by the new Armed Forces Families Strategy 2022-32. The Armed Forces Covenant applies to everyone who serves or has previously served in the UK Armed Forces, their families and the bereaved. The Strategy for our Veterans sets out an ambitious vision for making the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran. This year's report therefore gives readers an integrated update on what the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have been doing over the last year to deliver against both the Armed Forces Covenant and the Strategy for our Veterans.¹ The Veterans Strategy Action Plan 2022-2024 outlines forward looking policy plans for veterans.

Secondly, this is the 10th annual report that the UK Government has written since the Armed Forces Covenant was introduced in its current form in 2011. 10 years of the Covenant represents an enormous achievement for us all – the public, private and charity sectors, wider UK society and the Armed Forces Community itself. By working together, we have successfully embedded the principles of the Covenant – chiefly, that no-one should face disadvantage because of their service – across many areas of society. Doing right by our Armed Forces Community is now seen as business as usual – and this is exactly as it should be.

Looking back, the progress we have made together over the last 10 years has been formidable. More than 7,000 organisations have now signed the Covenant, including every local authority in Great Britain. The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust continues to distribute millions of pounds every year in support of our Armed Forces Community and charities. Since 2019, the Office for Veterans' Affairs has sat at the heart of Government to co-ordinate and drive forward our efforts to make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran.

¹ This report covers activity across the whole of the UK, undertaken by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. References to 'the Government' should usually be interpreted as meaning the UK Government. Where activity has been undertaken by one or more of the Devolved Administrations, this is usually specified.

And this is not to mention the scores of other projects that have been delivered and progress that has been made under the banner of the Covenant since 2011. Indeed, this report gives a flavour of just how much work goes on year in and year out.

However, none of these achievements should make us complacent. There will always be more to do. That is why 2021 also marks the year in which we are further embedding the Covenant into law. We are introducing a new statutory duty on certain public bodies to ensure that they pay due regard to the Covenant and its principles when carrying out specific public functions in the areas of housing, healthcare and education. The new duty will come into force next year, and we are grateful for the ongoing co-operation and support between the Government, local authorities and other public bodies to help make the duty a success. This legislation will raise awareness and understanding of the issues the Armed Forces Community can face, and lead to better outcomes for our Service personnel, veterans, their families and those who are bereaved. We will monitor the impact of the new duty carefully, and if there is evidence to suggest that the duty could also have a positive impact if applied to other areas beyond its current scope, we will consider further action.

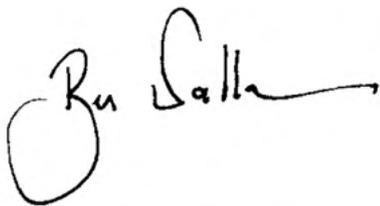
Thirdly, this report comes in the year that the UK and our NATO Allies concluded our military operations in Afghanistan, 20 years after they began. The way in which operations in Afghanistan ended over the summer reminded us once again of the sacrifices the Armed Forces Community has made – and continues to make – for us. Not only the courage with which those sacrifices are always made, but also the pain with which they often come. Following the UK's withdrawal from Afghanistan,

we announced an additional £5 million for Armed Forces charities, to help them continue to provide vital support to the Armed Forces Community through this difficult period. The Government, the people and the country owe the Armed Forces Community a huge debt of gratitude, and we hope the work we do as part of the Covenant and the Strategy for our Veterans goes some way towards demonstrating our appreciation and support.

Finally, this year's reporting period (1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021) is the first in which the COVID-19 pandemic has been ever-present – not only as a challenge and a constraint, but also as a spur to innovation. We are immensely proud of all that we have achieved in spite of – and because of – the pandemic. And we are immensely grateful to all members of the Armed Forces Community, for all that they have done and all that they continue to do in such challenging circumstances.

We are also grateful, as ever, to all our partners across central, local and devolved Government – and across the wider public, private and charitable sectors – who work so hard in support of the Armed Forces Community. Some aspects of that support may be delivered differently across the UK – for example, in terms of funding for Service children in schools, or the services available to veterans through each nation's healthcare providers. In order to ensure that variations in our approaches do not result in variations in outcome, the UK Government will continue to press for more detailed and specific data to be collected on outcomes for the Armed Forces Community within each part of the UK.

We look forward to celebrating the next 10 years of the Armed Forces Covenant and taking the next steps to deliver the Strategy for our Veterans.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ben Wallace". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'B'.

The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP
– Secretary of State for Defence

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Barclay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'S'.

The Rt Hon Stephen Barclay MP –
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster



Introduction and executive summary

This is the 10th Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report since its introduction as a statutory requirement in the Armed Forces Act 2011. It is also the first wholly joint and integrated report between the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) in the Cabinet Office. This year's report has therefore been retitled as the Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Annual Report. It covers the period 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021, and it is the Government's annual update to Parliament on delivery against both the Covenant (as it applies to Service personnel, veterans, their families and those who are bereaved) and the Strategy for our Veterans.

The report covers actions that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have taken during the reporting period to deliver the Covenant and the Strategy across the UK – in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In particular, it covers delivery in the areas of:

- healthcare
- education
- housing
- inquests
- family life
- transition
- business and employment
- research and data

A summary of the highlights from this reporting period for each of these areas follows. Annex A of this report provides a range of the data and metrics used to measure our progress in delivery.

All of the work included in this report has been delivered against the backdrop of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic has limited progress in some areas. Elsewhere, work has continued as before, although sometimes in an adapted form. In some instances, entirely new projects have been delivered in order to address the impact of COVID-19 on our Armed Forces Community. Throughout the pandemic, the Armed Forces Community has continued to deliver for our country, including at the front line of the pandemic response.

The Government and the country's ongoing appreciation for all the work of the Armed Forces, especially in the context of COVID-19, is profound.

Looking ahead, the next reporting period (October 2021 to September 2022) will see the entry into force of the new Covenant Duty, which will require certain public bodies to pay due regard to the principles of the Covenant when exercising specific functions in the areas of housing, healthcare and education. It will also see the delivery and initial implementation of the new Armed Forces Families Strategy. And specifically for veterans, the OVA's 2022-24 Action Plan sets out the ambitious commitments that the Government will deliver in support of veterans over the coming years. These include bolstering research and data work, adapting and modernising services for veterans, and working to ensure that veterans feel supported and celebrated for their service. In relation to Northern Ireland, the Government remains committed to delivering on its commitments to veterans of the Troubles, as part of a wider package to address legacy issues in Northern Ireland. Legislation will be brought forward shortly, which will focus on delivering for all those directly affected by the Troubles and on wider reconciliation.

Highlights from the reporting period

Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust activity

- The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust awarded £9.1 million in 2020 to projects designed to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Armed Forces Community. In April 2021, the Trust launched a new £6 million programme to support existing charitable activities and services in need of short-term grant support due to the pandemic, through the Sustaining Support to Armed Forces Communities Programme.
- The NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes) Fund was launched in late 2020 to provide funding to projects focused on improving quality of life for Service personnel and their families. 65 awards, worth over £700,000 in total, were made during the first round of funding.
- In May 2021, the Trust launched its new Knowledge Network to share impact, evaluation, learning and resources from its funded projects. The resources are freely available in a dedicated area of the Trust's website.
- In 2020, the Trust launched its Tackling Loneliness Programme, designed to address isolation within the Armed Forces Community. 60 projects received grants of £70,000 each.

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- The Trust has also continued to deliver projects under HM Treasury’s Veterans’ Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund. The Treasury has provided an additional £10 million of funding for projects in the financial year 2021/22. The One is Too Many Programme awarded more than £2.1 million to organisations providing services that reduce the risk of suicide among veterans and support affected families. The Veterans’ Places, Pathways and People Programme will provide awards of up to £800,000 each to projects working regionally to develop support for local veterans with mental health needs.
 - Following the UK’s withdrawal from Afghanistan earlier in the year, the UK Government has made an additional £5 million available to support Armed Forces charities. The Trust will distribute and monitor this funding, working closely with the OVA.
 - 97 healthcare providers – such as hospitals and hospital trusts – have now been accredited as ‘veteran aware’ by the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance, and over 1,000 GP surgeries have been accredited as ‘veteran friendly’.
 - The Scottish Veterans Care Network, operated by NHS National Services Scotland and bringing together a wide range of stakeholders, was formally launched in November 2020. The network’s initial priority was to develop a Mental Health Action Plan, which will be published in December 2021.
 - The Scottish Government continues to contribute funding to Combat Stress, providing over £1.4 million in the financial year 2021/22.
 - The Welsh Government announced a 35 percent increase in funding for Veterans NHS Wales in March 2021, increasing the total annual funding to £920,000.

Health and healthcare

- An additional £94 million of funding has been released for Programme CORTISONE, which aims to deliver an up-to-date medical information system for Defence.
- The new Veterans’ Mental Health High Intensity Service in England launched in October 2020, with seven regional ‘pathfinders’ running until the end of March 2023.
- Op COURAGE was launched in England in March 2021, bringing together existing mental health services for veterans into one comprehensive pathway. The Government has since committed an additional £2.7 million of funding to expand Op COURAGE.

Education

- The MOD’s Education Support Fund provided £2 million worth of grants to 75 schools across the UK during the financial year 2020/21, to help them mitigate the impact of mobility and separation on Service children and their families. £3 million has been made available for the financial year 2021/22.
- The Service Children’s Progression Alliance launched its Thriving Lives Toolkit in October 2020, which is a practical resource that helps schools to improve the quality of their support to Service children.

- A new School Admissions Code for England came into force in September 2021. It includes several provisions intended to ensure that Service families are not disadvantaged when applying for school places.
- The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership has received further funding to continue its work mapping military qualifications and transferable skills against those recognised by employers in Scotland.
- The Welsh Government has provided a further investment of £270,000 per year to support Service children in Wales. In addition, four Regional Schools Liaison Officers for Service children are now in post across Wales, funded by a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

Housing and accommodation

- There were record levels of investment in Service Family Accommodation in the financial year 2020/21, with a total of £160 million invested. This investment is enabling 775 long-term empty properties to be completely refurbished. A further 10,200 properties have been significantly improved. A total of £188 million has been earmarked for further investment in Service Family Accommodation in the financial year 2021/22.
- The MOD is working to deliver key recommendations from the National Audit Office's and the Public Accounts Committee's reports into Single Living Accommodation. Front Line Commands are developing their infrastructure delivery plans to improve the condition and quality of Single

Living Accommodation across the estate through an ambitious 10-year programme. £66.1 million was invested in the financial year 2020/21, and the MOD plans to invest a further £1.5 billion in Single Living Accommodation new-build and upgrade projects over the next decade.

- Members of the Armed Forces Community were made exempt from any local-connection eligibility requirements for the Government's new First Homes Scheme, launched in June 2021 in England.
- The Scottish Government continues to support Housing Options Scotland with its Military Matters project, which provides housing guidance and advice to members of the Armed Forces Community. In 2020/21, the project received 266 new referrals.

Inquests and judicial engagement

- The Defence Inquests Unit has recorded 52 inquests (in which investigations have been concluded) during the reporting period.

Family life

- Building on the independent Selous report on the needs of Armed Forces families, the MOD has devised a new UK Armed Forces Families Strategy for 2022-2032. The strategy will provide a framework that reflects modern and diverse family needs. It will be underpinned by a rolling action plan.
- Two further wraparound childcare pilot sites went live in January 2021 at Plymouth and Catterick Garrison.

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- The new Early Learning Childcare Fund was launched in late 2020. During the reporting period, the fund provided £1.5 million of grants to 42 early learning and childcare settings across the UK, benefiting almost 1,000 Service children.

Transition and through-life support

- The Joint Service Housing Advice Office is being moved from Army Regional Command into the Veterans UK organisation, aligning it as a tri-Service asset and reflecting its critical role in supporting successful transition.
- The planned review of Integrated Personal Commissioning for Veterans was completed in summer 2021, proposing 20 recommendations to reinforce the life-changing support offered by the scheme.
- The MOD and the OVA are providing a five-year grant worth £710,000 to Cobseo, the confederation of Service charities, to sustain its initiatives to improve governance, collaboration and co-ordination across the Service charity sector.
- The Veterans Railcard went on sale in October 2020. As of October 2021, over 32,000 railcards have been sold.
- The Scottish Government continues to provide £250,000 per year (until 2023) to fund the Unforgotten Forces Consortium – a partnership of 16 civilian and Service charities – which delivers a wide array of services to older veterans in Scotland.

- The Scottish Veterans Fund continued in 2021. A further £200,000 was awarded to 16 projects across Scotland, with a focus on projects supporting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Non-UK national Service personnel and families

- The MOD and the Home Office ran a joint public consultation from May to July 2021 on the issue of waiving settlement fees for certain non-UK members of the Armed Forces. A significant number of responses were received, and the Government will publish its formal response to the consultation in due course.

Business, employment and the community

- More than 7,000 organisations have now signed the Armed Forces Covenant.
- In July 2021, a further 140 organisations were awarded gold in the Defence Employers Recognition Scheme.
- The Department for Work and Pensions has introduced 11 new Armed Forces Champion Lead roles to oversee the 50 Armed Forces Champions working across the Jobcentre Plus network.
- The Government has introduced a National Insurance holiday for employers of veterans in their first year of civilian employment.

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- The MOD, the OVA and the Career Transition Partnership have developed an industry sector guide showcasing the Civil Service as a ‘great place to work’ for Service leavers.
 - In 2020, the Civil Service launched a pilot ‘veterans confident employment initiative’. During the pilot phase, over 3,000 veterans opted into the scheme, with 155 veterans posted to roles and a further 180 veterans placed on reserve lists. The pilot phase is currently being evaluated, with the ambition to roll it out across the Civil Service.
 - The Scottish Government has made £1 million available to create the Armed Forces Third Sector Resilience Fund, which provides direct financial relief to third sector organisations that support the Armed Forces Community in Scotland.
 - The Welsh Government continues to fund eight Armed Forces Liaison Officer posts working on a regional basis across Wales with local authorities and local organisations. £275,000 of funding per year will enable the officers to continue in their roles until 2023.

Research and data

- For the first time, the 2021 Census in England and Wales asked respondents whether they had previously served in the UK Armed Forces.
- The Treasury is providing up to £475,000 of funding to Armed Forces charities in 2021-22 to support the development of a digital and data strategy for the sector.
- In September 2021, the OVA and the Office for National Statistics announced a new method for monitoring health conditions and the frequency of suicide in the veteran community in England and Wales.
- For the first time, Scotland’s Census – taking place on 20 March 2022 – will ask respondents whether they have previously served in the UK Armed Forces. The Scottish Government intends to include the same veteran question from the Census in other relevant surveys in the future.



Members of the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards celebrate St David's Day on parade in Windsor on 1 March 2021.



External observations

External members of the Government's Armed Forces Covenant Reference Group, as well as the Independent Veterans Advisor to the Office for Veterans' Affairs, have provided the following observations on this year's annual report.

Observations from the Families Federations

Introduction

The Families Federations acknowledge that the unexpected continuation of the COVID-19 limitations has brought with it challenges for all in the Armed Forces and their families, but it has also presented opportunities to improve how certain processes can be delivered. Once again, the Armed Forces Community has risen to the myriad of challenges on all levels and we want to formally acknowledge this.

Governance

The Families Federations welcome the creation of the online commitments tracker, which has the potential to empower all stakeholders. However, in order to deliver real progress for Service personnel and their families on a number of enduring Armed Forces Covenant issues, the tracker requires significant development and we look forward to working with the MOD Covenant team to improve and refine it.

We are pleased to note the progress of the Armed Forces Covenant legislation in the Armed Forces Bill 2021. Whilst a positive step to support Armed Forces families, it is disappointing that it was not extended to cover all Government departments, as highlighted by the Chief Executives of the Families Federations at the Armed Forces Bill Committee hearing.

Health and healthcare

The Families Federations welcomed the publication of the NHS England and NHS Improvement Armed Forces Families Engagement Programme report: 'Improving Health and Wellbeing Support for Armed Forces Families'. We look forward to seeing how the implementation of the recommendations benefits the Armed Forces Community. This research will be added to by the publication of the Family Federations' commissioned research with Anglia Ruskin University into the effect of mobility on military families and their ability to access healthcare. The report, due to be published in January 2022, will offer a number of focused recommendations that will provide opportunities for the military and the NHS to change and improve their working practices for the benefit of Service personnel and their families.

As part of the wider challenges that the country has faced following the pandemic, the issue of access to dental care has been a shared problem for everyone. However, this is heightened for Armed Forces families – in particular those returning from overseas, dual-serving parents who struggle to register their child as they cannot register with the practice themselves, and mobile families who are consistently unable to access NHS dental treatment on consecutive postings. We are pleased that the Covenant Reference Group and the MOD/NHS Partnership Board are taking this forward and look forward to hearing a positive outcome in 2022.

The Families Federations are receiving a growing number of enquiries from Service personnel regarding COVID-19 vaccination passports. We note that the report acknowledges the advent of the

NHS England online service for Service personnel based in England, and those in Scotland can use NHS Scotland Inform. However, we are being informed that Service personnel are experiencing problems when they are moving between Scotland and England, as the NHS England and NHS Scotland systems are not yet interfacing with each other and so it has to be done manually. This is causing issues for deploying personnel.

Education

Family members are still experiencing challenges in accessing funding for higher education due to the student finance rules on eligibility for funding being based on where their Service person signed up, and we have been working closely with the MOD to try to resolve this. Given the challenges that non-UK Service personnel have experienced accessing student finance, we are pleased that the Home Office has now written to student finance organisations to highlight that non-UK personnel are part of the UK Armed Forces and not considered members of an overseas force. We hope this resolves the disadvantage for this cohort of the Armed Forces.

The Families Federations remain concerned about the regular number of enquiries that we receive regarding Special Educational Needs and Disabilities support, and the mobility of Service life appears to compound the problems that these families are experiencing. We applaud the establishment of the MOD Local Authority Partnership Special Educational Needs and Disabilities forum. We are hopeful that this forum will help to address some the specific challenges.

Housing and accommodation

The recent investment in Service Family Accommodation (SFA) has been appreciated, but the speed of the refurbishments and upgrades has not kept in line with the increasing demand that is being placed on SFA. We therefore remain concerned that families still have to move into SFA that does not meet the standard. The announcement of the Future Defence Infrastructure Services contract presents an opportunity to enhance accommodation support to families, and we await the outcome of the introduction of the new contract with interest.

The Families Federations feel that the introduction of the new contract provides an ideal opportunity to engage with the contractor to help them better understand the needs of Armed Forces families with additional needs that require adaptations to their SFA, and will be meeting with key stakeholders to explore this.

Whilst we recognise the positive work that has been undertaken to acknowledge long-term relationships, we have seen issues relating to the availability of surplus SFA for long-term relationships families and have concerns about expectation management whilst they are eligible for surplus SFA, rather than entitled to it. This cohort would also benefit from a consideration of broader issues around widening eligibility, including allowances.

Family life

The Federations have welcomed the wraparound childcare pilot. Feedback from families is positive and the decision to extend the pilots is welcome. Clear and early communication to all family members

would be helpful, to allow us to support this work as it develops. We would welcome a widening of the pilot to include other aspects of childcare to help overcome the challenges of early years and school holidays. We know that accessing this type of care is difficult for families, particularly in some of the more expensive areas of the country.

Partner employment has been a large focus for the three Families Federations over the last year. We are delighted with the growth of our platform, Forces Families Jobs, now hosting over 16,000 jobs on its website as well as providing training support to partners. Additionally, after the COVID-19 enforced pause, we are pleased to see that the Armed Forces Covenant Trust funded the Military Co-Working Network pilot project, which has been able to open eight of the 12 proposed hubs to date.

Following the announcement of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, the Families Federations are looking forward to understanding what the recommendations of the review mean for our families, given the possibility of unit moves and changes to training to meet operational objectives.

Transition and through-life support

The much-needed focus on non-UK personnel and families through the MOD's deep dive is welcomed, but we will be looking to ensure that the recommendations deliver effective change on a number of enduring issues. We have contributed to the public consultation into the waiving of settlement fees for some non-UK members of the Armed Forces, and we hope the response will reflect the evidence and concerns raised by the Families Federations.

Conclusion

As the MOD outlines the changes to Defence following the Integrated Review and publishes its new Families Strategy, 2021/22 could be a pivotal time for Armed Forces families. Post the publication of the Selous report, this work offers a significant opportunity to effect positive change for Armed Forces families through work undertaken by the MOD, the single Services, the Families Federations and other key stakeholders. The Families Federations look forward to understanding more about how the underpinning work required to take forward the strategy will be resourced by the MOD and the single Services, and to playing our part in this.

Observations from the Confederation of Service Charities

Introduction

We continue to be encouraged by the progress being made in the delivery of the Covenant and the Government's commitment to improve services for veterans. Nevertheless, there remain significant shortfalls, both in delivery and co-ordination, that require action. This year's report highlights a number of new initiatives, which are to be welcomed. However, the outstanding issues that have been highlighted in our observations, in some cases for many years, must not be overlooked. As we highlighted in last year's observations, the delivery of the Covenant is a partnership between the Government and the charitable sector. The sector's support over the last year needs to be set within the context of the pandemic. The impact is laid out in detail below, but Service charities have had to react with agility and flexibility to reach the beneficiary community, whilst concurrently dealing with significant reductions in income.

The effects of the pandemic are likely to be felt for some time and in order to sustain the necessary level of support, close co-ordination between the sector and the Government in terms of policy, resource allocation and delivery will be essential.

Impact of COVID-19

The most recent of the biannual surveys to assess the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on the sector was conducted in May 2021. The results highlighted the continuing impact on members' services, with 44 percent reporting an increase in beneficiary numbers over the previous six months (down 15 percent from the previous survey) and 34 percent reporting a decrease. This balance masked a significant and continuing increase in demand from beneficiaries for some specific areas of support, particularly mental health support, which was up 68 percent overall, and loneliness support, which was up 64 percent overall, although both were marginally down from the previous survey.

With revenue-raising activities severely constrained for much of the past 18 months, many charities have had to make difficult decisions to help navigate the financial challenge to the services they offer. Nearly 40 percent of respondents continue to forecast increasing beneficiary demand over the next year as restrictions ease. With beneficiary numbers expected to rise while income reduces, 30 percent of those surveyed anticipate having to reduce the services they offer at a time when they are needed more than ever. 18 percent believe that the increase would be unmanageable, accelerating the need for support to be made available closer to home, in the community or online.

Without ongoing financial support, the sector will be less able to respond to the many challenges that exist, presenting a real risk to those in the Armed Forces Community who rely on our services.

Cross-government co-ordination

We acknowledge the work of those within the MOD and the OVA who work diligently, and to positive effect, on behalf of the Armed Forces Community. The OVA has increased in capacity over the past year and is beginning to have an impact across a broad spectrum of issues. The reinvigoration of the Strategy for our Veterans through the Action Plan is to be welcomed, although at the time of writing the detail has yet to be shared. However, there are significant areas that require attention.

The Covenant Annual Report reads: “The MOD and the OVA have continued to build and strengthen their working relationships at all levels. This is demonstrated by the two key governance bodies for delivery... the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board and the Covenant Reference Group.” The reality, though, is that the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board has not met for over three years, and without a strong body at the highest political level (the board is co-chaired by the Defence Secretary and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster) to drive through solutions to the intractable issues facing the Armed Forces Community, the conditions are set for prevarication and drift. Examples are: the treatment of non-UK Service personnel, veterans and their families, which has been an issue for more than a decade, War Widows’ pensions and the public’s perception of veterans. We strongly urge the Government to fast track an early Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board meeting and establish a regular rhythm going forward. The

Covenant Reference Group has, for the last three years, been the senior level of governmental co-ordination. In the past year, the co-chairs have been reduced from 3* to 2* level, representation has been reduced and it remains to be seen how effective these new arrangements will be. The Covenant Reference Group issues tracker, which is an important means of monitoring progress against Covenant commitments, remains a work in progress after 18 months and is not yet fit for purpose. We look forward to an effective mechanism that is transparent and readily available for all who need it.

Special consideration

Last year’s report said that: “The Secretary of State for Defence and other ministerial colleagues are considering how to take the issue of War Widows’ pensions forward.”

We commented that this was the sixth year of consideration and that a seventh would be unacceptable, and yet that is exactly where we are. The Defence Committee is also on the record in calling for immediate engagement with the Treasury to rectify this ‘grotesque injustice’. If the Covenant pledge to provide special consideration for the bereaved is to mean anything, this issue must be resolved as a matter of urgency. The War Widows Association estimates the number of widows affected as under 200, so the cost would be limited. The Treasury argument of ‘precedent’ cannot be allowed to trump the nation’s promise of ‘special consideration’.

Covenant into law

As the Government's proposals – as part of the Armed Forces Bill – to consolidate the commitments set out in the Armed Forces Covenant in legislation are near conclusion, Cobseo and sector representatives have continued to engage with the MOD to ensure that the bill and the supporting statutory guidance provide the necessary scope and understanding so that the Covenant's principles remain at the heart of service delivery. Noting previously aired concerns about the limited scope of the draft legislation and means for enforcement and the risk of unintended consequences, not least the perception of a two-tier Covenant arising from differences between voluntary commitments and a lower legal standard, continued vigilance will be needed to ensure that good intentions are reflected in future delivery. Cobseo has already signalled its intent to monitor implementation and hold the Government accountable as required. This will include pressing for future action to address the limited scope of the existing legislation.

Addressing the legacy of Northern Ireland's past

We welcomed the Northern Ireland Office's engagement with the sector as part of its consultation on the Command Paper, 'Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past'. The Command Paper makes a number of proposals that will impact on veterans who served in Northern Ireland, including the possibility of being asked to provide evidence to a newly established Information Recovery Body. Whilst noting that Cobseo's engagement in the consultation implies

neither endorsement of, nor objection to, the proposed legislation, it has allowed us to make a range of points to ensure that veterans are supported appropriately and effectively. Of these, it remains the Confederation's view that the adequate provision of funding for wraparound care will be paramount if veterans and their families who are affected by this legislation are to be properly supported when it is introduced. Experience to date from the ongoing series of inquests in Northern Ireland is that whilst MOD legal support is well established for veterans required to attend, the wider welfare and wellbeing support required has, by default, fallen to the Service charity sector. It is now vital that provision is made for the wraparound care to be put in place to assure and support those veterans invited to support the process.

Non-UK

We find ourselves again reflecting on another year of discussion and focus on the issues facing non-UK Serving personnel and their families, whilst lamenting the lack of tangible progress on the inequities they face in their day-to-day lives. We remain hopeful for positive outcomes from discussions between the Home Office, the MOD and the Service Family Federations on a number of specific issues facing the non-UK cohort.

A number of actions have been agreed that should start to turn discussion into action. In the interim, the Cobseo Non-UK Cluster is working with Anglia Ruskin University to develop further research into the needs of this community, and we hope that its findings and recommendations will also be addressed in future policy development.

We also cautiously welcome the consultation this year with the Home Office and the MOD on visa fees for non-UK personnel on leaving the Service. Acknowledgement of the principle that visa fees are a disadvantage for non-UK personnel compared to the experience of those they serve alongside is undoubted progress. However, the proposal falls significantly short by excluding the vast majority of non-UK Service leavers and their families, and fails to address the ongoing issue of minimum income thresholds, which is separating recruits from their families for up to four years. Moreover, the recent introduction of the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme, and the support they provide for Afghan nationals, changes the context in which the ongoing consultation sits. It introduces a significant disparity between the rules for Afghan nationals and the rules for non-UK soldiers serving, or those recently discharged.

We await the outcome of the consultation but ask that our subsequent submission is also considered. At the very least, the waiver of fees for Afghan nationals should be matched by a similar concession for non-UK personnel and their families.

Social care

We have previously highlighted the absence of any reference to social care in successive Covenant annual reports and, once again, this year's report makes no mention of veterans' social care needs. The impact of the pandemic continues to highlight weaknesses in social care provision and the very significant challenges around the provision and funding of quality care. A large number of veterans are reliant on social care, but this is particularly the case for the wounded, injured and sick, for whom social care support is integral to their healthcare

needs. Many face a constant battle to make sure that their long-term care, rehabilitation and social needs are met, are appropriately funded and properly co-ordinated. The need to establish long-term funding arrangements to ensure that veterans can live with dignity and respect in their own homes and in residential care is now critical as changes to local commissioning arrangements unfold.

We welcome steps towards holistic support, such as social prescribing, but this needs to be fully and consistently available when needed. It is also important that there is a commitment to veterans and their families in the plans for further integrating health and social care systems. These plans should also ensure that the needs of unpaid carers in the Armed Forces Community, particularly relating to the provision of respite care, are addressed.

Key issues by report headings

Chapter 3 – Health and healthcare

Consistency of provision

We welcome the continued focus on 'veteran-friendly' GP accreditation and – in the context of the wounded, injured and sick – the growing range of specific services including the provision of advanced prosthetic services, access to some military rehabilitation facilities, targeted case management and mental health provision (Op COURAGE). Yet veterans continue to receive widely different experiences of these services depending on where they live. There is still a long way to go to improve GP awareness of the issues associated with Service-related injuries, and more needs to be done by the Government to improve the 'postcode lottery' regarding access to health and healthcare services.

Serving personnel and their families also face potential disadvantage when serving overseas, where healthcare and the provision of specialist services are often not locally available, which results in either unaccompanied service or limitations on career opportunities. We would reiterate our wish to see metrics included in the annual report to demonstrate a commitment to improving parity of veterans' care across the UK, assist in bearing down on the 'postcode lottery' of healthcare provisions and assist in holding service providers to account.

The wounded, injured and sick

The re-establishment of the UK-wide Priority Treatment Working Group to monitor effectiveness and increase awareness of priority access is a positive step. Yet delivery remains inconsistent in practice, and there is a continuing lack of clarity about its interpretation by the Government, clinicians and the NHS. With no metrics included in the report, there is little to indicate how successful these efforts have been.

Veterans Trauma Network

We welcome the development of a clinically-led Veterans Trauma Network, a collection of 13 NHS Veteran Trauma Centres and four specialist units, each with military and civilian medical experts able to help with physical Service-related issues. The Veterans Trauma Network complements NHS services, which provide support and accelerated access to secondary advice and care for veterans following GP referral. The Service charity sector has been, and continues to be, heavily involved in signposting veterans to the Veterans Trauma Network, as well as assisting the recruitment and selection of their specialist staff. The Veterans Trauma Network provides an important bridge between the NHS and the veteran

community, and its services would benefit from being supported regionally and through the appropriate professional institutions (Royal Colleges etc).

Veterans Mobility Fund

The Veterans Mobility Fund has provided vital funding for specialist equipment for veterans seriously injured during service since 2015. To date, it has supported 219 veterans through the funding of 275 separate awards. LIBOR funding for the fund was withdrawn in April 2021, and this has not been replaced. However, the requirement to provide specialist mobility support to those seriously injured in service still remains. We anticipate that at least a similar, and probably a higher, number of awards will be needed in the next five years as the complexity of applicants' needs increases, hence we fully support the request by Help for Heroes and Blesma for further targeted Government funding to extend the Veterans Mobility Fund for another five years.

Medical discharge and transition

We acknowledge the progress made since the publication of the Holistic Transition Policy in 2019 and welcome the release of additional funding for the much-delayed Programme CORTISONE to provide electronic transfer of medical records. This will have a significant impact when eventually introduced. Yet there remains a lack of focus now on the medical discharge process, and inconsistencies and gaps in the MOD's support for those being medically discharged still exist between Services and for individuals. Issues range from medical discharge with a physical injury before receiving a full diagnosis for mental health conditions, the need to improve the mental health support available to those leaving the military, through to compensation awards not being disclosed on occasion until after Service personnel have left the military.

Rehabilitation pathways for veterans with complex needs

We are aware that the MOD continues to work with the Department of Health and Social Care and the Devolved Administrations to explore whether and how DMRC Stanford Hall might further support the wider veteran community, beyond the valuable work of the Complex Prosthetic Assessment Clinic, for specific services under pressure elsewhere, and look for this work to come to a speedy resolution.

We also welcome the establishment of a working group to provide a clearer picture of the optimum pathways of care for those with complex rehabilitation needs. We hope the Government will acknowledge any gaps identified by the working group and act on any recommendations it puts forward. The inconsistency in service provision experienced by veterans, and noted earlier in our observations, is particularly evident in the provision of rehabilitation services, which are often in contrast to the higher level of provision for Serving personnel through the Defence Medical Services, including DMRC Stanford Hall.

Ex-Servicewomen

This year's report highlights the findings of the 'We Also Served' research project, which was commissioned by the Cobseo Female Veterans Cluster, in conjunction with NHS England, to better understand the specific health and wellbeing experiences of female veterans. We welcome its recommendations, and note that the findings need to be considered alongside the report of the House of Commons Defence Committee, 'Protecting Those who Protect Us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life', which sets out the extent of the poor treatment of Serving female personnel. Cobseo is committed to addressing and

helping to arrest and prevent, through its engagement across Government, the avoidable harm suffered by women who are serving, and have served, in the Armed Forces.

Mental health

We welcome the significant additional funding provided to Op COURAGE and the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust for its mental health programmes. The report also records very significant improvements in Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service waiting times, although waiting times for the Complex Treatment Service remain significantly and stubbornly higher. We have highlighted elsewhere in our observations the significant increase during the pandemic in the number of veterans seeking mental health support – a situation further exacerbated by a spike in demand following recent events in Afghanistan. Whilst the additional funding and improved Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service wait times will go some way to redressing the increase in need, significant and increasing numbers of veterans prefer to access services via the Service charity sector.

Suicide prevention

The recent announcement that the Office for National Statistics is working to develop a new method for recording and reporting cases of suicide within the veteran community in England and Wales, for introduction by 2023, represents an important step towards a better understanding of the scale of the problem and the causes of veteran suicide, and to providing improved support through better-targeted interventions. It is now essential that a way be found to replicate this new approach in Scotland and Northern Ireland too, as soon as possible.

Although local decision-making is a vital part of developing local suicide prevention action plans, there is also a role for national Government in ensuring that their strategy has an impact across all areas of the country.

We believe that the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations should make it a mandatory requirement for local authorities to:

- identify veterans as a ‘high-risk’ group when developing local suicide prevention action plans, and to ensure that tailored approaches are taken to support veterans with specific characteristics
- engage with veteran charities/representatives to help inform their overall action plan, including a commitment by each Armed Forces and Veterans Champion to take veteran-specific suicide prevention training courses
- have clear signposting for local veteran-specific support services, such as mental health services and bereavement support

Chapter 4 – Education

Armed Forces children and young people

The report acknowledges that “due to the mobility of Service families, Service children can face specific and additional challenges in comparison with their peers throughout their time in education”, but it otherwise gives little consideration to the issue of their health and healthcare. Their mental health and wellbeing need also to be specifically recognised and addressed across both policy and practice. A holistic approach to understanding and supporting the health and healthcare needs of Service children and young people is crucial.

Ultimately, the educational challenges and needs of Service children and young people, which are widely acknowledged and understood, do not sit in isolation of the health and healthcare challenges.

Chapter 5 – Housing and accommodation

Veterans housing data

The difficulty of identifying veterans in need of support is a common theme across the broad range of assistance offered by Service charities. A significant proportion of local authorities are able to identify veterans in need of accommodation, though, and Government direction or encouragement for others to similarly record this key data would contribute significantly to improving veterans’ homelessness through the housing services provided by the Service charity sector.

Local authority Disabled Facilities Grants

We have previously highlighted the length of time it can take to implement these grants, which otherwise remain an excellent point of support. Evidence this year is of even longer waiting lists but in addition, ‘thresholds’ for acceptance are rising significantly. In an increasing number of cases, Service charities have had to foot the whole bill for essential work when the Disabled Facilities Grant has been denied.

Access to Government funding

The very significant levels of future funding for housing recently announced by the Government are ring-fenced to specific categories of applicants (e.g. regulated providers). We would urge the Government to review the eligibility criteria to ensure that Service charities are also eligible. Otherwise, a significant section of the veteran community will be disadvantaged.

Chapter 6 – Inquests and judicial engagement

The War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Chamber

Not for the first time, Cobseo’s observations for the 2020 report highlighted concerns regarding the War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Chamber, which was consistently failing to meet its key performance indicators and as a consequence was faced with a mounting backlog of appeals awaiting resolution, the impact of which was being borne by some of our most vulnerable members of the Armed Forces Community. The commitment made by key stakeholders (HM Courts and Tribunals Service, the Royal British Legion and Veterans UK) during the past year to work together to address the backlog, identify new and more efficient ways of working, and identify the resources needed to provide the standard of service our veterans deserve going forward, has already made a significant difference and is an excellent example of what can be achieved by joint working. It is vital that this good work, and the underpinning resource commitment, is maintained. Cobseo has offered proposals to the Covenant Reference Group on how to take this work forward, including the development of a new performance indicator which better reflects what an acceptable service looks like from the appellant’s perspective.

Direct lodgement

The failure to introduce direct lodgement in England and Wales is another enduring concern that unnecessarily builds delay into the appeals process. This is a clear example of disadvantage which requires legislative priority.

Chapter 8 – Transition and through-life support

Support for veterans in the criminal justice system

This year’s report carries only brief reference to the range of collaborative work being conducted to support veterans in the criminal justice system. This belies the significant number of ongoing and new initiatives to improve support for veterans in the criminal justice system and we would draw attention briefly here to the following.

- The HM Prison and Probation Service Co-Financing Organisation’s commissioned Veterans Hub in Holme House Prison is now up and running in a pilot scheme.
- HM Prison Service and HM Probation Service are working on an Information Sharing Agreement so that veterans who have identified themselves in prison are known in probation.
- The Nottingham Healthcare Regroup Project provides support to veterans throughout the criminal justice system, from arrest through prison to probation. This pilot operates in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire.
- Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service has a dedicated post working with prison governors to improve the identification and support of veterans in prison, and to increase the numbers of VICSOs (Veterans in Custody Support Officers) across the service. The programme has been largely driven by veterans working in the HMPPS sector pushing for the posts to be created.

These initiatives are important, not least because veterans can be unwilling to disclose their service or engage with civilian support, which places them at a disadvantage compared to civilians and can mean they receive little or no support. COVID-19 has compounded this, as confirming proof of service for veterans has become extremely slow during lockdown. This too has led to some veterans not being able to access the support they need. We urge the MOD to do all it can to address the ongoing backlog.

Chapter 10 – Research and data

Data

While it is welcomed that chapter 10 of the report commits to improved data and evidence collection in the Veterans Action Plan, and whilst noting that some initiatives are already underway, the reality is that the Census 2021 veterans' data will not have been analysed before 2023. This is too long, inevitably leaves a gap and argues for the reinstatement of a Covenant and veterans focus being funded in the Annual Population Survey (not funded since 2018). Regular sources of employment and labour market data published by the Office for National Statistics do not include information on ex-Service personnel, or where data is available, sample sizes are small so conclusions are not reliable. The only two sources of socio-economic data for the UK which contain information on ex-Service personnel are:

- the Annual Population Survey, which is a boosted version of the quarterly Labour Force Survey
- the decennial Census of Population

We would urge the OVA to consider interim measures to address the paucity of data held on veterans and their families in UK society.

Performance metrics

The report confirms that the OVA is developing a single set of metrics and key performance indicators to measure the Government's performance in delivering against the goals and objectives set out in the Strategy for our Veterans by 2022. We welcome this and look forward to engaging further.

Educational data

The report notes that “research and data are key to improving our understanding of the needs of the Armed Forces Community, how effectively those needs are being met, and where any gaps in provision might exist.” Yet there continues to be no apparent systematic response to the many and consistent calls for co-ordinated data and rigorous research into the wellbeing and educational outcomes of Service children. Recommendations 22, 41, 91 and 103 of the ‘Living in Our Shoes’ report were all accepted by the Government and refer to the need for, and their commitment to support, research to improve our understanding of their experiences and how to improve their lives. We would urge the OVA to take account of these recommendations and develop a way forward to redress this.

Observations from the Royal British Legion

Introduction

The Royal British Legion welcomes the publication of this year's report, marking the important milestone of 10 years since the Covenant was first placed in legislation. Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are pleased to see new initiatives for the Armed Forces Community included and progress made on some long-standing areas of need. We look forward to the forthcoming Families Strategy, Veterans Strategy Action Plan and the detail of the commitments contained therein. However, not for the first time, we find that some of our external observations to this report are not dissimilar to those offered last year, nor to those for previous reports. This reinforces the point that we, along with many others across the Armed Forces charity sector and beyond, made during the passage of the Armed Forces Bill 2021: that the new duty to pay due regard to the Covenant should be expanded to every area of public policy and national and devolved Government, to deliver a level of accountability that the Covenant and Veterans Report cannot provide.

Special consideration

In the external observations on the first full Covenant Annual Report in 2012, it was noted that: "The key challenge one year on from the Armed Forces Bill passing into law is how we, as a nation, build on that progress and sustain momentum, so that both the principles of no disadvantage and, crucially, of special treatment (where justifiable, e.g. in the case of Service-related injury) are applied in practice at every level of Government. The structure of this year's annual report, with its almost exclusive

focus on no disadvantage, highlights the importance of defining what is meant by 'special treatment' as soon as possible. Not to do so would be to risk the core principle of special treatment becoming overlooked." This in turn would risk "no disadvantage, which should be the bare minimum, becoming the gold standard by which access to statutory and non-statutory services is judged. It is vital that this does not happen if the nation is genuinely to honour the Covenant." It is regrettable that much of this commentary is still relevant today and we urge, especially in the light of the Armed Forces Bill 2021, that renewed vigour and attention are applied to both principles of the Covenant.

Governance

It is reassuring to see the commitment to convene the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board. However, a similar commitment was made in 2020's report and it is disappointing that the board has not met for three years. To reinstate the ministerial direction and oversight required to embed the Covenant at the highest echelons of Government, we urge the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board to meet at the earliest opportunity and put in place a firm schedule of regular meetings.

Health and healthcare

We welcome the progress on health, although for another year we note that the application of priority treatment continues to present challenges to the Covenant's implementation. We are pleased to be a member of the Priority Treatment Working Group, and hope for an outcome that consistently delivers on this long-standing policy for personnel, veterans and their families. We also note once more that the 2018 commitment to an alcohol strategy has not yet been acted upon.

We are disappointed to see that this year's report once again contains no mention of social care. Royal British Legion research has found that unpaid carers in the Armed Forces Community are experiencing a severe impact on their health but are less likely to access support than other carers. They also face unique issues linked to Service life and culture that should be addressed. We recommend investment in tailored respite and mental health provision for these carers, and for the MOD to urgently develop and publish a strategy to support carers in the Serving community.

Housing and accommodation

A significant proportion of the housing and accommodation focus within this report is rightly on MOD provision to personnel and their families. Given its prominence as an ongoing issue, we argued during the passage of the Armed Forces Bill that the scope of housing issues covered by the new Covenant duty should be extended to accommodate MOD in-Service provision. Including central Government within the bill's scope may also address a significant issue with Disabled Facilities Grants, whereby the means test continues to unacceptably treat compensation for injured personnel as normal income.

Transition and through-life support

In external observations to the first full Covenant Annual Report in 2012, it was highlighted that "an issue of particular concern in relation to Service leavers is the treatment of Foreign and Commonwealth Service personnel" within the immigration system. Over the years since, Armed Forces charities have repeatedly highlighted that non-UK personnel and their families face disadvantages in UK immigration processes. This year, we welcomed the principle behind the Government's consultation on visa fees, but the solution proposed in it

fails to address the fees that the majority of personnel and their families face. We sincerely hope that our representations, and those of many others, have been taken on board in any policy change.

Business, employment and the community

As we continue to await the roll-out of Universal Credit to complete, another year has elapsed where injured veterans have had to sacrifice their military compensation within the means test for Employment Support Allowance. We would like to see all remaining compensation disregard discrepancies addressed, so as to ensure that those awards for injuries as a result of Service are never treated as normal income.

We do, however, welcome the investment in the Department for Work and Pensions' Armed Forces Champions Network. Training for these champions should be standardised to ensure a consistent experience for veterans in any Jobcentre Plus. Additionally, and in line with 2020 Royal British Legion research, we have been pleased to welcome the inclusion of a veteran identifier in Universal Credit applications. We hope that this is rolled out across all benefits, the data is published and further work is carried out on data-sharing practices that could streamline benefit applications for injured personnel.

Research and data

Following the Royal British Legion's successful 'Count Them In' campaign, a highlight this year has been the inclusion of a new Armed Forces question in the 2021 Census in England and Wales, and the 2022 Census in Scotland. We stand ready to work with the OVA, the Office for National Statistics, the MOD and others to help analyse and interpret this rich source of data that has great potential to transform our understanding.

Observations from the Independent Veterans Advisor

Introduction

The role of Independent Veterans Advisor was created in April and this is the first occasion that there has been an opportunity to present observations on the Covenant and Veterans Annual Report.

This year has been one of considerable challenges for everyone and it has been heartening to see that while so much Government attention has been focused elsewhere, progress has continued to be made on veterans' affairs. I believe that while we must hold to account those charged with delivering positive change and improvement in the support provided to the veteran community and that much remains to be done, we must recognise that this report covers a snapshot in time and must be considered in the context of the progress made in support to veterans over a number of years. It is important that this progress is maintained and that the UK really does become the best country in the world to be a veteran.

Governance

The increasingly effective relationship between the OVA and other Government departments, particularly the MOD, has been encouraging. However, two years on from its establishment, although there has been some increase in staff, the OVA still lacks the staff capacity necessary to ensure it can deliver effectively on the full range of commitments that it is given. This is not in any way a criticism of the OVA staff, but there simply are not enough of them and this needs to be addressed quickly if it is not only to drive forward the delivery of commitments already in place, but also to develop the strategic plans necessary to realise the Government's ambitious vision

to make the UK the best country in the world to be a veteran.

It is concerning that the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board has not met for several years and must do so at least annually if it is to continue to be referenced in this regard. The involvement in this forum of ministers from across Government is key to ensuring that there is political engagement in veterans' affairs at the most senior levels, in particular those matters that cut across departments.

The Covenant Reference Group has undergone some changes during the year and is now co-chaired by the Director of the Office for Veterans' Affairs and the Director of Armed Forces People Policy at the MOD. Numbers attending have been reduced to make the group more manageable and effective. I believe this to be positive, but the Covenant Reference Group must be supported by the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board to ensure formal cross-government political engagement and the full range of Armed Forces Covenant and Strategy for Our Veterans matters.

COVID-19 constraints have meant that the Veterans Advisory Board is yet to meet in full in person, which has constrained the degree to which the board has been able to engage in influencing policy development thus far. That said, as COVID-19 constraints have lifted and the OVA has grown some capacity, it has been able to engage the board earlier in policy discussions. This has provided an excellent forum for policies and future plans to be challenged, discussed and further developed. This discussion is further enhanced by the inclusion of the views and expertise offered through their 'Chair of Chairs' by the Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committees, whose establishment across the UK provides an excellent source of ground truth that we must leverage further in future.

Non-UK Service leavers and veterans' immigration status

The treatment of non-UK Service leavers and veterans in respect of their immigration status has been subject to a public consultation, and we await the outcome. However, the issue will bring into focus the value that the nation places on military service and, in particular, the personal and professional sacrifices made by those who come from overseas to serve in our Armed Forces. The length of service required to qualify for any dispensation or waiver of the fees charged to secure Indefinite Leave to Remain, and the extent to which family members are included, will be key determinants in how this policy is received by the veteran community in particular and their views of the commitment the Government makes to its non-UK veterans.

Northern Ireland legacy inquiries

Although it is not directly Armed Forces Covenant- or Strategy for Our Veterans-related, it is surprising that the report fails to mention the ongoing Northern Ireland legacy inquiries, brought back to the fore by the recent death of 80-year-old Dennis Hutchings while he was under trial for an alleged murder committed while he was on patrol in Co Tyrone in June 1974, 47 years ago. Dennis had been cleared of any wrongdoing on two previous occasions. These ongoing inquiries erode trust in the Government's commitment to veterans and lead to negative perceptions among elements of the veteran community about the true impartiality of the system. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland published a Command Paper in July this year, setting out a number of proposals that would remove the risk of future prosecutions. I have engaged

with a significant number of veterans and veterans' associations and, in broad terms, the proposals have been well received, albeit with a number of caveats. There is an urgent need now to convert these proposals into action that protects veterans from the ongoing threat of vexatious prosecution.

Female veterans

During the year, there has been considerable work done on female Service personnel and veterans. It is surprising, therefore, that the House of Commons Defence Committee report by Sarah Atherton MP, 'Protecting Those Who Protect Us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life', which looked at the lived experience of women who serve and have served, is not mentioned or referenced. The report considered over 4,500 pieces of evidence and made a number of recommendations and conclusions that would improve the support given to female Service personnel and veterans. These should have greater prominence in the report and should be considered as part of future Armed Forces Covenant and Strategy for Our Veterans Action Plans.

LGBT+

This year, there have been positive steps taken to address the hurt felt by members of the LGBT+ community who served prior to January 2000. This has included an apology made in the House of Commons by the Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans, the return of medals and the development of an increasingly close and effective working relationship with the OVA, the MOD, the NHS and others. This has evidenced a genuine desire in Government to understand and mitigate the impact of historic policies.

Narrative

This year has shown once again the role that Serving personnel and veterans play in society through their support to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic via military deployment, their work as key workers across a number of sectors and as volunteers. Approximately 14,500 individuals leave the Armed Forces every year and take into society an extraordinary range of skills, qualifications and experience combined with the culture and ethos of the military services. More must be done to communicate what military service is, the sacrifices made by the Service person and their family, the training, skills and experiences gained, the risks taken, the commitments made, and the benefits all this would bring to a future employer. This will contribute to ensuring that public understanding of the Armed Services and what military service means is not lost. It will support efforts to ensure that the investment made in developing the skills, qualifications, experience and leadership of individuals during their military service is better understood by a wider range of employers and continues to add value to society long after their military service comes to an end.



Chapter 1: Governance

Efficient and effective governance arrangements across the UK Government, the Devolved Administrations and the wider sector help us to manage, agree and review priorities, co-ordinate work across stakeholders and deliver timely, positive outcomes for the Armed Forces Community.

The UK Government has recently reviewed and strengthened its governance arrangements around the Armed Forces Covenant and the Strategy for our Veterans. This chapter sets out our new approach, together with the approaches taken in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Governance across the UK

The MOD and the OVA have continued to build and strengthen their working relationship at all levels. This is demonstrated by the two key governance bodies for delivery of the Covenant and the Strategy for our Veterans: the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board and the Covenant Reference Group. Both are co-chaired by the relevant ministers or senior officials from the MOD and the OVA.

At the most senior level, the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board is co-chaired by the Secretary of State for Defence (who leads for Service personnel and their families in the cabinet) and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (who leads for the cabinet on veterans' issues).

The Covenant Reference Group – the senior official-level meeting responsible for raising issues related to the Covenant – continues to meet regularly. It met three times during this reporting period. Membership includes senior officials from relevant UK Government departments, key stakeholders from the Service charity sector and representatives from the Devolved Administrations. This year, the Covenant Reference Group agreed new arrangements to strengthen governance and oversight of the Covenant, including changes to its own terms of reference. The Group is now co-chaired by the relevant Directors from the OVA and Armed Forces People Policy in the MOD. Official attendance at meetings has been reduced to those making an active contribution to the agenda, to enable a more streamlined discussion.

Sitting below the Covenant Reference Group, the MOD has reviewed and updated its approach to working-level meetings to make them more collaborative, focused and efficient. The MOD has also introduced a new tool to track the agreement and delivery of departmental commitments against the Covenant, visible to all Covenant Reference Group members, to improve transparency and accountability. Sharing information with external partners is a new approach, and officials are working hard to take on feedback to improve the tool's value.

This year, the MOD established a Deputy-Director-led policy team focused on the needs of Service families and safeguarding. The new Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding team will work with the Armed Forces Covenant team to create efficient, mutually supportive governance structures that cohere with existing mechanisms, including a new Families Steering Group to oversee delivery of the refreshed UK Armed Forces Families Strategy 2022-32 and the accompanying action plan.

Governance has also been strengthened in relation to veterans' policy, with the establishment of a new Veterans Advisory Board in November 2020. The board provides independent insight and expert advice to ministers concerning the future needs and expectations of veterans. It also advises on the delivery, impact, effectiveness, sustainability and inclusiveness of current and future support services and policies. The board has already met three times since being established, and it played a valuable role in supporting the development of the Strategy for our Veterans 2022-24 Action Plan.

Alongside the new Veterans Advisory Board, David Richmond CBE has been appointed as the UK Government's Independent Veterans Advisor. Reporting directly to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Independent Veterans Advisor plays a key role in making the most of the Veterans Advisory Board. He provides constructive, expert challenges to the Government's work to make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran.

Governance in Scotland

The Scottish Government publishes its own annual update to the Scottish Parliament on support for the Armed Forces and veteran community in Scotland.² This is delivered by the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans, Keith Brown MSP.

Scotland was the first part of the UK to appoint an independent Veterans Commissioner. This year, the Commissioner, Charlie Wallace, published reports on employment, skills and learning, and housing provision, providing recommendations to the Scottish and UK Governments.³ The Scottish Government also supports UK-wide work on Armed Forces, veterans and Covenant issues through its membership of the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board, the Covenant Reference Group and engagement with the OVA on the Strategy for our Veterans.

Governance in Wales

The Welsh Government publishes its own annual report on Covenant activity in Wales.⁴

The Armed Forces Expert Group in Wales, chaired by the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership Hannah Blythyn MS, provides oversight and a strategic voice on behalf of the Armed Forces Community across Wales. Members include the single Services in Wales, the Families Federations, the Welsh Local Government Association, charities and statutory agencies. The group met three times during the reporting period. The Welsh Government has also established ongoing governance structures to deliver on the recommendations made in its Veterans' Scoping Exercise.

At a regional level, Armed Forces forums provide focal points for key agencies to deliver for their Armed Forces Communities. These forums are closely supported by Armed Forces Liaison Officers and local authority champions, as well as the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government also supports UK-wide work on Armed Forces, veterans and Covenant issues through its membership of the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board, the Covenant Reference Group and engagement with the OVA on the Strategy for our Veterans.

Working with the Welsh Government, the OVA and the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales are committed to appointing a new Veterans Commissioner for Wales.

2 The Scottish Government's 2021 update is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-support-veterans-armed-forces-community-2021/documents/>

3 Available at: <https://scottishveteranscommissioner.org/reports/>

4 The Welsh Government's most recent report is available at: <https://gov.wales/armed-forces-covenant-annual-report-2020>

In line with existing governance structures in Wales, the role would champion the interests of veterans in Wales by working with ex-Service people and the public, and with private and voluntary organisations that represent them.

Context and governance in Northern Ireland

Given Northern Ireland's unique context, bespoke arrangements for the delivery of Covenant, Armed Forces and veterans' issues remain in place.

The Headquarters of the Army's 38 (Irish) Brigade oversees the needs of Service personnel and their families, offering support with MOD-provided facilities, particular remuneration packages and arrangements at a local level with school and health providers.

The Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for Northern Ireland maintains oversight of broader Covenant delivery. This is achieved through:

- the Veterans Support Office, which builds capacity and co-ordinates the delivery of welfare to veterans across Northern Ireland
- the Defence Relationship Management team, which engages with businesses in Northern Ireland in support of reservists, veterans and the wider Armed Forces Community
- the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association engagement team, which works closely with the single Services to facilitate engagement with civil society

The elected Armed Forces Champions from Northern Ireland's local authorities and Health and Social Care Trusts are also important for the wider delivery of the Covenant.

The independent Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner, Danny Kinahan, continues to monitor, champion and promote veterans' interests across Northern Ireland. This year, he has travelled across Northern Ireland, listening to veterans and hearing first-hand about what they have experienced during their time in the Armed Forces and afterwards. One of the Commissioner's goals is to secure a sustainable environment for all veterans and their families, where they can access timely, high-quality support whenever they need it. The Commissioner continues to use his position to engage with political representatives, statutory agencies and others to ensure that support is available.



Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Regiment of Scotland, take part in a medal parade in September 2021.



Chapter 2: Activity by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust is an arm's length body of the MOD, which has charitable status and acts as an independent grant-making body. It administers the Covenant Fund of £10 million per year, which funds projects across the UK that support the Armed Forces Community, and it also administers funding from other Government sources. This chapter sets out the work the Trust has undertaken this year and the funding it has provided.

COVID-19 impact

The impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has caused various challenges for organisations that support the Armed Forces Community. In its work during this reporting period, the Trust has sought to address those challenges by adapting its existing funding programmes and launching new ones.

As organisations decided how best to respond to the needs of those they support, the Trust was flexible and responsive in its delivery of grant funding. It agreed over 500 changes to existing grants to reflect the challenges that projects were facing during the pandemic.

New funding programmes were delivered quickly: £9.1 million was awarded in 2020 to projects designed to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Armed Forces Community. In April 2021, the MOD and the OVA secured funding for the Trust to launch a new £6 million programme to help existing charitable activities and services in need of short-term grant support. The Sustaining Support to Armed Forces Communities Programme has provided short-term funding to projects and Service charities that give valuable support to the Armed Forces Community, but were experiencing financial challenges due to the pandemic.

The Trust also worked with NAAFI to launch the NAAFI Fund in late 2020. NAAFI provides catering and welfare to Service personnel around the world, with profits returned to the MOD in the form of a welfare dividend. Through its new fund, NAAFI is making an additional £7.5 million of funding available over the next 10 years for projects seeking to improve quality of life for Service personnel and their families.

65 awards, worth a total of £711,707, were made during the first round of funding. The first round focused on tackling boredom and isolation – especially in the context of COVID-19 – and more generally encouraging Service personnel and families to use their downtime well. Several awards were used to create, renovate or repurpose outdoor areas to provide facilities for Service personnel and their families on bases. Some units identified the need for a community hub, while other units provided bikes to help people keep active. Awards were made to projects across the UK and overseas, including in Naples, Gibraltar, Cyprus and France.

Sharing learning and insight

Between January and September 2021, the Trust published six evaluation reports encompassing nine different funding programmes.

Under the Strengthening Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant Programme, which launched in 2016, the Trust awarded

£6.6 million through two rounds of funding to clusters of local authorities. The funding enabled local authorities to work together in particular areas to deliver projects linked to needs identified by local Covenant partnerships, and find ways to ensure that the local Armed Forces Community could access the right types of services and support.

RAND Europe evaluated the programme and published their report in September 2021.⁵ The evaluation found that the funding had made a significant positive impact on delivery of the Covenant, especially by improving co-ordination, sharing best practices, providing tailored support and raising awareness of the support available.

In May 2021, the Trust launched its new Knowledge Network to share impact, learning and resources from its funded projects.⁶ The network is an open access data repository featuring outcome-based content from projects the Trust has supported. It holds a collection of curated content for those working with the Armed Forces Community, featuring research, reports, evaluations, case-studies and e-learning materials.

Addressing complex needs

In 2020, the Trust launched its Tackling Loneliness Programme, designed to address isolation and loneliness in the Armed Forces Community across the UK. 60 projects were awarded grants of £70,000 each.

5 Available at: <https://covenantfund.org.uk/resources/strengthening-and-empowering-delivery-of-the-covenant-evaluation-of-the-strengthening-delivery-of-the-armed-forces-covenant-programme/>

6 Available at: <https://covenantfund.org.uk/resources/>

Projects work with traditionally 'hard-to-reach' groups of beneficiaries to encourage people to engage in their community, access services and build stronger networks with peers, organisations and service providers.

In addition, under the Tackling Social Isolation Programme, the Trust awarded seven strategic grants to experienced organisations to act as mentors for successful Tackling Loneliness projects. This follows the success of the mentor model used for the Trust's Strategic Pathways and Positive Pathways Programmes.

The Trust has also continued to deliver projects under HM Treasury's Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund. The Treasury has provided an additional £10 million of funding in the financial year 2021/22. Over £2.1 million was awarded through the One is Too Many Programme to organisations providing specialist and co-ordinated services that reduce the risk of suicide among veterans. Eight awards were made to organisations across the UK that have experience working with individuals at increased risk of suicide. Three projects are working to provide support to veterans in the Devolved Administrations, while the remaining five operate on a UK-wide basis.

In November 2021, the Veterans' Places, Pathways and People Programme made awards of up to £800,000 each to projects working regionally to develop better, more joined-up and lasting support for local veterans with mental health needs.

Following the UK's withdrawal from Afghanistan earlier in the year, the UK Government made an additional £5 million available to support Armed Forces charities in September 2021. The Trust will distribute and monitor this funding on behalf of the OVA. It will focus on increasing capacity in mental health charities, improving veterans' understanding of the help available and delivering enhanced support.

Governance

The MOD has been working closely with the Cabinet Office to ensure that the Trust can continue to meet its requirements as a Non-Departmental Public Body and an independent charity acting to the highest standards of practice. As a result, the MOD and the Trust have established a revised governance structure, in line with independent charity law guidance. These changes ensure that the Trust can continue to function effectively as a non-departmental public body to the highest possible standards under the Charities Act 2011. The revised governance structure safeguards the predominance of independent members of the Board of Trustees while also ensuring that the Secretary of State for Defence retains powers to appoint or remove Trustees on an exceptional basis.

A new Chief Executive has been appointed by the Board of Trustees and ratified by the Permanent Secretary of the MOD. Anna Wright, formerly Chief Executive of the Naval Families Federation, will take over from the incumbent, Melloney Poole, in early 2022.

Case study: The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's Strengthening Delivery Programme

Gateshead Council led a cluster of local authorities in the North East to extend the existing Armed Forces Community Outreach Service into urban and rural areas of Northumberland and Durham. £241,000 of funding from the Trust's Strengthening Delivery Programme enabled the service to employ an additional four full-time Armed Forces outreach workers in Northumberland and Durham and a part-time worker in Gateshead, expanding the capacity of service across the four local authority areas.

The project sought to address a significant gap in the provision of housing support, services and advice – which already existed in Gateshead and Newcastle – to the Armed Forces Community in Durham and Northumberland. Through the project, an additional 610 members of the Armed Forces Community in Durham and Northumberland received support. The project worked with SSAFA (the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association), the Royal British Legion, Walking with the Wounded and other local charities.

A single-point-of-contact approach enabled more effective and targeted support to the local Armed Forces Community. The points of contact promoted a better understanding of the unique issues faced by the Armed Forces Community across wider council-run services, and acted as advocates for veterans and Armed Forces families who faced barriers when accessing key services.

The service encouraged applicants with serving histories or links to the Armed Forces to apply for the posts. All four full-time outreach workers appointed were veterans themselves.

In Durham, the most significant outcome was the provision of housing advice to 36 percent of clients, followed by the provision of benefit advice and the prevention of homelessness. The most significant outcome in Northumberland was the provision of housing advice to 41 percent of clients, with 15 percent of clients obtaining social housing and seven percent obtaining priority awards for rehousing.

Northumberland County Council and Durham County Council have committed longer-term funding for the four outreach workers employed in their region. In this way, funding from the Strengthening Delivery Programme enabled Northumberland and Durham to launch a dedicated service for the Armed Forces Community in the area that is well-used, well-supported by each local authority and more permanently embedded within service provision.



A Gunnery Warfare Specialist at her station onboard HMS Prince of Wales during an exercise in May 2021.



Chapter 3: Health and healthcare

Looking after the health needs of Service personnel, family members, the bereaved and veterans – especially where military service has caused or exacerbated those needs – is one of the first priorities of the Government when it comes to the welfare of the Armed Forces Community. The MOD provides some healthcare services to Service personnel, while the NHS in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland provides services to family members, veterans and the bereaved, depending on their location. The MOD, the OVA, the Department of Health and Social Care, the relevant bodies of the NHS and the Devolved Administrations all continue to work closely together to ensure that needs are met and services are improved.

This chapter sets out the work that has been undertaken to meet these needs by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations during the reporting period. Particular highlights include additional funding for Programme CORTISONE and the launch of the new Veterans Mental Health High Intensity Service and Op COURAGE in England.

Healthcare across the UK

Programme CORTISONE

Programme CORTISONE aims to deliver an up-to-date medical information system for Defence. The Cabinet Office has approved the second business case for the programme, releasing an additional £94 million of funding.

The additional funding will enable further development of the programme and the addition of new areas, which will improve the connectivity and interaction between all parts of the Defence Medical Services and capitalise on the work already carried out. The funding will also allow the programme to improve the support offered to clinicians and patients on military operations across the world.

The programme will ultimately link MOD medical information services with the NHS services in all four home nations of the UK. This means that Service personnel will be able to have their medical records made available to NHS clinicians in case of injury or illness, wherever they are in the UK. It will also allow the seamless transition of medical histories to GPs at the end of someone's time in service, facilitating greater continuity of healthcare for Service leavers, particularly those who are wounded, injured or sick.

The programme has now delivered a live connection to the NHS, allowing the transfer of data in a test environment. The next stage will be the roll-out of the Primary Medical Care solution to pilot sites from April 2022, to further support the sharing of information with the NHS.

Defence Primary Healthcare

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Defence Primary Healthcare accelerated the roll-out of remote ways of working by introducing digital triage (eConsult) and remote video consultation (Attend Anywhere), making access easier and bringing the MOD into line with successful NHS practices.

Digital triage using eConsult allows Defence personnel to seek advice from the medical centre or help managing their own condition at all hours of the day, from any location. Attend Anywhere allows patients to attend consultations online via a video call.

COVID-19 vaccination certificates for Service personnel

The MOD has worked with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS Digital to arrange for timely vaccinations for Service personnel and ensure the secure flow of Defence patient vaccination information into NHS databases. In England, Service personnel can access their NHS COVID Pass Certificate for travel and other events using the NHS online service. Scottish-based Service personnel are able to use NHS Inform.

Priority treatment

In February 2021, the UK-wide Priority Treatment Working Group – made up of clinical and patient representatives from

each home nation and key stakeholders from the Service charities – was re-established. The group's remit is to evaluate how the term 'priority treatment' is still applicable to the services provided. This includes monitoring the impact of changes to wider policy and legislation. The group also acts as a forum for sharing best practice in priority services and pathways between nations, as well as for reporting on new developments within existing services.

Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC), Stanford Hall

The DMRC has continued to prove itself as a world leader in military rehabilitation and research. It specialises in providing services to Service personnel with complex trauma injuries and neurological conditions following injury or illness, as well as providing both inpatient and outpatient care to those with joint and soft-tissue injuries and disease. In order to support patients recovering from COVID-19, specialist rehabilitation capabilities were rapidly introduced in 2020.

A limited and defined cohort of veterans of recent operations has also been able to access services at the DMRC, through the Complex Prosthetic Assessment Clinic. The MOD continues to work with the Department of Health and Social Care and the Devolved Administrations to explore high-pressure areas that could be supported by the DMRC, to determine whether and how it could benefit the wider veteran community.

UK Government departments are working with NHS England, NHS Improvement and Help for Heroes to provide a clearer picture of the optimum pathway of care for veterans with complex rehabilitation needs, and to identify any gaps in the care that is already available for this group.

Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

A UK-wide civilian and military collaboration programme – led by the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine and the University of Birmingham, in collaboration with leading experts from across the UK – is taking forward research to advance the diagnosis, management and rehabilitation of patients with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury. The research will bring much-needed advances to the management and care of patients with Mild Traumatic Brain Injury.

It is expected that the outcome of the research will benefit Service personnel, veterans and other civilian patients by informing UK Traumatic Brain Injury guidelines and contributing to future NHS and MOD clinical commissioning decisions.

The Quality Network for Veterans' Mental Health Services (QNVMHS)

The QNVMHS promotes quality improvement within mental health services across the UK through the adoption of a multi-disciplinary approach, including the sharing of best practice. The network uses quality standards to assess services, developed from recommendations in key literature, research and consultation with stakeholders.

The Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England funded a 12-month pilot programme to test the first edition of quality standards, which was completed in summer 2021. The 10 participating teams in the pilot were drawn from the NHS in England, Scotland and Wales, as well as a range of independent providers from across the UK. Feedback from the pilot is helping to inform the second edition of quality standards.

In time, teams participating in the programme will have the opportunity to work towards accreditation of their service and a recognised 'quality mark' award, which will be widely promoted among the Armed Forces Community to help veterans and their families more easily identify veteran mental health services that are members of the network and have been quality-checked.

Satisfaction with treatment and access to treatment

Although UK regular Service personnel's satisfaction with medical and dental care received within the last two years has remained high, levels of satisfaction have decreased from last year (a three percentage point drop to 77 percent for medical treatment in 2021, and a five percentage point drop to 84 percent for dental treatment in 2021 – see Annex A, Table 1).

In 2021, there was also a significant reduction in the number of Service families able to access dental treatment or hospital services in the NHS (for dental treatment, there was a 19 percentage point drop to 68 percent in 2021 – see Annex A, Table 2). For the small number of families that moved while undergoing treatment, there was a significant reduction in the percentage able to continue with their dental treatment (a 23 percentage point drop to 54 percent in 2021 – see Annex A, Table 3). The decrease in satisfaction and access may in part be due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on medical and dental facilities.

The percentage of Service families able to access GPs (including nurses and midwives) and continue medical treatment with GPs if they moved was the same as previous years.

Healthcare in England

Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service

NHS England and NHS Improvement commissioned the Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service, which launched as part of a phased roll-out from October 2020. This comprises seven regional 'pathfinders' that are testing a proposed service model for crisis care, therapeutic inpatient support, help with co-ordinating care across organisations and supporting family members and carers where appropriate. The 'pathfinders' will run until the end of March 2023, and their learning and insight will inform a final service model which will be in place by April 2023.

As of March 2021, there have been 304 referrals into the service, with an average wait time of five days and care spanning over an average period of 72 days (Annex A, Table 9).

Op COURAGE: The Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

The Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service forms part of a wider offer of mental health support for veterans across England, collectively known as Op COURAGE. Launched in March 2021, the tiered service brings together all three veterans' mental health services – the Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS), the Complex Treatment Service (CTS), and the High Intensity Service. Together, these services provide a complete mental health care pathway for Service leavers, reservists and veterans, with service users benefiting

from personalised care plans to ensure that they can access support and treatment.

As of March 2021, almost 15,500 veterans have been referred into the TILS (Annex A, Table 5), which offers a holistic care package including help with housing, employment, alcohol misuse and social support. In 2020/21, the average wait time for a face-to-face assessment was 13 days, down from 37 days last year (Annex A, Table 6).

As of March 2021, nearly 2,000 veterans have been referred into the CTS, which provides intensive care and treatment for veterans with complex mental health problems (Annex A, Table 7). In 2020/21, the average wait time for a face-to-face assessment was 24 days, down from 33 days last year (Annex A, Table 8).⁷ The Government has committed an additional £2.7 million to further expand Op COURAGE, starting in 2022. The expansion will include a dedicated substance misuse service and care co-ordinators.

Veteran Trauma Network (VTN)

The VTN is a collection of 12 NHS veteran trauma centres and four specialist units, each with military and civilian medical experts. It provides an equivalent to Op COURAGE for veterans with Service-related physical healthcare problems. The VTN has received over 150 referrals, with a rapidly increasing number of referrals in the last six months (Annex A, Table 10).

⁷ Owing to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, statistics from NHS England's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Service are unavailable this year. The data for previous years can be found in last year's annual report.

A multi-disciplinary team works to develop a holistic care package to ensure that all the needs of the individual and their family are addressed. The VTN now employs a full-time programme manager and national case co-ordinator, supported by a peer support worker.

‘Healthcare for the Armed Forces Community: A Forward View’

In March 2021, the Chief Executive of NHS England and NHS Improvement launched ‘Healthcare for the Armed Forces Community: A Forward View’.⁸ This document builds on the promises made in the NHS Long Term Plan and outlines the commitments that NHS England and NHS Improvement are making to improve the health and wellbeing of the Armed Forces Community during and after their military service. The document sets out nine commitments, including improving veterans’ mental health, supporting veterans in the criminal justice system, addressing healthcare inequalities and using data to improve services.

The document also outlines the additional specific requirements placed on new Integrated Care Systems to support NHS commitments under the Covenant. This will set a framework to help Integrated Care Systems plan and deliver care for the Armed Forces Community as a sometimes-transient population.

Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA)

The VCHA is an accreditation process for providers of NHS commissioned services. It aims to improve the care the Armed Forces Community receives from the NHS, as well as raise standards across the NHS for all.

‘Veteran-aware’ Trusts showcase high-quality veterans’ healthcare and demonstrate their commitment to the Covenant by meeting a set of agreed standards. At the end of the reporting period, 97 providers across the UK have now met these standards and have been accredited as ‘veteran aware’, including acute hospitals, ambulance services and mental health and community Trusts.

In 2021, the VCHA appointed a team of seven full-time regional leads to drive forward its work, with a mixture of backgrounds and expertise across healthcare and the Armed Forces.

The VCHA has also recruited a team to carry out a review of enhanced rehabilitation programmes currently accessible to Service personnel and veterans. The aim of the project is to develop a model and pathways that could be used at additional centres for veterans.

‘Veteran-friendly’ GP accreditation

In partnership with the Royal College of General Practitioners, NHS England and NHS Improvement continue to roll out the Armed Forces ‘veteran-friendly’ GP practice accreditation scheme across England.

⁸ Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Healthcare-for-the-Armed-Forces-community-forward-view-March-2021.pdf>



Soldiers from 1st Regiment Royal Horse Artillery assist Bolton City Council in distributing COVID-19 testing kits.

The scheme, which was rolled out across England in 2019, helps family doctors and their staff to better identify and treat veterans and other members of the Armed Forces Community. By the end of the reporting period, 1,050 GP surgeries had been accredited as ‘veteran friendly’ (up from 780 at the beginning of the period). NHS England and NHS Improvement’s ambition is that all primary care networks will have at least one accredited practice during 2023.

Engagement with families

In order to improve the care and advice offered to Service families, NHS England and NHS Improvement conducted an engagement exercise last year, gathering the views and experiences of families through questionnaires, focus groups and one-to-one interviews.

The findings were published in August 2021 and indicated that a more co-ordinated approach to providing care and advice to families would be beneficial.⁹ Families asked for a single point of contact and a support network that was considerate of the wider health and wellbeing needs of the Armed Forces Community.

9 Available at: <https://nff.org.uk/nhs-af-report/>

From late 2021, NHS England will develop a range of actions in response. These include establishing Service family support networks across England and providing a single point of access for the Armed Forces Community within Integrated Care Systems, along with information and direct support to access health and wellbeing services.

Ex-Servicewomen

Female Service personnel can face particular challenges to their physical and mental health, both during and after service. NHS England and NHS Improvement's 'Forward View' document commits to better understanding their unique healthcare and wellbeing needs. NHS England and NHS Improvement have been working to do this throughout 2021 by directly consulting with female veterans to ensure that services are appropriate, inclusive and accessible. A Service- and ex-Servicewomen's health improvement steering group has been established to oversee implementation of this commitment.

NHS England and NHS Improvement also commissioned the 'We Also Served' report, produced by the Veterans and Families Institute at Anglia Ruskin University and published in June 2021. The report seeks to further understand the specific health and wellbeing experiences of female veterans and provides a set of recommendations for the Government and wider charity sector to consider.¹⁰

Cancer wait times

UK Armed Forces personnel requiring treatment for cancer receive care through the NHS. The assessed wait times in England for cancer have increased across all four measures in 2021 (Annex A, Table 4), mainly due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The wait times were similar for three of the four measures, indicating no systematic disadvantage for UK Armed Forces personnel compared to the general population in England. However, the statistics indicate that a significantly lower percentage of Armed Forces personnel received cancer treatment within two weeks for symptomatic breast cancer compared to the general population in England. This may be a statistical anomaly and will be reviewed as part of the post-COVID-19 restoration and recovery.

For both England as a whole and the UK Armed Forces as a specific cohort, all measures were below target. Cancer services are a priority in the restoration of NHS services in England. There is a focus on using all available resources to ensure sufficient diagnostic and treatment capacity to meet the increased level of referrals required to address the shortfall in the number of first treatments by March 2022. Breast cancer screening accounts for around a quarter of this shortfall and remains a specific priority for the NHS.

10 Available at: <https://www.vfrhub.com/article/we-also-served-the-health-and-well-being-of-female-veterans-in-the-uk/>



Armed Forces personnel help administer COVID-19 vaccinations in Scotland.

Healthcare in Scotland

Scottish Veterans Care Network

The Scottish Veterans Care Network was formally launched in November 2020. Operated by the National Services Division of NHS National Services Scotland, the network brings together a wide range of stakeholders involved in providing specialist health and social care for veterans.

The network's initial priority has been to develop a Mental Health Action Plan, which will be published in December 2021. The plan will help veterans in Scotland to live a healthy life and reach their full potential, and to access high-quality mental health and wellbeing services tailored to their needs.

Suicide prevention

The Scottish Government has undertaken work to identify groups at elevated risk of suicide and to facilitate specific preventative interventions to target them. The Scottish Government's Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan was published in October 2020 and committed to identifying prevention opportunities for veterans, alongside existing work on at-risk groups.

Additionally, the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group reviewed existing literature on veterans' suicide and sponsored further research into their experiences with suicide and suicide prevention services, which is currently under review. This will inform the development of a new suicide prevention strategy, which will be published in September 2022.

GP accreditation

NHS Scotland, the Scottish Government, the Royal College of General Practitioners and Veterans Scotland are working together to develop ‘veteran-aware’ GP accreditation in Scotland. The accreditation scheme will consolidate good practice, raise awareness of veterans’ issues and promote learning across GPs.

Veterans First Point

Veterans First Point provides health and wellbeing support services to Service leavers and veterans in Scotland. The service is hosted by six health boards, all of which have agreed to match the Scottish Government’s funding award to Veterans First Point in the financial year 2021/22. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans opened the new Veterans First Point facility in Fife on 20 July 2021.

Combat Stress

The Scottish Government continues to contribute funding to Combat Stress, which provides mental health services to veterans. Funding in the financial year 2021/22 was over £1.4 million, which is the same as the previous year. Any future funding will be determined by the recommendations from the Veterans Mental Health Action Plan.

Healthcare in Wales

Veterans NHS Wales

The Welsh Government continues to support Veterans NHS Wales, which provides treatment for those with a Service-related mental health condition. In March 2021, the Welsh Government announced an increase to funding for Veterans NHS Wales. From 2021 onwards, total funding to the service is £920,000 per year, which is a 35 percent increase on previous years.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a large drop in referrals to Veterans NHS Wales in 2020/21 (517 compared to 831 in 2019/20 – see Annex A, Table 11). In 2020/21, 88 percent received a referral within four weeks, and 80 percent received treatment within 24 weeks (Annex A, Table 12). The percentage of veterans demonstrating reliable improvement on at least one of the three core measures for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression and anxiety was 81 percent in 2019/20 (Annex A, Table 13).

Amputee support

From April 2021, civilians in Wales became eligible for microprocessor knees, improving long-term health, independent living and quality of life by giving the best mobility and function possible. Eligibility includes veterans with non-Service attributable injuries, subject to clinical need. Microprocessor knees were already available to veterans injured in service through the Welsh Government’s veterans’ prosthetics policy.

Free swimming

In February 2016, the Welsh Government launched a scheme offering free swimming to veterans and Service personnel. In March 2021, the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism agreed funding of £45,000 in the financial year 2021/22 to continue supporting the Armed Forces free swimming scheme.

Veterans Trauma Network (VTN) Wales

VTN Wales has been operational for over a year, with governance transferred to the South Wales Major Trauma Network in late 2020. VTN Wales accepts referrals of veterans with complex physical injuries caused by their service who may require specialist treatment. Several referrals have now been received.



Chapter 4: Education

Due to the mobility of Service families, Service children can face specific and additional challenges in comparison with their peers throughout their time in education. This chapter sets out the work that has been undertaken by the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations during the reporting period to address these challenges through funding, research, guidance and support.

This chapter also addresses the education of Service personnel themselves, which can be key to making a successful transition out of the Armed Forces, such as through the Armed Forces Apprenticeship Programme.

Education across the UK

MOD Education Support Fund (ESF)

The ESF provides grants to maintained schools in the UK to help mitigate the exceptional impact of mobility and/or separation on their Service communities. In the financial year 2020/21, the ESF allocated over £2 million to 75 schools across the UK, supporting approximately 17,000 Service children. The ESF's processes, deadlines and guidance were all adapted to meet the needs of schools while they were delivering remote learning to pupils during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A total of £3 million has been made available for the financial year 2021/22. The ESF bidding round for 2022 closed on 30 September 2021.

Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme (AFBSS)

The AFBSS was established in 2011. It gives the children of Service personnel who have died as a result of service since 1990 a scholarship to support their post-16 education. In the financial year 2020/21, the AFBSS provided scholarships to 97 students, at a total of £787,250.

The Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance

The SCiP Alliance is a partnership of organisations – encompassing academic, research, charity and governmental institutions – focused on improving outcomes for Service children. It is hosted by the University of Winchester and supported by the MOD. During this reporting period, the SCiP Alliance delivered a range of research and development projects, as well as collaboration and training events across the UK. It brought together over 1,000 delegates working to improve support for Service children.

The research-to-practice Hub Network has now expanded to 12 hubs across the UK, ensuring UK-wide access to collaboration for all those supporting Service children's education and wellbeing. Creative Forces days were delivered virtually, enabling Service children to access support for further and higher education decision-making and to build relationships with peers and school staff.

The SCiP Alliance's Thriving Lives Toolkit is a practical resource that helps schools to improve the quality of their support to Service children.¹¹ The launch of the new toolkit in October 2020 was followed by further projects, including research to tailor support for each of the four home nations of the UK and a national programme of online training conferences, supported by the MOD, that has enabled hundreds of schools to use the toolkit.

The SCiP Alliance has sought to address the knowledge gap between compulsory schooling and higher education by setting up a scoping project and strategy summit. The purpose is to identify priorities for co-ordinated national work on supporting Service children in tertiary education.

The SCiP Alliance's online targeting tool has also been enhanced, with support from ABF The Soldiers' Charity. The Department for Education's Service Pupil Premium data helps service deliverers to improve their understanding of the distribution of Service children in England and target support more effectively.

COVID-19 impact on schooling

The Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding team in the MOD has worked with a range of partners to continue supporting Service children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included liaising with military units around the world to return Service children to the UK and make school places available on their return. Support has been provided to local authorities to accommodate Service children returning from Kenya and Nepal and to ensure their continuity of education. Similarly, the Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding team has worked with military units in the USA to provide smooth transitions for families being posted to and returning from the USA.

Many of the planned Army unit moves were postponed or amended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding team and the Army Rebasing team worked together to ensure that local authorities were aware of these changes.

¹¹ Available at: <https://www.scipalliance.org/thriving-lives-toolkit>

Apprenticeships

The Armed Forces Apprenticeship Programme is now offering apprenticeships from Level 2 to degree level to over 90 percent of non-commissioned Service personnel. There are 91 different apprenticeship programmes on offer, and most are completed within the first two years of service. An apprenticeship underpins a recruit's trade training and gives them an industry-recognised qualification. In this sense, apprenticeships are crucial for developing future careers.

The MOD is exploring whether apprenticeship progressions can be further embedded into career development programmes, as well as ensuring that there is recognition of all training and learning throughout a Service person's career.

In-Service training and education metrics

The UK Armed Forces veterans' employment levels are on a par with, or better than, national averages (Annex A, Table 25). However, the percentage of UK regular Service personnel satisfied with the opportunities to gain civilian accreditation and the opportunities for personal development has remained consistently low (49 percent and 59 percent respectively in 2021 – see Annex A, Tables 23 and 24).

Higher and further education funding

The MOD is working closely with the Department for Education and the Devolved Administrations to review the current arrangements for Service families seeking to access funding for further and higher education courses across the Devolved Administrations. A decision will be made on possible changes to the current arrangements during the next reporting period.

Education in England

Service Pupil Premium (SPP)

The Department for Education continues to allocate additional funding in the form of the SPP to state-funded schools in England with Service children among their pupils. SPP funding helps schools to provide pastoral and academic support to current and former Service children.

Schools receive SPP funding for each pupil aged 5 to 16 who is currently recorded as a Service child, who has held this status in the last six years or who receives a child pension from the MOD. The SPP is now worth £310 per eligible pupil annually and more than £24.7 million will be paid to schools in the financial year 2021/22, benefiting nearly 80,000 pupils.

In order to help strengthen school accountability for their use of pupil premium funding, the Department for Education requires schools to complete and publish a template setting out their overall pupil premium strategy. The template now includes an optional field on how the SPP was spent in the previous academic year and what impact this had on eligible pupils.

School admissions

The School Admissions Code sets out the requirements on admission authorities when allocating school places. Following public consultation, a new School Admissions Code came into force in September 2021. The code includes provisions to ensure that Service families are not disadvantaged by their mobility requirement when applying for school places.

It continues the arrangements set out in the previous code, requiring publicly funded boarding schools to give second-highest priority for boarding places to the children of Service personnel who qualify for MOD financial assistance with the cost of boarding fees.

Admission authorities can also give priority to children eligible for the SPP and can admit a Service child as an exception to the infant class-size limit, if the child is moving outside the normal admissions round.

The new code still requires admission authorities to allocate a school place to a Service child before the family moves to the area, provided the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date. But the new code also allows admission authorities to use a private address or a unit or quartering address as the child's home address if requested by a parent. This new provision will expedite the in-year school application process for Service children.

Educational outcomes of Service children

The Department for Education has provided updated statistics on how Service children and non-Service, non-free school meals (FSM) children in state schools in England perform across key measures of academic attainment, and how these pupils are distributed across schools according to Ofsted rating.¹²

The statistics for the secondary school phase show that on average in 2019/20, the academic attainment of Service children remains largely on a par with that of non-Service, non-FSM children across the majority of measures (Annex A, Table 15). As with previous years, there remains a disparity in relation to the English Baccalaureate measure – a smaller proportion of Service children were entered for the qualification, and a lower percentage achieved a grade 4 or higher in all pillars (Annex A, Table 16).

Statistics for the 2019/20 academic year on pupils moving schools show that Service children remain more likely to have moved schools at least once, although they were much less mobile than in previous years. This is because the vast majority of Armed Forces personnel moves were suspended during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even so, there remains a strong correlation between levels of pupil mobility and academic attainment, with the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE English and Maths at grade 5 or above at the end of Key Stage 4 being lower among those who moved schools frequently (Annex A, Table 18).

Data from Ofsted inspections shows there is a lower likelihood of Service children attending state-funded schools in England rated as Outstanding, compared with non-Service, non-FSM children. However, a higher proportion of Service children attended schools rated as Good (Annex A, Table 19).

12 Due to the fact that the assessments were cancelled in 2019/20 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, there are no statistics available this year showing how Service children performed in assessments at the end of primary school, or the progress they made between the end of Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 4. The data for previous years can be found in last year's report.

Statistics on the post-16 and post-18 education, employment and training destinations of young people show that Service children are as likely as non-Service, non-FSM children to stay in sustained education or employment after the end of both Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. However, Service children are still slightly less likely to progress to higher education after Key Stage 5 (48 percent, compared with 51 percent), and are more likely to be in sustained employment (30 percent, compared with 24 percent) (Annex A, Tables 20 and 21).

MOD Local Authority Partnership Group (MODLAP)

During the reporting period, the MODLAP has extended to include a MODLAP Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Officers group and a group focusing on early learning and childcare. This has established a national network of local authority professionals sharing best practice among local authority areas. Building on the success of the MODLAP, the MOD has contacted all local authorities in England to help broaden their understanding of the issues Service children can face and their awareness of available support mechanisms.

The MODLAP's work is creating a more consistent approach among local authorities in the transfer of Education, Health and Care Plans for Service children. The number of local authorities adopting the 'Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Agreed Principles' document has grown to over 30 and now includes local authorities with smaller numbers of Service children, as well as those with larger cohorts.

Education in Scotland

Mapping military qualifications

The Scottish Funding Council's 2020/21 funding for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) enables the SCQFP to continue its work, which began in 2018, mapping military qualifications and transferable skills against those recognised by employers in Scotland. The MOD is working closely with the SCQFP on this project, which seeks to simplify the current system for mapping and translating qualifications and skills gained in the Armed Forces. This will help Service personnel, veterans, employers and educational institutions to understand the level of learning and skills that Service personnel and veterans have gained in the Scottish context. It will also be useful for understanding the transferability of military skills in the broader UK context.

To date, skills guides have been published for qualifications in the Infantry, the Royal Artillery, the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and the Royal Logistic Corps. The mapping will be extended to additional job roles within the Armed Forces.

In 2021, the Scottish Government provided £35,000 of additional funding to the SCQFP to develop a web-based resource in the 'My World of Work' portal to help veterans articulate their skills clearly when seeking employment or education. This tool is being developed in partnership with Skills Development Scotland and the MOD.

Barriers to higher and further education for Service children

Scotland's Community of Access and Participation Practitioners organised a presentation to members of the higher education and further education 'widening participation' community, to highlight the importance of support to Service families. The Service Children's Progression Alliance is working to create a dedicated information toolkit to present higher and further education as an opportunity to Service children.

Scottish Armed Forces Education Support Group (SAFESG)

The previous Scottish Service Children Strategy Group has been re-constituted and re-launched as the SAFESG in order to take a more strategic approach to improving the support offered to children and young people from Armed Forces backgrounds. The new group's updated terms of reference and minutes from their meetings are available online.¹³ The SAFESG will promote information and best practice, and has invited headteachers from across Scotland to share their insights. Areas of best practice that the group has been focusing on include safeguarding, support to dispersed families and support to families moving into Scotland. The group is also working with local authorities to understand local data gathering, with a view to developing and sharing digital best practice.

Education in Wales

Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru

The SSCE Cymru project's mission is to provide the best possible educational support to Service children in Wales.

In April 2021, SSCE Cymru celebrated the Month of the Military Child in Wales. Using guidance provided by SSCE Cymru, schools in Wales worked with their Service children to share their experiences and to engage with the Armed Forces Community through activities and celebrations.

In May 2021, SSCE Cymru launched a new Service family guide to provide information on education and living in Wales, and the support available to schools, parents, carers and Service children.¹⁴ The guide was based on the findings of a survey conducted by SSCE Cymru with the parents and carers of Service children.

Funding

The Welsh Government has provided a further investment of £270,000 per year via SSCE Cymru to support Service children in Wales. £200,000 of this funding was distributed over the last academic year between the 22 local authorities in Wales, influenced by the number of Service children identified in each area.

13 Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/groups/scottish-armed-forces-education-support-group/>

14 Available at: <https://www.sscecymru.co.uk/toolkits/servicefamilyguide/default.htm>

Regional Schools Liaison Officers (RSLOs)

Funded by a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, four RSLOs for Service children are now in post across Wales. Working with SSCE Cymru, the RSLOs' main objective is to help schools and educational settings to understand the experiences of Service children and embed sustainable support mechanisms. The RSLOs also help schools and local authorities to develop and implement plans for using the funding allocated to them through the Welsh Government's Supporting Service Children in Education in Wales Fund.

Data collation on Service children

SSCE Cymru and the RSLOs in Wales worked with all 22 Welsh local authorities to conduct a data collection activity, which identified over 2,000 Service children in some 500 schools in Wales as of February 2021.

Further and higher education

In the financial year 2020/21, a total of £133,972 was provided towards the Further and Higher Education Scheme, enabling Service leavers across Wales to benefit from tertiary education opportunities. In the same period, the Welsh Government also contributed £73,650 towards the Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme.

Hwb Cymru

Free resources created by the Royal British Legion are now available on Hwb Cymru, the digital platform for learning and teaching in Wales. The resources teach the importance of remembrance and include a series of free, downloadable lesson plans and assemblies aimed at Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 5 learners.

Education in Northern Ireland

Schools

While the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant issues for all children in Northern Ireland moving into secondary education, all Service children in Northern Ireland secured places in suitable schools that were within easy reach of their homes. Although some children did not manage to secure their first-choice place, this was due to the impact of COVID-19 and, overall, figures for first-choice success are comparable with the wider population in Northern Ireland.

Service families continue to be supported in all aspects of primary and secondary education by the MOD's dedicated Children's Education Support Officer.

Further and higher education

In 2019/20, the percentage of Service children in Northern Ireland entering either higher or further education (73 percent) was comparable to non-Service children (75 percent), indicating there was little difference in the destination of Service and non-Service children after secondary-level education (Annex A, Table 22). However, the low number of Service children means it is not possible to make a definitive conclusion.



Chapter 5: Housing and accommodation

Access to decent accommodation underpins the wellbeing of our Armed Forces Community and supports operational effectiveness. This chapter sets out the work the MOD has undertaken during the reporting period to improve its accommodation offer to Service personnel and their families, including through increased investment in Service Family Accommodation and improvements to Single Living Accommodation.

This chapter also sets out what the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have done this year to help Service leavers, veterans and their families to find accommodation outside the Armed Forces, whether in the private or social rented sectors or through homeownership.

Service accommodation across the UK

Service Family Accommodation (SFA)

The improvement and modernisation of SFA has continued throughout the reporting period. There were record levels of investment in SFA in the financial year 2020/21, with £160 million invested overall. This increased investment is enabling the full refurbishment of 775 long-term empty properties in areas of high demand. These properties were previously damaged or deemed structurally unsound, but they are being newly repaired and modernised and are now coming online for allocation to Service families.

A further 10,200 homes were significantly improved during the financial year 2020/21, with the aim of giving Service families more modern and energy-efficient places to live. In addition, 60 play areas have been built or upgraded across the UK, providing families with safe, communal places for children to play. New properties have been purchased in Hereford, Birmingham and Lichfield to provide greater family stability in areas with a shortfall of SFA.

For the financial year 2021/22, the MOD has earmarked a further £188 million for investment in similar improvement and modernisation works on 13,000 homes. This will mean that almost 50 percent of all SFA in the UK will have received substantial investment over the course of financial years 2020/21 to 2021/22. In addition, there are plans to purchase the currently used Private Finance Initiative properties in central Scotland.

This strategy of improving, modernising and purchasing SFA has enabled the MOD to continue to meet its commitment to only allocate properties at Decent Homes Standard. At present, 97 percent of SFA properties are at the Government's Decent Homes Standard, with 87 percent at the higher standard of Decent Homes+.

Service delivery

The COVID-19 pandemic has not unduly affected the delivery performance of the National Housing Prime and Substitute Accommodation contracts. Amey's response maintenance service has regularly met or exceeded the key performance target.¹⁵ Timely allocation and move-in preparation targets have also been met. In addition, Mears has continued to obtain appropriate accommodation for both families and single personnel in a tight and difficult private rental market.¹⁶

New accommodation service suppliers will be in operation from 1 March 2022. The single National Housing Prime contract will be replaced by five new contracts. The National Accommodation Management Services contract was awarded to Pinnacle Group Ltd. The Regional Accommodation

Maintenance Services contracts were awarded to Amey Community Ltd (Northern and Central) and Vivo Defence Services Ltd (South East and South West).

Each contract will last for seven years, with options to extend for up to a further three years, subject to satisfactory performance and other considerations. Throughout the procurement process, the MOD collaborated closely with the single Services and the Families Federations, which will continue during the mobilisation of the new contracts.

The new suppliers have committed to introducing significant changes to modernise and improve the services provided to Service families. The new contracts will include specific targets and financial incentives tied to customer satisfaction levels.

Customer satisfaction

Satisfaction with the overall standard of SFA increased by two percentage points to 53 percent, according to the results of the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2021 (Annex A, Table 26). On the other hand, the MOD's independent survey recorded a one percentage point decrease in overall satisfaction to 66 percent during the 12-month rolling period to March 2021. Satisfaction with responses to maintenance and repair requests, as well as with the quality of the job, has remained consistent (Annex A, Tables 27 and 28).

The MOD expects the impact of its increased investment in the improvement and modernisation of SFA to be reflected in future customer satisfaction levels.

15 Amey Defence Services currently operates the existing single National Housing Prime contract for the MOD.

16 Mears Group Plc currently operates the Substitute Accommodation contract for the MOD.

Managing the SFA estate

Following the Public Accounts Committee's observations in June 2019 on the high number of empty SFA properties, the MOD committed to reducing the number of empty properties to the required 10 percent management margin (around 5,000 properties).

While the COVID-19 pandemic has affected progress, the MOD continues to hand back properties to Annington Homes, demolish MOD-owned properties that are no longer required, widen eligibility for SFA and maintain the sub-let programme at agreed locations.¹⁷

In addition, the MOD is supporting the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Programme by leasing a limited number of SFA properties to local authorities to provide short-term housing for Afghan families.

Cohabitation in surplus SFA

Service personnel in established long-term relationships continue to benefit from the cohabitation policy introduced in 2019, which allows them to cohabit in surplus SFA where available. As of April 2021, 2,216 Service personnel in established long-term relationships were occupying surplus SFA.

The MOD continually seeks to improve the cohabitation policy by assessing the viability of potential new evidence that confirms a long-term relationship and working to increase the availability of surplus SFA for cohabitation. A Service person's nomination of the recipient of their Death Benefit Lump Sum (an element of the Armed Forces Pension Scheme) is now an approved

form of evidence for confirming long-term relationship status.

Single Living Accommodation (SLA)

The National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee both published reports on SLA this year. The MOD is now working to deliver the key recommendations from the reports, including:

- setting a minimum standard for SLA
- improving understanding of the lived experiences of those in SLA
- appointing the Chief of Defence People as the senior sponsor for SLA

Addressing the long-term impact of underinvestment will take time and requires long-term investment, but the MOD is committed to delivering SLA fit for the 21st-century Service person as part of the moral component of fighting power.

Front Line Commands continue to develop their infrastructure delivery plans to improve the condition and quality of SLA across the estate through an ambitious 10-year programme, which began in the financial year 2020/21. Over the next decade, the MOD plans to invest a further £1.5 billion in SLA new-build and upgrade projects.¹⁸ The majority of the £66.1 million investment during the financial year 2020/21 focused on three priority areas: heating and hot water, bathrooms and fire protection systems.

17 Annington Homes owns the vast majority of the SFA estate in England and Wales. A minimum level of 500 properties returned per year for seven years has been agreed between the MOD and Annington.

18 This figure excludes any additional Defence Estate Optimisation Portfolio spend on SLA upgrades.

The SLA Expert Advisory Group is supporting work to re-consider how access to SLA could evolve to support remote working as part of a flexible or hybrid working pattern. Trials and pilots are ongoing across Defence to assess needs and determine a suitable package to support hybrid-working Service personnel, including by providing subsidised accommodation when they are required to attend their place of duty.

Future Accommodation Model (FAM)

The FAM will provide more choice to Service personnel in terms of where, how and with whom they live. It will do this by making use of the private rented sector and supporting homeownership, alongside the existing MOD accommodation options.

FAM policy has been designed so that the cost of renting property will be broadly the same as the charges for the equivalent type of Service Family Accommodation. Accommodation entitlement will reflect the size of the Service family, rather than the rank of the Service person. The FAM also caters for those Service personnel in established long-term relationships and their entitlement to subsidised accommodation.

Following the FAM pilot launch in September 2019 at Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde, two further pilot sites were launched at Aldershot Garrison and RAF Wittering in January and June 2020 respectively. The pilots will last around three years and the evidence will be used to refine any final policy. In September 2021, the MOD conducted research with Service personnel at the FAM pilot sites to explore their experiences of the FAM in more detail. Following the conclusion of the pilots, a decision will be taken regarding the wider roll-out of the FAM across the UK.

Over the course of the FAM pilots to date, 8,464 Service personnel have been eligible for FAM, with 2,257 taking up an accommodation option under the model.

Defence Accommodation Strategy (DAS)

The new DAS sets out the high-level guiding principles for supporting Service personnel through the provision of accommodation in the UK and helping with homeownership. The four guiding principles of the strategy are:

- Defence will provide accommodation and support homeownership for Service personnel
- Defence will improve the quality of the accommodation provided to Service personnel, to ensure that it supports their health and wellbeing
- Defence will maximise utilisation to ensure affordability and best value for money
- Defence will improve sustainability across its accommodation and promote sustainable behaviour among its people

The DAS complements and strengthens the aims for accommodation set out in the Strategy for Defence Infrastructure, the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach, the Strategy for our Veterans, the Families Strategy, the People Strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The DAS will be published in late 2021. The single Services and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation have drafted a series of delivery plans setting out how and to what timescales they will implement changes to accommodation provision and support. They will be held accountable for doing so through the MOD's governance mechanisms.



The Forces Help to Buy Scheme has helped over 25,000 Service personnel onto the property ladder since 2014.

Forces Help to Buy Scheme

Introduced in 2014, the Forces Help to Buy Scheme enables Service personnel to borrow up to 50 percent of their annual salary (up to a maximum of £25,000) to purchase their first property. In certain circumstances, the scheme may also be used by Service personnel to move to another property, either because they are assigned elsewhere or because of certain family or medical circumstances. Similarly, where such family or medical circumstances exist, the scheme may also be used to extend or modify a currently owned property.

As of June 2021, the scheme has helped 25,100 Service personnel, lending a total of £380 million (an average of £15,200 per claim). The scheme has been extended until the end of December 2022.

Housing and accommodation in England

First Homes

The First Homes Scheme was launched in June 2021. It is designed to give local first-time buyers a discount of at least 30 percent on a new home. The following groups are exempt from any local-connection eligibility requirements for a first home:

- members of the Armed Forces
- the divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of members of the Armed Forces
- the spouses or civil partners of deceased members of the Armed Forces
- veterans who have left the Armed Forces within the last five years

Homelessness

As part of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017's 'duty to refer', the Secretary of State for Defence is required to refer members of the regular Armed Forces in England to a local housing authority if the Secretary of State believes that they may be made homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.

Homelessness statistics for England during the period April to June 2021 show that 400 of the 66,040 households owed a homelessness duty had a support need due to service in the Armed Forces.

In April 2021, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities changed the guidelines for the reporting of quarterly homelessness statistics. Local authorities are now asked to include any support need or life experience, irrespective of whether assistance for it is required.

This new approach will capture the characteristics of a homeless applicant more accurately, including whether they previously served in the UK Armed Forces.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Locally administered Disabled Facilities Grants continue to support people of all ages and tenures, including eligible veterans, to adapt their homes to live safely and independently. The Government has provided £573 million of funding to local authorities in England for grants in the financial year 2021/22.

As part of the new National Disability Strategy that was published in July 2021, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Department of Health and Social Care committed to jointly publish new guidance for local authorities in England on the effective delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants. To develop this new guidance, the departments have been engaging closely with a wide range of organisations, including the Royal British Legion, to ensure that it reflects the needs of veterans.

Social and private renters

In 2019/20, over three-quarters (77 percent) of Service personnel and veterans in England lived in owner-occupied households. 12 percent lived in the social rented sector and 11 percent lived in the private rented sector.

Satisfaction with both the social and private rented sector in terms of accommodation, tenure, area and repairs and maintenance in 2019/20 was broadly comparable between the Service population and the non-Service population (Annex A, Tables 32 and 33).¹⁹

In 2019/20, the percentage of Service personnel and recent (within five years) Service leavers in England who were allocated social housing in a local authority area where they had not previously lived remained higher than the percentage among the non-veteran population (17 percent compared to nine percent). There was a total of 770 new social housing lettings in England to households containing a recent Service leaver (Annex A, Table 30).

The percentage of the Service population in England who were allocated a social housing letting within six months of entering the waiting list has been the same or higher than the percentage among the non-Service population for the past five years (68 percent compared to 55 percent in 2019/20 – see Annex A, Table 31).

This data enables the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to monitor the effectiveness of the package of measures introduced in 2012 and ensure that members of the Armed Forces Community have the same access to social housing as others, and are not disadvantaged by the requirement for mobility while in service. This package ensures that veterans with urgent housing needs and Service personnel with serious illnesses or disabilities are always given appropriate priority for social housing, and that local authorities do not apply a local connection test that would disqualify Service personnel and recent Service leavers from accessing social housing.

¹⁹ In this context, the Service population includes veterans.

Housing and accommodation in Scotland

Housing Options Scotland

The Scottish Government continues to support Housing Options Scotland to provide its Military Matters project. The project focuses on housing issues affecting Service personnel, Service leavers and veterans in Scotland, helping them to find the right home in the right place. Since it began in 2012, the project has supported nearly 1,000 members of the Armed Forces Community. In 2020/21, the project received 266 new referrals.

Affordable Housing Supply Programme

The Affordable Housing Supply Programme continues to make funding available to deliver homes specifically for veterans, if local authorities identify this as a strategic priority. Since 2012, over £6 million has been made available through the programme to deliver over 100 homes for veterans.

Earlier this year, Riverside Scotland began constructing 19 homes specifically for veterans across two sites in North and South Ayrshire. Hillcrest Housing Association is due to complete five homes for veterans in Edinburgh in January 2022. These projects are being supported with over £1.83 million in grant funding from the Scottish Government.

Statutory homelessness in Scotland

During 2020/21 in Scotland, 670 households that were assessed as homeless had a former member of the Armed Forces in the household – two percent of all households assessed as homeless (Annex A, Table 34).

Housing and accommodation in Wales

Housing support

Armed Forces Liaison Officers in Wales continue to work with partners, including many across the housing sector, to support individual members of the Armed Forces Community and provide training to front line housing staff on the needs of the Armed Forces Community.

Data

The Welsh Government is currently considering the range of homelessness data collection to inform policy development and improve service delivery across all homelessness and housing support services. The possible need to collect data on the Armed Forces Community will be considered as part of this work.

Case study: supporting veterans' housing needs

Over the last year, 80 vulnerable ex-Armed Forces personnel were given a home by the Alabaré Homes for Veterans Cymru team in their nine supported homes across Wales. 25 veterans in the scheme moved on into their own homes this year, and many achieved personal successes including reconnecting with families and finding employment.

One of the key priorities for the Alabaré team is the mental wellbeing of veterans. The charity has two social enterprises, also based in Wales – Field Kitchen, a mobile-catering pizza enterprise in North Wales, and Boots on the Ground, which provides activities such as mental wellbeing walks, social forestry and bushcraft. Both give veterans (residents and non-residents) the opportunity to get involved in activities that can have a positive impact on mental health and self-esteem.



The MOD invested £160 million in improving and modernising Service Family Accommodation in 2020/21.



Chapter 6: Inquests and judicial engagement

This chapter provides an update on the activity of the Defence Inquests Unit during the reporting period. It is a legal requirement for this report to provide such an update every year.

The Defence Inquests Unit (DIU)

The DIU is the MOD's single point of contact for coroners in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit when investigating the causes of the deaths of Service personnel, veterans and MOD civilians. The DIU is responsible for:

- ensuring that any relevant material is provided to coroners or the Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit
- supporting Service personnel, veterans and MOD civilians who are called to appear as witnesses at inquest
- offering briefings to next of kin to help them better understand the inquest process and the role of the DIU
- ensuring that the MOD meets its obligations to provide the appropriate level of support to coroners, the Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit, bereaved families and MOD Service and civilian personnel involved in investigations
- giving practical guidance and advice alongside an established network of experts who deliver legal, medical and pastoral support

Inquests during the reporting period

The DIU has recorded 57 inquests, in which investigations have been concluded, between 1 October 2020 and 30 September 2021.

During the reporting period, both the Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit and the Coroners Service of Northern Ireland also confirmed that they had each concluded investigations into four Service personnel deaths. In all eight deaths, their investigations were sufficient to understand the causes of death, so there was no need to take them forward to either an inquest or a fatal accident inquiry (Scotland's equivalent of an inquest).

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant pressures on the courts system across the UK. Inquests are yet to be held into the deaths of 39 regular or reservist personnel, 11 veterans and four MOD civilians that occurred since 1 October 2020. During the pandemic, coroners virtually attended inquests in order to meet their statutory duties and provide closure for bereaved families. The DIU expects that coroners will adopt a hybrid system of working going forward.

Northern Ireland legacy inquests

In November 2019, as requested by the Lord Chief Justice, the Presiding Coroner in Northern Ireland set out her plan to deal with 51 listed inquests within a five-year period, beginning in April 2020. This is now known as the Lord Chief Justice's five-year plan.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has prevented legacy inquests being heard as planned during year one (2020) of the Lord Chief Justice's five-year plan, and work is now continuing on delayed cases. Of the 10 inquests listed, findings have been delivered in the Patrick McElhone inquest and the inquest hearings relating to the death of Neil McConville have been completed. A number of additional year one inquests are being progressed. The Presiding Coroner has also identified a number of inquests to be progressed in year two of the Lord Chief Justice's five-year plan.

Although not part of the five-year plan, both the Ballymurphy and Kathleen Thompson inquests have also been completed. The Kathleen Thompson findings are expected in late 2021. The Ballymurphy findings were delivered in May 2021. On 23 May, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland made a statement to the House of Commons on the findings of the Ballymurphy inquest, acknowledging the terrible hurt caused to the families of the victims.





Chapter 7: Family life

Families play a vital role as members of the Armed Forces Community. The support that families provide to the Service person helps to ensure they are ready to carry out their role to the best of their ability. It is therefore right that families themselves are adequately supported through the unique experiences and challenges that Service life can bring.

Nurturing family life is central to developing a diverse and highly skilled Armed Forces. The MOD and its partners work to ensure that families can access provision that meets the demands of modern family life and mitigates any disadvantage resulting from mobility, deployment and separation.

This chapter sets out the work the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have undertaken during the reporting period in support of Service families. It also provides an update on the MOD's new UK Armed Forces Families Strategy.

Families across the UK

Armed Forces Families Strategy

The Government's response to the 'Living in Our Shoes' report, an independent review of the support provided to Service families led by Andrew Selous MP, was published in March 2021.²⁰ The response, together with associated research, has helped to shape the new UK Armed Forces Families Strategy 2022-2032. The strategy will provide a framework that reflects modern and diverse family needs and encourages recruitment to and retention in service.

The new strategy will be underpinned by a rolling action plan organised around eight core workstreams.²¹ In many cases, responsibility for delivering commitments in the strategy and the action plan lies outside the MOD, and MOD workstream leaders are already engaged with the Devolved Administrations and other UK Government departments to take this work forward.

²⁰ Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974334/20210229-FINAL_Selous_Response_O.pdf

²¹ The eight workstreams are: family life, Service life, family home, children's education, childcare, non-UK families, supporting partners, and health and wellbeing.



Families play a vital role as members of the Armed Forces Community.

Workstream leaders will use a variety of networks to communicate progress to families, including social media, the single Service information services, the British Forces Broadcasting Service and the Families Federations. Timely and accessible information will empower families to make decisions that are right for them. For dispersed families, the use of virtual environments and modern technologies will allow them to continue to feel fully supported and part of the Armed Forces Community.

Progress in delivering the commitments will be measured against key performance indicators and reported bi-annually to the Secretary of State for Defence. An annual

update will be included in the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report from 2022 onwards.

Wraparound childcare

Wraparound childcare pilots began in September 2020, with the launch of the first of three pilot areas centred at RAF High Wycombe and RAF Halton. The purpose is to test whether and how the wraparound childcare initiative can be rolled out fully across the UK. To date, the pilot at RAF Wycombe and RAF Halton has assisted the parents of around 300 eligible Service children in the payment of their wraparound childcare costs.

Based on the learning from the initial pilot, a further two pilot sites went live in January 2021 at Plymouth and Catterick Garrison. The proportional take-up at these two sites was less than expected, and the nationwide lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic may be partly responsible. To date, nearly 600 eligible children have had their wraparound childcare costs met at the two sites.

The pilots have helped considerably to inform a future operating model, which will continue to be tested, adjusted and refined before any UK-wide roll-out.

Early Learning Childcare Fund (ELCF)

The ELCF was launched in late 2020. During the reporting period, the fund provided £1.5 million of grants to 42 early learning and childcare settings across the UK, benefiting almost 1,000 Service children. These grants have helped early learning and childcare providers to improve infrastructure and cater for more children, and to provide additional resources such as books and play items.

Partner employment

The Partner Career Support Programme pilot, delivered by the Career Transition Partnership, ran from November 2020 to May 2021. The programme provided bespoke, professional career support to Service partners and spouses, such as career development and growth courses, career assessments, CV reviews and interview skills. Programme participants were supported during lockdown periods by social media webinars and virtual events. The MOD is analysing the success of the pilot programme among its 592 registered members from across the UK and overseas.

The Military Co-Working Hubs project – a community of Service spouses and partners working together to create a network of co-working spaces on military bases – has been awarded grant funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to support its transformation from grassroots initiative to international network. Supported by the Families Federations, a pilot is being conducted to measure success across the UK Defence estate. The project will run for two years until September 2022, followed by an evaluation to consider longer-term provision.

Domestic abuse

The MOD continues to improve the support it provides to victims and survivors of domestic abuse. A new whole-force policy on domestic abuse and sexual violence will be published in late 2021. This work involved extensive engagement with sector specialists, other Government departments and survivors within Defence. The updated policy recognises the various aspects of abusive behaviour outside of physical violence and offers clearer direction to those who wish to disclose, as well as those responding to disclosures. The need for further training is now being assessed, and the work will be complemented by a renewed awareness campaign. Additionally, a digital platform for survivors to confidentially access information and support (SafeSpaces Online) is now available on MOD internal systems.

The appointment of Lucy Bogue, Director of Defence Infrastructure Organisation Corporate Services, as the new Senior Domestic Abuse Awareness Champion, effective from June 2021, provides Defence personnel with a single, recognisable point of contact who can be approached about any issues related to domestic abuse.

COVID-19 support to families

The MOD has communicated directly and frequently with families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, including through personal letters from senior figures within Defence. Specific guidance on entitlements and provision was issued, and there has been a degree of flexibility on allowances and entitlements where possible, to help families manage the cost implications of the pandemic. Additional flexibility was granted on SFA housing entitlements, as well as on the continuity of education allowance, food and incidental allowance and the longer separation allowance.

Defence Breastfeeding Network

This year, the Army Breastfeeding Network has developed from a single Service network into a Defence-wide network, linking Service personnel from all three Services to peer-to-peer support, guidance and encouragement, as well as specialist advice from a third-sector partner. The network is now supporting some 600 families.

Families in Scotland

Childcare

The MOD has conducted further work to ensure that a sustainable early learning and childcare offer is in place for Service families across Scotland. Funding from the Early Learning Childcare Fund has provided an £800,000 extension to existing childcare facilities at RAF Lossiemouth. This has increased the number of available childcare places, leading to a reduction in the previous 12-month waiting list for places.

Robust licence arrangements have been developed with early learning and childcare providers occupying MOD buildings across Scotland. These arrangements support the sustainability of childcare for Service families in Scotland.

Case study: childcare in Scotland

Scots Corner Early Learning and Childcare Centre has been recognised as an example of best practice by the Scottish Government. It is now operating near capacity, serving 27 Service families and 11 families from the local community. The partnership between the MOD and Midlothian Council offers quality, flexible, accessible and affordable early learning and childcare for children aged between two and five all year round.

Families in Wales

Service families' employment

The Welsh Government worked with Business in the Community and the Scottish Government to produce the Capitalising on Military Family Talent Toolkit.²² Launched in November 2020, the toolkit gives employers information on how they can recruit and retain military spouses and partners, explaining the barriers that family members can experience when applying for work.

Family support

In 2020, the Welsh Government revised and updated its 'Welcome to Wales' guide for Service families.²³ The guide sets out what to expect from life in Wales and how families can access support. The Welsh Government and partners continue to promote this resource widely.

Childcare

Three- and four-year-old Service children in Wales can access 30 hours per week of government-funded early education and childcare, for up to 48 weeks of the year. Part-time early education is free for them, with local authorities offering a minimum of 10 hours to learners. The difference (up to the 30 hours of entitlement) is then made up by government-funded childcare. This support is available across all local authorities in Wales.

22 Available at: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/capitalising-on-military-family-talent/>

23 Available at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-06/welcome-to-wales.pdf>

Families in Northern Ireland

Welfare support to families

Headquarters 38 (Irish) Brigade's Garrison Support Unit has supported Service families over the reporting period by making use of grants from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. The provisions include a mobile drive-in cinema facility, a voucher scheme to encourage families to re-engage with the wider community and a Defence Gardening Scheme, with families establishing horticultural plots and completing bee-keeping courses.

Funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's Removing Barriers to Family Life Programme continues to support Northern Ireland's Hockey Education Reaching Out to Society (HEROS) Programme. It brings children from a range of backgrounds together through ice hockey to demonstrate tolerance and understanding in a post-conflict society, while also showing how the MOD can be a force for good across Ireland.

Other initiatives have included an online arts project and a fitness programme, delivered to support adult mental health during lockdown periods.

Employment support to families

The MOD's dedicated Families Employment Support Officer in Northern Ireland provides support to the spouses and partners of Service personnel. However, there has been a decrease in the number of clients using the service during the reporting period. This is likely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with more limited employment opportunities and the demands of home-schooling children affecting spouses and partners' ability to seek employment. Education, training and volunteering opportunities remain available, many at no cost.

Domestic abuse

In line with wider MOD policy, Headquarters 38 (Irish) Brigade has kept its platinum-level status in relation to its work in countering domestic abuse and making the workplace a safe space under the Northern Ireland Safe Place Scheme. The Brigade has also established bespoke provision for male victims of domestic abuse, as well as access to a specialist behavioural change programme for non-adjudicated perpetrators of abuse.



The new UK Armed Forces Families Strategy 2022-2032 will better support families and encourage recruitment to and retention in service.



Chapter 8: Transition and through-life support

When the times comes, a successful transition out of the Armed Forces and back into civilian life can make all the difference to the life experiences of Service personnel and their families.

This chapter provides an update on the resettlement, transition and welfare services offered by the MOD to Service leavers and their families, as well as on other aspects of post-transition support, such as the new Veterans Railcard.

This chapter also provides an update on the work the UK Government is doing to address issues related to non-UK national Service personnel and their families.

Transition and through-life support across the UK

Resettlement

The resettlement service offered to all regular Service leavers is delivered through the Career Transition Partnership (CTP).²⁴ The CTP is a contracted service between the MOD and Right Management Limited, which currently runs until 30 September 2023.

The CTP continued to deliver its services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, providing a blended approach to training that involved a mix of face-to-face and virtual workshops to best meet the needs of Service leavers.

The aim of the current CTP contract is to enable Service leavers to make a successful transition into civilian employment within six months of leaving the Armed Forces. The MOD is currently reviewing the CTP Statement of Requirement to consider if the future CTP should include wider elements of transition.

24 Including Full-Time Reserve Service (FTRS).

Defence Holistic Transition Policy

Since October 2019, the Defence Holistic Transition Policy (Joint Service Publication 100) has overseen support to Service leavers and their families to help them adjust to the transition to civilian life. Complementing the resettlement service provided through the CTP, this holistic approach considers all aspects of civilian life that may differ from the military experience, including housing, healthcare, budgeting and life skills.

Since the launch of the Strategy for our Veterans, the three single Services have continually enhanced support for their Service leavers. Building on this work, a new 'life skills' training package will be provided to Service personnel and their families throughout their career in the Armed Forces. This will enable individuals to prepare appropriately for transition and make better informed decisions about their future. Using monitoring and assessment tools, Service personnel and their families will be able to keep track of their progress and work with their chains of command to establish whether further interventions are required. The training package is currently being developed and a pilot scheme is due to launch in 2022. This is a key element of the MOD's ongoing commitment to the Strategy for our Veterans, ensuring that Service leavers get the best possible start in their new life as a veteran.

Defence Transition Services (DTS)

DTS was set up in late 2019 under the MOD's Veterans UK service. It exists to support those Service leavers and family members that face the greatest barriers to a successful transition following their discharge from the Armed Forces. DTS supports clients who choose to settle in the UK or the Republic of Ireland once they or their family member have left the Armed Forces. DTS also facilitates

access to any additional help that Service leavers and families might need, above and beyond the help provided during their service. This may come from other UK Government departments, the Devolved Administrations, local authorities, the NHS or trusted charities.

To date, DTS has received referrals for over 1,300 Service leavers, veterans and family members. Referrals are received through the Defence Transition Referral Protocol, which launched in 2019 alongside the MOD's new Holistic Transition Policy. DTS also processes referrals on behalf of the wider portfolio of veterans' services, including the Veterans Welfare Service and Integrated Personal Commissioning for Veterans.

Of the 1,300 referrals received to date, nearly half were allocated to DTS based on the client's reasons for discharge and the length of time until or since their discharge date. The remainder were allocated to the Veterans Welfare Service, which provides support and assistance to the broader cohort of Service leavers, veterans and their families.

DTS continues to operate on a regional basis, with teams covering Northern Ireland and Scotland, northern England and northern Wales, central England and south Wales, and the south of England. Within each regional team, a regional manager, caseworker and casework assistant support clients from the Army, the RAF, and the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. Three percent of the referrals allocated to DTS since 2019 have been in relation to a family member of a Service leaver.

DTS clients largely reflect the wider Armed Forces discharge ratios, with the majority of clients coming from the Army and referrals being made by the client's unit.

In 2021, DTS and the Veterans Welfare Service established themselves as Veterans Gateway Referral Partners to raise their profiles and streamline access to the services. Since DTS is a ‘digital by default’ service, the impact of restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic has been minimal.

Case study: feedback on DTS from clients and referrers

- “Thanking DTS and the team for their unswerving support, especially in these challenging times. Keep up the great service.”
(Military referring authority)
- “Nobody else has listened to or supported me. DTS is the only one to make a difference: things are now happening. I feel a bit more positive about the future, getting help and finding work.”
(Client)
- “I have been in the veterans’ charity sector for over 19 years. DTS has done an amazing job. [It is] making the support in the transition space much, much better than it ever was.”
(Service charity partner)
- “I am committed to providing soldiers and families under my command the very best level of welfare advice and support that I can. DTS played a critical role in this provision and I am hugely grateful to them.”
(Military chain of command)

Wider Veterans UK services

Over the last year, Veterans UK has worked hard to embed DTS into its wider suite of services and facilitate smooth access to the right services. For example, medical discharge referrals are allocated to the Veterans Welfare Service, where there is significant experience and expertise in medical discharges. Similarly, if a DTS client is eligible for either the War Pensions or the Armed Forces Compensation Schemes, colleagues from the Veterans Welfare Service will support them with those elements of their case, working alongside the DTS caseworker.

Overall, the Veterans UK veterans’ services portfolio continues to develop, harnessing the growing expertise and experience of the wider team to provide tailored, holistic support through specialist teams for Service leavers, veterans and their families.

Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO)

Following a review in 2021, Defence Business Services has begun preparations to move the JSHAO from Army Regional Command into the Veterans UK family. The move will more effectively align the JSHAO as a tri-Service asset and position it within the transition space. The move also recognises the important role that through-career education on civilian housing options and timely support for Service leavers facing critical housing needs can play in increasing the likelihood of a successful transition.

Integrated Personal Commissioning for Veterans (IPC4V) review

The planned review of IPC4V was completed in summer 2021. The MOD’s Armed Forces People Support team now owns the IPC4V policy, and Veterans UK is responsible for its delivery.

The review proposed 20 recommendations to reinforce the life-changing support offered by the scheme after two years in operation. Among other actions, the MOD will create a steering group to direct on service quality and data handling, and to improve guidance available to eligible individuals and the general public.

The MOD will continue to work in partnership with NHS England to effectively support the most seriously injured Service personnel and to improve IPC4V's functionality in the coming years.

Veterans UK digitisation

Veterans UK has continued to deliver on its commitment to improve digital access to the services it provides for veterans.

A new online claim service for the Armed Forces Compensation and the War Pension Schemes is being introduced. It will sit on GOV.UK. The service has been developed using feedback from veterans, with over 200 volunteering to submit their claims digitally during the testing phase. Further improvements will be made as a result of the feedback received. The new online service is expected to go live on GOV.UK later in 2021/22.

Veterans in the criminal justice system

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Co-financing Organisation provides support to veterans through the Ex-Armed Service Personnel Action Plan, developed from the legacy of the Network for Ex-Service Personnel project.

Part of this work involves establishing activity hubs for offenders, to provide safe and supportive spaces that complement existing resettlement arrangements. In June 2021, a new veterans' activity hub was opened at HMP/Young Offender Institution Holme House.

A new programme, funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, is providing support to detainees discharged and released from the Military Corrective Training Centre in Colchester. The programme works specifically with offenders who are furthest away from returning to employment and supports detainees being released and discharged, who may or may not be under statutory supervision.

Cobseo

The MOD and the OVA are providing a five-year grant to assist Cobseo in funding a number of posts within their organisation. The funding will sustain Cobseo's initiatives to improve governance, collaboration and co-ordination across the Service charity sector. This will help to deliver on key elements of the 2018 Strategy for our Veterans and further improve support for beneficiaries across the Armed Forces Community. In total, the MOD and the OVA have committed to providing £710,000 in funding. The funding began in autumn 2020 and runs through to 2025.

Veterans Railcard

The Veterans Railcard went on sale in October 2020 and provides reduced-price train travel to veterans of the UK Armed Forces. Anyone who has served (regular or reserve) can purchase a railcard and save one-third on most rail fares. When travelling with the railcard holder, spouses and children can also benefit from a discount.

The railcard costs £30 but was initially available for £21 as a limited introductory offer. As of October 2021, over 32,000 railcards have been sold. This number may have been affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on rail use over the last year.

Support to non-UK national Service personnel and their families

The MOD and the Home Office continue to progress issues and welfare challenges faced by non-UK national Service personnel and non-UK families due to their UK immigration status, particularly as or after they leave the Armed Forces.

Officials from the MOD and the Home Office co-chair the joint working group on non-UK nationals. Following engagement with the Families Federations, the Home Office has agreed to take forward a number of actions to simplify and update the Appendix Armed Forces Immigration Rules. This package of changes will be introduced during 2022, subject to ministerial agreement. The MOD and the Home Office are also working together to further improve communications and guidance to non-UK Service personnel and non-UK families posted overseas.

The MOD and the Home Office ran a joint public consultation from May to July 2021 on the issue of waiving settlement fees for certain non-UK national members of the Armed Forces. The draft policy proposal set out that, in order to be eligible for the waiver, Service personnel must have served at least 12 years on discharge and meet all other Home Office eligibility requirements. The fee waiver would also apply to those discharged with an illness or injury attributable to service, irrespective of the length of that service.

The consultation also sought the public's views on the impact of settlement fees for non-UK family members and veterans who have not regularised their immigration status since discharge. A significant number of responses were received, which will help to inform the scope of any future fee waiver, as well as broader future policy development. The Government will publish its formal response to the consultation in due course.

In addition, the MOD is strengthening its response to non-UK national welfare issues. Initial observations from a deep-dive review of the issues indicate that many welfare challenges stem from a misunderstanding of immigration rules. Therefore, one of the MOD's priorities is to improve access to, and understanding of, information that assists non-UK national Service personnel and their families with their immigration applications.

Transition and through-life support in Scotland

Resettlement in Scotland

The MOD has worked closely with the Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland to explore how the current resettlement offer can be tailored to the Scottish need. As part of this, a bespoke Scottish resettlement guide was first published in 2020, and reviewed and updated in June 2021.²⁵ The guide provides financial, housing and educational advice for Service leavers resettling in Scotland.

Unforgotten Forces Consortium

The Scottish Government continues to fund the Unforgotten Forces Consortium – a partnership of 16 civilian and Service charities – which delivers a wide array of services to older veterans in Scotland. The Scottish Government is contributing £250,000 per year from the financial year 2020/21 until 2022/23 to support their work in improving the health, wellbeing and quality of life for older veterans in Scotland. In 2021, the consortium expanded their remit to include all veterans over 60 years of age, instead of the previous age of 65.

Scottish Veterans Fund

The Scottish Veterans Fund continued in 2021. A further £200,000 was awarded to 16 projects across Scotland, with a focus on projects supporting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. From the financial year 2022/23, the funding available through the fund will increase to £500,000 per year.

25 Available at: <https://www.ctp.org.uk/guides>

Transition and through-life support in Wales

Resettlement in Wales

The Wales Transition Action Group – chaired by Defence Transition Services and involving 160th (Welsh) Brigade, the Career Transition Partnership and a range of public- and charity-sector partners –

has developed a bespoke resettlement guide for Service leavers and their families settling in Wales.²⁶ The guide was first published in June 2021 and brings together information on the support available in Wales and how to access it.

Case study: Veterans Legal Link (VLL)

VLL at Aberystwyth University was established in 2015 to source and provide free legal advice and casework to veterans and families in Wales.

Since 2020, the project has directly and indirectly supported more than 330 beneficiaries across Wales and the wider UK.

The project provides legal assistance, advice, signposting and specialist referrals dependent on need. It continues to see high demand for legal advice in the areas of criminal, family and employment law. The majority of beneficiaries have complex needs, including mental health difficulties, housing troubles and relationship breakdowns. Many do not qualify for legal aid.

VLL relies on an extensive network of partner organisations. National Lottery funding has been secured to develop an online platform, which will enable veterans to refer and manage cases online and link into wider support networks.

Case study: Veterans Connected project, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Vale of Glamorgan councils

Rhondda Cynon Taf and Vale of Glamorgan councils' Veterans Advice Service has kept in regular telephone contact with local veterans since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the 528 veterans contacted by officials, 44 reported being lonely and 87 reported experiencing isolation and missed attending their weekly veteran groups and the social and emotional benefits they provide.

The councils obtained £18,900 from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's Force for Change Programme to deliver the Veterans Connected project. The project helps veterans to stay in touch with family and facilitates social connections through digital technology, with the aim of improving wellbeing and reducing social isolation.

26 Available at: <https://www.ctp.org.uk/guides>

Transition and through-life support in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland Aftercare Service review

A review into the Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Irish (Home Service) Aftercare Service is considering whether its remit should be widened to cover all UK Armed Forces veterans living in Northern Ireland with Service-related injuries and conditions. The review is also considering how this service provision could transition to become part of the wider support offered by the Veterans Welfare Service, under Veterans UK. It began in December 2020 and will conclude with recommendations to ministers in 2022. Implementation will follow a ministerial decision.

Resettlement in Northern Ireland

The Career Transition Partnership has developed a guide to living and working in Northern Ireland for Service leavers and their families settling in Northern Ireland, which was first published in July 2021.²⁷

27 Available at: <https://www.ctp.org.uk/guides>



Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Leo Docherty MP, at the unveiling of the Gurkha Memorial in Aldershot on 25 September 2021.



Chapter 9:

Business, employment and the community

The Armed Forces Covenant is one of Defence's key tools for supporting engagement between the Armed Forces Community and wider civilian society, and for encouraging organisations to support the Armed Forces Community.

This chapter provides an update on Covenant engagement with the private and public sectors and society more generally during the reporting period. It also covers initiatives to support employment of the Armed Forces Community, especially Service leavers and veterans, through the work of the Department for Work and Pensions, the OVA and other Government departments.

Business, employment and community across the UK

Armed Forces Covenant signatories

As of 30 September 2021, 7,488 organisations have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, of which 1,765 signed during the reporting period. Signatories come from all sectors and regions of the UK, ranging from microbusinesses to multinational corporations.

Organisations that signed the Covenant for the first time during this reporting period include London Southend Airport, Lincoln College, the Yorkshire Ambulance NHS Trust, the Royal Hospital Chelsea and the British Chambers of Commerce. In addition, organisations such as Amazon and Jaguar Land Rover took the opportunity to re-sign and reaffirm their Covenant pledges.

Figure 1 – Total number of Armed Forces Covenant signings since 2011

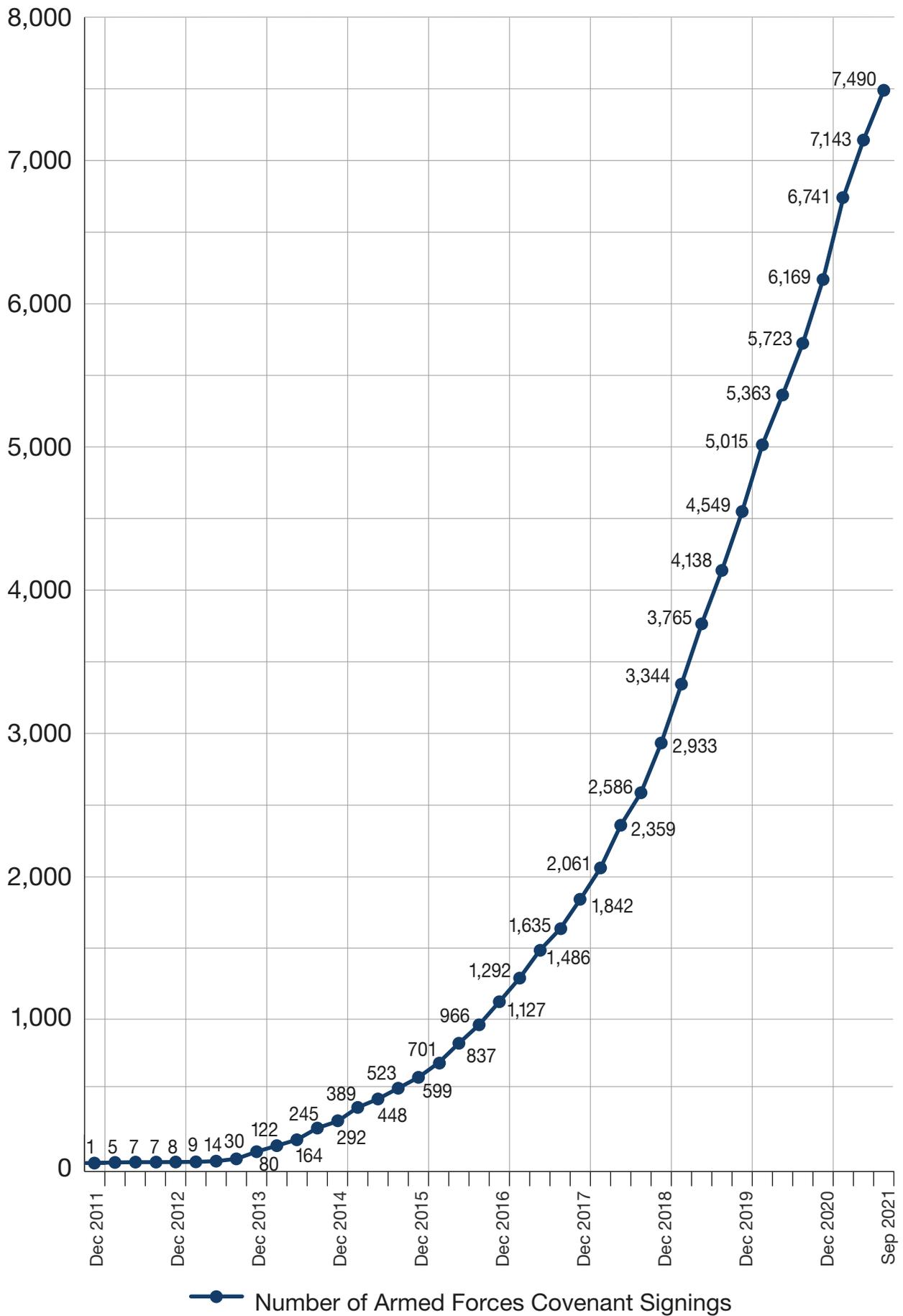


Figure 2 – Armed Forces Covenant signings by company ownership, 1 October 2020 – 30 September 2021

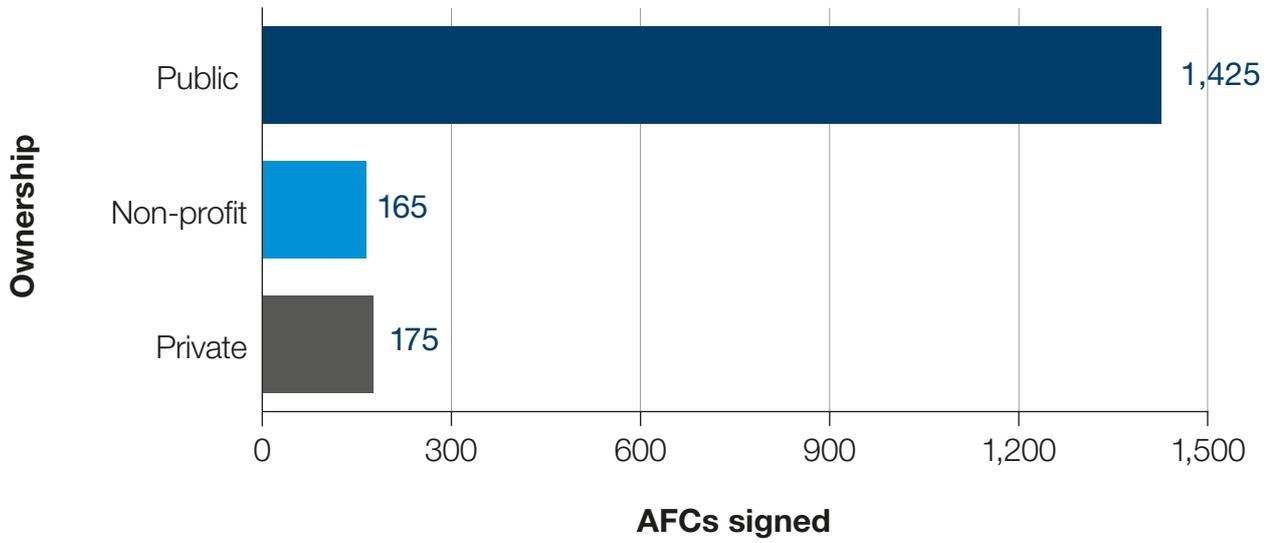
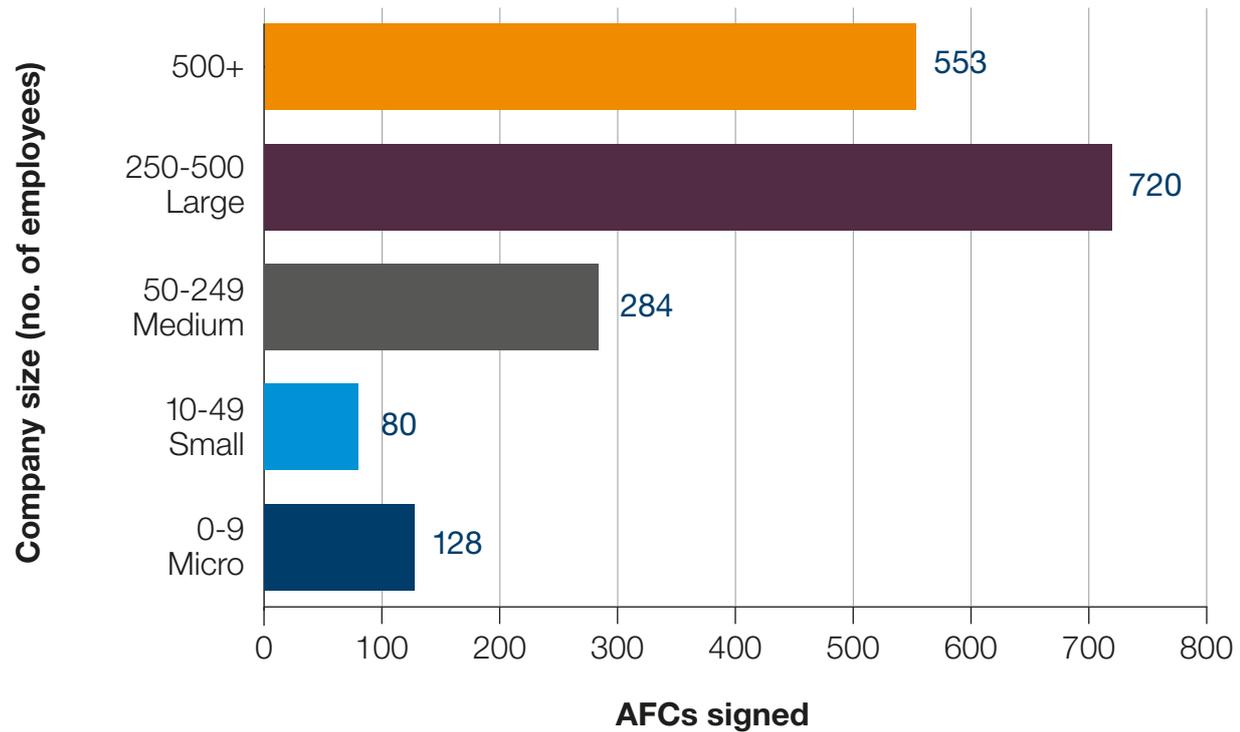


Figure 3 – Armed Forces Covenant signings by company size, 1 October 2020 – 30 September 2021



Measuring effectiveness

Defence Relationship Management uses an internal model to monitor and record the activities of organisations and employers that do the most to benefit the Armed Forces Community. Understanding what is most effective is important so that Defence can promote best practice among Covenant signatories.

According to the model, the most effective activities recorded during the reporting period were bespoke HR policies, specifically positive recruitment aimed at the Armed Forces Community. The most effective type of policy recorded was registration with the Career Transition Partnership, followed by flexible or remote working for partners of spouses.

However, like last year, fewer organisations engaged in Defence discussion forums, commercial fairness awareness sessions and workplace employer engagement sessions during this reporting period. This is likely due to the impact of COVID-19 on the ability to organise or attend such forums and sessions.

The model also records organisations' sectors and sizes. During this reporting period, there has been another increase in support from organisations in the public sector and the defence industry, as well as from educational bodies, not-for-profits and trade bodies. Slower growth was recorded in the energy and utilities sector, as well as in the arts sector. Defence Relationship Management will target campaigns on these slower-growth areas in the coming year.

Employer Awareness and Attitudes Monitor 2021

The Employer Awareness and Attitudes Monitor is an independent research series that has been conducted annually since 2014. It provides evidence to inform policy on reserves and other Defence people policy areas.

The monitor is based on interviews with 1,000 employers, split evenly between reservist and non-reservist employers. Participants are chosen to give a meaningful spread across organisational sectors and sizes.

Issues related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic were, perhaps unsurprisingly, the main challenge raised by participants.

However, the 2021 results do indicate continued positive consolidation, recording generally high levels of awareness and positive employer attitudes towards the Armed Forces Community:

- 95 percent of employers surveyed said reserves were a necessary element of the UK's Armed Forces (up from 92 percent in 2020)
- 94 percent of employers surveyed said reservists were an asset to the UK's workforce (up from 92 percent in 2020)
- 93 percent of employers surveyed said reserves should be supported by their employers as a matter of principle (up from 91 percent)
- 90 percent of employers surveyed said they could benefit from the skills and experiences that reservists bring (down from 91 percent)

- 72 percent of employers surveyed said they were satisfied with their relationship with Defence, up from 65 percent in 2020 – among reservist employers, the figure rises to 78 percent, up from 69 percent
- 59 percent of employers surveyed said they were aware of the Armed Forces Covenant, up from 52 percent in 2020 – among reservist employers, the figure rises to 78 percent, up from 68 percent
- 85 percent of employers surveyed agreed that veterans were an asset to the workforce, up from 83 percent in 2020 – among reservist employers, the figure rises to 94 percent, up from 86 percent
- 91 percent of employers surveyed believed they could benefit from the skills and experience that veterans bring, up from 90 percent in 2020 – among reservist employers, the figure rises to 94 percent, up from 92 percent
- the key barrier to organisations signing the Armed Forces Covenant continues to be a lack of knowledge
- 65 percent of employers surveyed reported awareness of rights related to the mobilisation of reservists, up significantly from 52 percent in 2020
- awareness of financial assistance was up to 64 percent, from 51 percent in 2020

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, which launched in 2014, offers bronze, silver and gold awards for employers that advocate, pledge and demonstrate support for Defence and the Armed Forces Community, and align their values and practices with the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Gold awards are given to exemplary employers within their sector that advocate on Covenant issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers with tangible results. In July 2021, a further 140 organisations were given a gold award, bringing the total number of gold award holders to 493. In August 2021, a further 329 organisations were given a silver award, bringing the total number to 1,308.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Armed Forces Champions

From April 2021, the DWP began to introduce a new model for providing support to the Armed Forces Community. Building on the existing network of Armed Forces Champions across the Jobcentre Plus network, the new model includes 11 dedicated management roles. There is now one Armed Forces Champion Lead in each DWP group area.

The leads oversee 50 Armed Forces Champions working across the Jobcentre Plus network (there is at least one champion in each Jobcentre Plus district). The leads form a virtual network and, along with the champions, are responsible for building capability throughout the DWP and working with partners to share best practice.

The 50 champions each have specific responsibility within their districts for supporting members of the Armed Forces Community and improving colleagues' awareness of Armed Forces issues. Under the new model, their role includes front line responsibilities, including handling some claims personally, supporting veterans into work and helping to resolve complex cases where necessary. DWP Work Coaches also receive training on how to provide tailored and personalised support to members of the Armed Forces Community and their families, working in partnership with the champions.

Case study: BuildForce, Employer Recognition Scheme gold award holder

BuildForce is an initiative that brings Service leavers and veterans into rewarding careers in the construction industry. BuildForce was given the Employer Recognition Scheme gold award in 2021.

In the last two years, BuildForce has run three ‘insight days’ and 32 fortnightly virtual career chats. BuildForce has both a Service-leavers’ and a veterans’ programme to identify transferable skills, develop career plans, and arrange industry mentors and work placements. The veterans’ programme offers educational modules to participants, enabling them to build their understanding of construction and prepare for a successful interview. The programme has recently been expanded to include Service spouses.

BuildForce promotes a Forces-friendly culture among partner organisations. More than 150 organisations have signed up to the BuildForce programme, including all the major construction, homebuilding and engineering companies in the UK.

BuildForce has inducted more than 750 members of the Armed Forces Community into new and fulfilling careers in construction.

Paul Bedford, a participant in the BuildForce programme, said: “BuildForce opened my eyes to an industry that I had never previously considered. It helped me to find an opportunity in an organisation that I instantly felt at home in, and I was able to use the skills I had learned during my military career.”

Universal Credit ‘identifier’

In April 2021, the DWP introduced a question on the Universal Credit system asking people whether they have served, or are currently serving, in the UK Armed Forces.

This identifier means that all those now making a claim for Universal Credit, and those who need to report a change of circumstances on their claim, have the opportunity to indicate whether they are a veteran or are currently serving. This will help the DWP to more easily identify customers who belong to the Armed Forces Community, and provide them with any extra help they may need. Over the longer term, the data collected will enable the DWP and others to better understand the needs of Armed Forces Community customers.

National Employer and Partner Team (NEPT)

Although the NEPT’s emphasis over the last year has been on supporting the DWP Kickstart Scheme, it has also dedicated time to supporting the Covenant. Engagement with its portfolio of national employers and partners has resulted in specific recruitment opportunities for the Armed Forces Community. Examples include working with BT Openreach to deliver a recruitment campaign targeted at Service leavers and reservists, and supporting Civil Service departments to promote jobs aimed at veterans through the Going Forward into Employment Scheme.

The NEPT also delivered a national campaign across the Jobcentre Plus network during Armed Forces Week, to improve knowledge among newly recruited Work Coaches of how the DWP supports the Armed Forces Community. In addition, the NEPT supports the Armed Forces Champions Network by chairing a monthly online forum enabling partner organisations to engage with champions and present their offer. Organisations that have attended during this reporting period include the Career Transition Partnership, Forces Families Jobs, the Forces in Mind Trust, the OVA, the Army Recruitment Group and the Poppy Factory. RFEA - the Forces Employment Charity also used the platform to present their employability programmes and arrange meetings with the DWP's new Armed Forces Champions Leads.

National Insurance holiday for employers of veterans

The Government has introduced a National Insurance holiday for employers of veterans in their first year of civilian employment. A full digital service will be available to employers from April 2022. Transitional arrangements are now in place, enabling employers to claim this holiday from April 2021. The holiday will exempt employers from any National Insurance Contributions liability on the employed veteran's salary, up to the upper earnings limit.

Employment outcomes for Service leavers

In January 2021, the MOD published annual figures detailing employment outcomes for those who left the Armed Forces during 2019/20.²⁸ The figures show that of the 12,258 Service personnel who left the UK Armed Forces and used the MOD's Career Transition Partnership services during 2019/20, 84 percent were employed within six months of leaving service. This figure is higher than the overall UK employment rate of 76 percent. A further 10 percent were economically inactive (e.g. in education or training, or not seeking employment).

Civil Service employment for Service leavers

The MOD, the OVA and the Career Transition Partnership have produced an industry sector guide showcasing the Civil Service as a 'great place to work' for Service leavers. The guide, which launched in August 2021, provides Service leavers with information on employment opportunities in Government, skills and training requirements, Civil Service news and useful links for job-finding.²⁹

The guide will be supported by a new Service leaver employment engagement group, co-chaired by the MOD and the OVA. The group will share best practice in the employment of Service leavers and veterans across Government departments, and build a strategic approach to Civil Service-wide employment of Service leavers and veterans.

28 Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/career-transition-partnership-ex-service-personnel-employment-outcomes-financial-year-201920>

29 Available at: <https://www.ctp.org.uk/guides>

In 2020, the Civil Service also launched a pilot 'veterans confident employment initiative'. Several Government departments, including the MOD, the Ministry of Justice, the Cabinet Office and the Home Office, were involved in the pilot scheme. Any veteran applying for a role and opting into the scheme was guaranteed to move to the next stage of selection, provided they met the minimum required criteria for the role. During the pilot phase, over 3,000 veterans opted into the scheme, with 155 posted to roles of all grades and a further 180 placed on reserve lists. The pilot phase is currently being evaluated, with the ambition to roll it out across the Civil Service.

Step into Health

NHS England and NHS Improvement commissioned the Step into Health Programme to support members of the Armed Forces Community seeking employment in the NHS in England. Since March 2019, over 33,000 self-identified members of the Armed Forces Community have applied for roles in the NHS, with nearly 1,300 individuals securing roles.

The programme supports candidates through the application process and helps employers to be more 'Armed Forces friendly' by offering work placements and insight days. 106 NHS Trusts are part of the programme, with many more preparing to sign up.

Business, employment and community in Scotland

Armed Forces Third Sector Resilience Fund

The Scottish Government has made £1 million available to create a new Armed Forces Third Sector Resilience Fund. The fund provides direct financial relief to third-sector organisations that support the Armed Forces Community in Scotland. The Corra Foundation are specialists in grant management and help to administer the fund.

Women's Returner Programme

In 2020, the eligibility criteria for the Women's Returner Programme was extended to include female veterans and the spouses and partners of Service personnel. The purpose is to help women back into work and to ensure that employers can offer advice, peer support and access to training and work experience. The Scottish Government provided £500,000 to the programme in the financial year 2020/21.

Adult Disability Payment

The application form for Adult Disability Payments is being changed to ask clients about their possible entitlement to Armed Forces Independence Payment, War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement and War Pension Constant Attendance Allowance. Where appropriate, clients will be directed to Veterans UK for further advice. These changes will ensure that veterans can efficiently access the support they are entitled to.

Work placements in the Scottish Government

The Scottish Government continues to offer work placements and fixed-term appointments to veterans through the Going Forward into Employment Programme. Working with the Career Transition Partnership and other partners to identify candidates, the initiative offers Service leavers and veterans short-term work placements, which could lead to permanent appointments.

NHS Scotland careers

During Armed Forces Week 2021, NHS Scotland launched a dedicated careers webpage designed to promote the NHS as a post-service career.³⁰ The page includes support for veterans applying to NHS jobs, guidance on communicating transferable skills and career case studies from veterans and Service family members who work in the NHS.

Employment opportunities for veterans

The Scottish Government's 2021/22 Programme for Government committed to securing better employment opportunities for veterans, so that they can access good jobs once their time in the military is over. The Scottish Government will launch a public awareness campaign next year, targeting employers and the business community, to increase employment opportunities for veterans.

Business, employment and community in Wales

Armed Forces Liaison Officers (AFLOs)

The Welsh Government continues to fund eight AFLO posts working on a regional basis with local authorities and local organisations across Wales to deliver policies that support the Armed Forces Community.

The Welsh Government is providing funding of £275,000 per year to enable the AFLOs to continue in their roles until 2023.

Case study: Armed Forces Liaison Officers' activity in Wales

Mental health first aid training

The AFLOs helped to secure funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to run accredited mental health first aid training for professionals across all six local authorities in North Wales and nine local authorities in South Wales. Attendees included custody, local authority and charity staff working with the Armed Forces Community.

Data and evidence

The AFLOs are working with local partners to improve available data and evidence regarding the needs of the Armed Forces Community. At Caerphilly Council, the Supporting People team (providing help with housing, homelessness, debt, benefits and employment) now routinely asks whether service users have previously served in the Armed Forces.

³⁰ Available at:

<https://www.careers.nhs.scot/careers/find-your-career/service-leavers-and-veterans/>

This has provided important evidence on the principal issues veterans are faced with. Since 1 April 2021, four-and-a-half percent of referrals to the team have been from ex-Service personnel, with the main issues being a need for benefit- and debt-related support.

Training

The AFLOs continue to deliver training to front line staff to raise awareness of Armed Forces issues and to support collaborative working between agencies. In North Wales, the AFLOs have delivered training to four local authorities, reaching over 120 staff members. Post-training evaluation found that awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant increased by 92 percent among staff in some areas.

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme in Wales

During the reporting period, 10 Welsh employers were given a gold award under the Employer Recognition Scheme. These included Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Cardiff and Vale College and the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust. In addition, 24 employers in Wales received a silver award.

Going Forward into Employment

The Welsh Government has reached the end of its Great Place to Work for Veterans pilot phase and is now considering plans for wider roll-out. From November 2020 to June 2021, three percent of all applications to Welsh Government external vacancies were from veterans. 83 percent of eligible veterans applying for roles opted into the initiative, and three percent of job offers were made to veterans. Extending the scheme to spouses and partners is now being considered.

Business, employment and community in Northern Ireland

Initiatives with industry partners in Northern Ireland

Defence Relationship Management has developed a number of programmes with industry partners in Northern Ireland, to improve the employment of spouses and veterans, and share skills between civilian employers and reserve units.

These programmes have included:

- cyber-related study events, with the direct involvement of the RAF and supported by the Northern Ireland Cyber Security Centre, BT and the Centre for Secure Information Technologies at Queen's University Belfast
- matching the Career Transition Partnership with several employers across Northern Ireland
- identifying veterans seeking employment and matching them with industry needs, incorporating skills development along the way

Employers of reservists

A survey conducted by Defence Relationship Management's Northern Ireland Regional Employment Engagement Director this year found that 60 percent of reservists in employment in Northern Ireland surveyed said they had notified their employers of their reservist status. This figure represents an all-time high.

A total of 495 employers across Northern Ireland have declared themselves to Defence Relationship Management as 'supportive employers' of reserve service.

Community initiatives

With funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, the Veterans Support Office in Northern Ireland oversees an expanding local network of charitable initiatives based on a hub-and-spoke approach, incorporating sporting, cultural and other occupational initiatives.

These are managed by ‘navigators’, who support and drive the programmes in co-operation with nominated charities and report back to the Veterans Support Office. The Defence Gardens Scheme, involving several hundred veterans and Service families, is the largest of these.



Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Leo Docherty MP, signing the Armed Forces Covenant alongside a representative from L3Harris at the Defence and Security Equipment International Exhibition in London on 14 September 2021.



Chapter 10: Research and data

Research and data are key to improving our understanding of the needs of the Armed Forces Community, how effectively those needs are being met, and where any gaps in provision might exist.

This chapter outlines the work carried out during the reporting period to improve the data picture on the Armed Forces Community, including through the introduction of a question on the Census in England and Wales asking whether respondents had previously served in the UK Armed Forces.

Research and data across the UK

Digital and data strategy

The OVA and the MOD have formed a cross-Government data working group with nominated data champions from other UK Government departments and the Devolved Administrations. The group has developed the first cross-UK data map for the Armed Forces Community, which has informed the OVA's data strategy to be published in 2022.

The Treasury is providing up to £475,000 to Service charities in 2021/22 to support the development of a digital and data strategy for the sector. This will help charities to work together and potentially with Government, and it will ensure that members of the Armed Forces Community across the UK can access the support they need when they need it.

2021 Census

For the first time, the 2021 Census in England and Wales asked respondents whether they had previously served in the UK Armed Forces. The OVA is working closely with the Office for National Statistics to look at how the anonymised data provided by the Census could be used to better understand the nature and needs the veteran population in England and Wales.

Health and suicide data

In September 2021, the OVA and the Office for National Statistics announced a new method for monitoring health conditions and the frequency of suicide within the veteran community in England and Wales.

In 2023, the Office for National Statistics will compare the health of the veteran population, including the number of veterans with long-term health conditions or disabilities, with the general population. This analysis will also include suicide-related deaths of veterans. A new official statistic will be published regularly, providing the Government, the charities sector and others with a better understanding of the frequency of suicide among veterans.

Veterans research projects

The findings of the study commissioned by the OVA and led by King's College London into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the veteran community were published in the British Medical Journal Open on 27 August 2021. This research has provided vital insights and has helped to inform policy.

The next phase of the King's College London cohort study, which is the largest of its kind, began in autumn 2021. Running since 2003, the study provides insight into the long-term physical and psychological health and wellbeing of UK Service personnel and veterans. In addition, the new phase of the study will look at issues including social mobility, employment and following up on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the veteran community.

Research and data in Scotland

2022 Census

As in England and Wales this year, Scotland's Census – taking place on 20 March 2022 – will ask respondents whether they have previously served in the UK Armed Forces. This will provide a better understanding of the veteran community in Scotland, including numbers, location, employment status, healthcare, housing and other needs.

The Scottish Government also intends to include the same veteran question from the Census in its three primary surveys: the Scottish Household Survey, the Scottish Health Survey and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey. Analysis from the results should be available during 2023.





Annex A: Metrics

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

2012 – 2021

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Medical treatment	..	..	..	77	76	76	76	80	80	77
Dental treatment	86	85	86	87	86	86	87	89	89	84

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2021

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

1. Minor wording and format change in 2015
2. Excludes N/A responses
- .. Represents data unavailable

Table 2: UK Armed Forces families able to access medical care in the past 12 months, estimated percentage

2012 – 2021

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
GP (including nurse/midwife)	97	96	96	98	98	98	98	98	97	98
Dentist	88	89	90	91	90	90	90	89	87	68
Hospital or specialist services	..	..	..	98	96	97	97	96	95	94

Source: Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2014 and 2021

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

1. 2012-2014 – excludes N/A
2. 2015-2019 – includes ‘Yes, without difficulties’ and ‘Yes, but with some difficulties’; excludes missing and ‘No, I did not need to’ responses
3. Responses are filtered for those who required access to respective medical care [GP: 89%, Dentist: 82% and Hospital: 54% for 2021]
- Break in time series due to change in response options and population reported on
- .. Represents data unavailable

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

2012 – 2021

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
GP (including nurse/midwife)	93	90	92	96	95	93	95	92	91	91
Dentist	79	70	74	75	82	81	82	78	77	54
Hospital or specialist services	..	..	..	91	90	85	84	83	80	78

Source: Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2014 and 2021

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

1. Refers to whether spouses/dependants were able to continue treatment in new location if moved
 2. Includes if moved for own reasons and if due to Service
 3. 2012-2014 – excludes N/A
 4. 2015-2019 – includes ‘Yes, without difficulties’ and ‘Yes, but with some difficulties’; excludes missing and ‘No, I did not need to’ responses
 5. Respondents are filtered for those who moved in the last 12 months whilst undergoing treatment [GP: 9% Dental: 6% Hospital: 8% for 2021]
 6. Numbers based on a small subset: people who have moved and needed to continue treatment
- Break in time series due to change in population reported on
- .. Represents data unavailable

Table 4: UK Armed Forces personnel,¹ wait times for cancer treatment in England, numbers and percentages

2017/18 – 2020/21

		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21	
		number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Two-week wait for all cancers ²	Service personnel	1,729	93.4	1,886	91.7	2,192	91.6	2,027	86.7
	England	1,833,138	94.1	2,066,264	92.0	2,386,815	90.8	2,080,673	88.7
	Target ⁵		93		93		93		93
Two-week wait for symptomatic breast patients (where cancer was not initially suspected) ²	Service personnel	264	87.4	230	85.8	217	81.6	141	63.1
	England	179,996	92.8	164,485	85.8	176,807	83.9	128,364	76.0
	Target ⁵		93		93		93		93
One-month (31-day) diagnosis to first treatment wait for all cancers ³	Service personnel	82	96.5	123	97.6	111	97.3	115	95.7
	England	287,270	97.5	303,569	96.8	316,588	96.0	275,553	95.0
	Target ⁵		96		96		96		96
62-day wait for first treatment following an urgent GP referral for all cancers ⁴	Service personnel	26	83.9	57	87.7	47	87.2	59	71.2
	England	122,631	82.3	129,724	79.1	167,101	77.2	148,280	74.3
	Target ⁵		85		85		85		85

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

1. All Defence Medical Services registered patients; will include Service families who are DMS registered
2. Patients seen within 14 days of referral
3. Patients treated within 31 days of the decision to treat date
4. Patients received a first definitive anti-cancer treatment within 62 days of the urgent referral date
5. Operational Standard: expected level of performance based on case mix, clinical requirements and potential numbers of patients unfit for treatment or electing to delay treatment (patient choice)

Table 5: UK Armed Forces Veterans, TILS¹ referrals receiving assessment, treatment and discharging, numbers and percentages

2017/18 – 2020/21

	2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Number of referrals	2,879r		3,913		4,660		3,967	
Appropriate for assessment	2,414r	83.9r	2,684	69	3,496	75	3,194	81
Assessment attended ³	1,649r	68.3r	2,120	79	2,569	73	2,391	75
Of assessed, received treatment in TILS ⁴	581r	35.2r	613	29	585	23	722	30

Source: NHS England and NHS Improvement

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

Table 6: UK Armed Forces Veterans, TILS¹ waiting times² for assessment and treatment³, days

2018/19 – 2020/21

		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
		Average wait (days)	Average wait (days)	Average wait (days)
Assessment	Offered ⁴	39	37	13
	Attended	47	39	16
Treatment	Offered	55	68	16
	Attended	57	70	17

Source: NHS England and NHS Improvement

1. TILS – Transition, Intervention and Liaison Services – Op COURAGE
2. Wait time from referral to assessment and from referral to treatment
3. Seen in TILS service/clinical appointment
4. Target: 14 days

Table 7: UK Armed Forces Veterans, CTS¹ referrals accepted and appointments delivered, numbers and percentage

2018/19 – 2020/21

		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21	
		number	%	number	%	number	%
Number of referrals		648		714		631	
Referrals accepted		617	95.2	691	96.7	578	91.6
Appointment delivered in pathway²	Total	14,781		16,427		4,895	
By year delivered ³	2018/19	5,739					
	2019/20	5,485		7,546			
	2020/21	3,557		8,881		4,895	

Source: NHS England and NHS Improvement

1. CTS – Complex Treatment Services – Op COURAGE
2. Appointments delivered for referrals received in that financial year
3. The appointments have been split by the year delivered

Table 8: UK Armed Forces Veterans Op COURAGE, CTS¹ waiting times² for initial appointment,³ working days

2018/19 – 2020/21

		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
		Average wait (days)	Average wait (days)	Average wait (days)
Initial clinical appointment	Offered ⁴	18	33	24
	Attended	24	36	34

Source: NHS England and NHS Improvement

1. CTS – Complex Treatment Services – Op COURAGE
2. Wait time from referral from TILS to initial appointment
3. Seen in clinical appointment
4. Target: 10 working days from referral from TILS

Table 9: UK Armed Forces Veterans Op COURAGE, HIS¹ referrals and key activity

2020/21: October 2020 – March 2021²

	2020/21
Referrals	304
First contacts	272
Referrals seen in Service (%)	89.5
Follow-up appointments	2,638
Average no. follow-ups	9.7
Family and carer contacts	77
Average wait from referral to first contact with patient (days)	5
Average length of care (days)	72

1. HIS – High Intensity Service – Op COURAGE
2. First regional service launched in October 2020

Table 10: UK Armed Forces Veterans, Veterans Trauma Network (VTN) referrals and enquiry source

2019/20 – 2021/22

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 ¹	Total
Referrals received	50	41	65	156
Specialities				
Musculoskeletal and pain	66%	78%	80%	75%
Neurology	12%	5%	8%	8%
Mental health (no physical health issues)	8%	5%	0%	4%
Other	14%	12%	12%	13%
Enquiry source				
GP	66%	51%	32%	48%
Self/Spouse	22%	12%	20%	19%
Mental health provider	4%	7%	14%	9%
Third sector	2%	22%	6%	9%
Other	6%	7%	28%	15%

1. 2021/22 numbers are for Apr-Sept only, not full year effect

Table 11: UK Armed Forces Veterans, VNHSW¹ referrals receiving an assessment and treatment, Wales, numbers and percentages

2010/11 – 2020/21

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of referrals ^{2,3,7}	205	329	390	542	607	633	614	808	831	517
% referrals receiving assessment ^{3,4,7}				60-70	73	57	67	66	56	60
% referrals receiving treatment ^{5,6}				30-50	58	39	..	37	36	..

Source: Veteran NHS Wales

1. Veteran NHS Wales
2. 2017/18: There were gaps in administration cover in 2017-2018 which may have resulted in some referrals not being recorded until after the end of the reporting period. Consequently, the true figure is likely to be higher
3. 2017/18: 67% of referrals were offered an assessment. This figure is an estimate based on the first 11 months of the year. March 2018 was excluded as assessments were less likely to have taken place and recorded in the reporting period
4. 2018/19: 66% of referrals were offered an assessment. In 2018-2019 the reporting period was extended so this figure is based on all 12 months of the year
5. 2017/18: The method of data collection combined with the gaps in administration cover in the 2017-2018 year resulted in too few data points to provide a confident estimate of the number of referrals who received treatment
6. 2018/19: 37% of referrals were offered treatment and subsequently booked in for treatment. This figure is estimated on the first nine months of the year
7. The total referrals and assessments completed for 2020-2021 were reported on the Monthly Summaries and are therefore provisional until confirmation by the Minimum Data Set
- .. Represents data unavailable

Table 12: UK Armed Forces Veterans, VNHSW¹ waiting times for assessment and treatment, Wales, percentages

2015/16 – 2020/21

		2015/16 %	2016/17 %	2017/18 %	2018/19 %	2018/19 %	2019/20 %	2020/21 %
Referral to assessment ²	4 weeks or less	29	30	74	77	77	56	88
	10 weeks or less	80	80	..	..	..	97	..
Assessment to treatment ³	4 weeks or less	28	19	..	..	..	9	..
	24 weeks or less	80	..	90	95	95	81	80

Source: Veteran NHS Wales

1. Veteran NHS Wales
2. Welsh Government target for assessment is four weeks. Clock starts at opt-in and not referral. Therefore the measurement here is opt-in to assessment
3. Welsh Government target for treatment is 26 weeks
- .. Represents data unavailable

Table 13: UK Armed Forces Veterans, VNHSW¹ reliable improvement,^{2,3} Wales, percentages

2015/16 – 2019/20

	2015/16 %	2016/17 %	2017/18 %	2018/19 %	2019/20 %
Reliable improvement	88	74	94	89	81

Source: Veteran NHS Wales

1. Veteran NHS Wales
2. Demonstrated reliable improvement on at least one of the three core measures for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, depression and anxiety
3. Pre- and post-therapy measure available for: 48 veterans in 2015/16, 31 veterans in 2016/17, 34 veterans in 2017/18, 126 veterans in 2018/19 and 78 veterans in 2019/20

Table 14: UK Armed Forces Veterans in Wales, receiving treatment for substance misuse¹, numbers

2014/15 – 2019/20

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number receiving or have received treatment	319r	362r	305r	306r	364r	346r	279r

Source: Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW) Information Services Division (ISD)

<https://dhcw.nhs.wales/>

1. Alcohol or drug misuse
- r. Numbers adjusted for data reconciliation

Table 15: Service children¹ and non-Service children achieving key grades in GCSE English and mathematics, England, percentage

2016 – 2020

		% of pupils achieving A*-C in both English and mathematics GCSEs	% of pupils achieving grades 9-4 in English and mathematics ²	% of pupils achieving grades 9-5 in English and mathematics ³
2016	Service children	69.6	–	–
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	66.7	–	–
2017	Service children	–	68.7	45.0
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	–	67.5	45.9
2018	Service children	–	68.7	45.3
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	–	67.7	46.4
2019	Service children	–	69.2	44.3
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	–	68.4	46.7
2020 ⁴	Service children	–	76.6	53.3
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	–	75.4	54.1

Source: National Pupil Database, KS4 results data

1. Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record and eligible pupils at the end of KS4. Excludes pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools
2. The 9-4 pass shows pupils who achieved a grade 4 or above in English and mathematics, and is provided alongside the headline measure for transparency and comparability to the old measure
3. From 2017, headline threshold attainment measures use grade 5 for reformed English and mathematics
4. The pupil attainment data for 2020 is based on Centre Assessment Grades rather than exams. Summer 2020 exams were cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the 2019/20 data should not be directly compared to attainment data from previous years for the purposes of measuring changes in pupil performance

Table 16: Service children¹ and non-Service children entering the English Baccalaureate and achieving key grades, England, numbers and percentage

2016 – 2020

		Number of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4	Percentage of pupils entered for all EBacc components	Percentage of pupils who achieved EBacc for all components (grades A*-C/9-4 pass) ²	Percentage of pupils who achieved all EBacc components (grades 9-5 pass in English and maths) ³
2016	Service children	3,662	42.2	25.7	–
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	436,801	42.3	27	–
2017	Service children	3,773	38	22.4	20
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	453,777	40.6	25.9	23.3
2018	Service children	3,805	36.6	23.3	15.6
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	453,559	40.6	26.1	18.2
2019	Service children	4,136	38.1	24.5	15.9
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	462,292	42.5	27.2	18.9
2020 ⁴	Service children	4,347	37.9	29.5	20.8
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	468,989	42.5	32.7	23.6

1. Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record and eligible pupils at the end of KS4. Excludes pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools
2. The 9-4 pass shows pupils who achieved a grade 4 or above in English and mathematics, and is provided alongside the headline measure for transparency and comparability to the old measure
3. From 2017, headline threshold attainment measures use grade 5 for reformed English and mathematics
4. The pupil attainment data for 2020 is based on Centre Assessment Grades rather than exams. Summer 2020 exams were cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the 2019/20 data should not be directly compared to attainment data from previous years for the purposes of measuring changes in student performance

Table 17: Service children¹ and non-Service children Attainment 8 and Progress 8 at end of Key Stage 4, England, average score

2016 – 2020

		Average Attainment 8 score per pupil	Average Progress 8 score	Lower confidence interval for Progress 8	Upper confidence interval for Progress 8
2016 ²	Service children	52.4	0.11	0.08	0.14
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	51.6	0.04	0.03	0.04
2017 ²	Service children	47.8	0.03	0.00	0.07
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	48.0	0.04	0.03	0.04
2018	Service children	48.0	0.00	-0.03	0.04
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	48.3	0.05	0.05	0.06
2019	Service children	48.0	0.00	-0.04	0.04
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	48.6	0.05	0.05	0.06
2020 ³	Service children	52.0	–	–	–
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	52.4	–	–	–

Source: National Pupil Database, KS4 results data

1. Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record and eligible pupils at the end of KS4. Excludes pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools
2. Figures have been revised to include confidence intervals for Progress 8 scores
3. The pupil attainment data for 2020 is based on Centre Assessment Grades rather than exams. Summer 2020 exams were cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the 2019/20 data should not be directly compared to attainment data from previous years for the purposes of measuring changes in student performance. In addition, in response to the changes in grade awarding process, the DfE announced it was not publishing school accountability statistics using 2020 data. Hence, the absence of 2020 Progress 8 data

Table 18: Pupils with English and maths grades 5-9, by number of school moves¹ from years 7 to 11 for Service children and non-FSM, non-Service children, England, percentage

2016/17 – 2019/20

		Number of moves from year 7 – year 11							
		Pupils reported in spring census				% of pupils achieving English and maths grades 9-5			
		0	1	2	3+	0	1	2	3+
2016/17	Service children	71.0	23.7	4.3	1.0	49.8	36.8	27.2	12.5
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	82.6	14.6	2.2	0.6	48.2	36.3	22.7	15.4
2017/18 (revised) ²	Service children	71.2	22.5	5.2	1.1	49.0	35.3	25.7	16.7
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	82.5	14.6	2.4	0.6	48.9	36.3	23.2	14.0
2018/19	Service children	69.5	24.9	4.3	1.3	47.0	37.8	30.5	13.9
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	82.4	14.7	2.3	0.6	49.3	36.1	23.9	13.8
2019/20	Service children	90.9	7.9	1.0	0.2	51.1	32.2	24.4	50.0
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	94.9	4.7	0.4	0.0	53.2	32.0	16.9	13.2

Source: National Pupil Database, KS4 results data

1. Number of school moves between years 7 and 11 for pupils finishing year 11 in the academic year stated
2. Based on revised figures in the National Pupil Database, which may differ slightly from finalised published figures
3. Percentages for moves of 3+ are volatile, based on very small numbers of pupils and conclusions should be treated with caution
4. The pupil attainment data for 2020 is based on Centre Assessment Grades rather than exams. Summer 2020 exams were cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the 2019/20 data should not be directly compared to attainment data from previous years for the purposes of measuring changes in student performance

Table 19: Ofsted rating¹ of schools in England attended by Service children and non-Service children, by region, percentage

June 2021

		Ofsted rating				
		1 (Outstanding)	2 (Good)	3 (Requires Improvement)	4 (Inadequate)	Unavailable ²
England	Service children	16.6	65.2	11.5	3.2	3.6
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	21.8	62.9	10.6	3.8	1
East Midlands	Service children	26.9	61.6	8.5	2.4	0.5
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	17.7	61.4	13.9	5.6	1.4
East of England	Service children	14.0	68.8	11.1	4.3	1.9
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	18.8	65.4	11.3	3.4	1.1
London	Service children	36.4	59.0	3.8	0.5	0.3
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	34.6	57.6	5.2	1.6	1.1
North East	Service children	20.7	60.9	13.1	4.8	0.4
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	21.6	58.5	12.3	6.4	0.9
North West	Service children	19.8	64.3	12.2	3.4	0.3
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	21.5	61.6	11.8	4.3	0.8
South East	Service children	17.6	72.1	8.6	1.0	0.7
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	21.3	69.0	6.9	2.0	0.8

Table continued over

		Ofsted rating				
		1 (Outstanding)	2 (Good)	3 (Requires Improvement)	4 (Inadequate)	Unavailable ²
South West	Service children	12.2	65.0	16.5	4.4	1.9
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	18.1	62.7	13.6	4.7	0.8
West Midlands	Service children	14.6	71.7	11.1	2.3	0.3
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	17.7	64.1	13.3	4.3	0.6
Yorkshire and The Humber	Service children	16.5	65.9	10.7	6.1	0.9
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	19.7	61.2	12.8	5.6	1.2

Source: National Pupil Database, Ofsted June 2020

1. School attended as recorded in Spring Census 2020/21, Ofsted rating as of 31 March 2021 reported in Get Information About Schools. This data may need to be revised, as Ofsted inspection ratings in Get Information About Schools have not yet been updated with changes to the Ofsted methodology published in June 2018 at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/changes-to-ofsted-statistical-reporting-of-inspection-outcomes-for-state-funded-schools-an-analysis-of-the-changes>
2. Includes pupils at schools that are new and have not been inspected. Does not include pupils at MOD overseas schools, which are not subject to Ofsted inspection

NB: Impact of COVID-19: since 17 March 2020, section 5(1) of the Education Act 2005 has been disapplied under the Coronavirus Act 2020. As a result, routine inspections of schools were suspended. Ofsted did, however, carry out some non-routine inspections of schools under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. These included additional monitoring visits to schools judged less than good in the spring term 2021
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/january-2021-maintained-schools-and-academies>

Table 20: Pupil destinations of Service children and non-FSM, non-Service children after completing KS4, state-funded schools in England, percentage

2014/15 – 2018/19

Destination year ¹	Pupil type	Number of eligible pupils	Percentage of eligible pupils					
			Any sustained education or employment	Any sustained education destination	Sustained apprenticeships	Sustained employment destination	Destination not sustained	Activity not captured in the data
2014/15	Service children	3,307	94	88	4	3	4	2
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	474,905	95	88	5	2	4	1
2015/16 ²	Service children	3,482	95	89	4	3	3	1
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	473,879	95	88	5	3	4	1
2016/17	Service children	3,662	96	88	5	3	3	1
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	464,827	95	87	5	3	4	1
2017/18	Service children	3,761	95	88	4	3	3	1
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	455,022	95	88	5	3	4	1

Table continued over

Destination year ¹	Pupil type	Number of eligible pupils	Percentage of eligible pupils					
			Any sustained education or employment	Any sustained education destination	Sustained apprenticeships	Sustained employment destination	Destination not sustained	Activity not captured in the data
2018/19	Service children	3,782	95	87	4	4	4	1
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	453,803	95	88	4	3	4	1

Source: Longitudinal Education Outcomes dataset

Coverage: England state-funded schools³

1. Employment and benefits data from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) from the LEO dataset was included for the first time in 2014/15 and accounted for a one percentage point increase in employment destinations. Direct comparison with previous years' employment estimates should be treated with caution. Education destinations are not affected
2. Self-employment information from HMRC has been included in 2015/16. It accounted for an increase of less than half a percentage point nationally
3. State-funded schools include local authority maintained schools, academies, free schools, city technology colleges, further education colleges with provision for 14- to 16-year-olds, state-funded special schools and non-maintained special schools

Table 21: Student destinations of Service children¹ and non-FSM, non-Service children after 16 to 18 study, percentage
2014/15 – 2018/19

Destination year ²	Pupil type	Number of eligible pupils	Percentage of eligible pupils								
			Any sustained education or employment	Any sustained education destination	Further education (level 3 and below)	Higher education (level 4 and above)	Other education destinations	Sustained apprenticeships	Sustained employment destination	Destination not sustained	Activity not captured in the data
2014/15 ³	Service children	2,000	90	59	9	48	2	6	25	7	3
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	323,773	89	61	10	49	3	6	22	8	3
2015/16 ⁴	Service children	1,987	91	58	9	47	2	7	27	7	2
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	325,386	90	62	8	51	2	6	22	7	3
2016/17 ⁵	Service children	2,211	90	57	7	47	3	7	26	8	2
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	337,111	89	61	7	51	3	7	22	7	4
2017/18 ^{6,7}	Service children	2,500	90	54	7	46	2	8	27	8	3
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	345,791	88	57	6	49	2	7	24	8	4

Table continued over

Destination year ²	Pupil type	Number of eligible pupils	Percentage of eligible pupils								Activity not captured in the data
			Any sustained education or employment	Any sustained education destination	Further education (level 3 and below)	Higher education (level 4 and above)	Other education destinations	Sustained apprenticeships	Sustained employment destination	Destination not sustained	
2018/19	Service children	2,409	91	55	5	48	3	6	30	7	2
	Non-FSM, non-Service children	321,006	89	58	5	51	2	7	24	8	4

Source: Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset

Coverage: England mainstream schools and colleges

1. Service child status was determined by looking across three academic year cohorts before students reached the end of 16 to 18 study. The majority of them would have been at the end of Key Stage 4 study two years prior
2. Employment and benefits data from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) from the LEO dataset have increased coverage and estimates of employment substantially from 2014/15
3. From 2014/15, data on employment, training and NEET from the NCCIS dataset is not included, as local authorities are no longer required to collect for young people aged 18 or over. Removal of NCCIS data means there is a small break in the time series and comparison with previous years should be treated with caution. However, the impact is small as almost all employment destinations are available in LEO data

Notes continued over

4. From 2015/16, self-employment information from HMRC has been included. At the national level, the inclusion of this data will not impact on the employment destinations. Among colleges, there will be an expected increase of around one percentage point in overall employment destinations compared to the national average. HE alternative provider data has also been included. This data is collected on UK domiciled students attending non-mainstream (independent) HE institutions in England that provide designated undergraduate courses funding by the Student Loan Company (SLC). This data was collected by HESA for the first time in 2014/15
 5. In 2016/17 the KS5 cohort has changed. From 2015/16, only students who entered approved level 3 qualifications (designated as academic, applied general or tech level) are included and there are some changes to how students and qualifications are counted
 Altogether around 6,000 more students are included than last year, an increase of 1.7%. The impact is expected to be small but the exclusion of some students entering unapproved vocational qualifications and the inclusion of some students entering qualifications worth only one AS level in size at level 3 may have affected the change in destinations seen between years
 There may also be very small changes to HE destinations due to a different algorithm used in the matching of the 2016/17 which resulted in lower match rates for young people treated as overseas or Scottish domiciled
 6. In 2017/18 there were further changes to the 16 to 18 cohort of level 3 students. From this year, the cohort includes students who left their institutions up to two years before being deemed to have reached the end of 16 to 18 study. Development analysis has shown that this group of students is much less likely to continue in education than those who stayed in education up to the end of 16 to 18 study. Partially as a result of these changes, the overall rate of progression to education for the level 3 group has decreased
 7. The data shows how many students took any level 3 qualification in the destination years 2017/18 and 2018/19. As a result, the value for destination year 2017/18 will be slightly different to what was presented last year. Last year's value was based on only students who completed an approved level 3 qualification. This year's data has examined how many students have taken any level 3 qualification and due to changes in which qualifications are counted as approved or unapproved, presenting all level 3 for the past two years makes the data more comparable. Data prior to 2016-17 covers just students who completed mainly level 3 approved qualifications. As such, comparisons across years should be treated with caution
- Change in time series due to change in methodology, see footnote 7

Table 22: Pupil destinations of Service children and non-Service children after completing secondary level education, percentage

2018/19 – 2019/20

Year	Pupil type	Number of eligible pupils	Percentage of eligible pupils	
			Higher or further education	Other ¹
2018/19	Service children	20	75	25
	Non-Service children	21,601	75	25
2019/20	Service children	33	73	27
	Non-Service children	20,689	77	23

Source: Department of Education, Northern Ireland

Coverage: Northern Ireland

1. Includes those who went into employment, training, unemployed, or failed to disclose their future destination
Categories have been combined to reduce the risk of disclosure

Table 23: UK Armed Forces personnel satisfied with opportunities to gain civilian accreditation,¹ estimated percentage

2012 – 2021

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Satisfied	46	43	42	47	48	46	47	48	48	49

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2021

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

1. Relates only to Service training courses and not training received prior to leaving the Services (resettlement training)
2. Minor wording change in 2011

Table 24: UK Armed Forces personnel satisfied with opportunities for personal development, estimated percentage
2012 – 2021

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Satisfied	54	52	52	57	57	54	55	57	58	59

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2021

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

1. Minor wording change in 2011

Table 25: UK Armed Forces personnel who used the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) and were employed within six months of leaving the Armed Forces, estimated percentage

2010/11 – 2019/20

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Employment rate	85	85	83	83	85	80	82	84	86	84

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

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

- 2010/11-2014/15 – Estimated from a 20% sample of those who used billable Career Transition Partnership services
- Break in time series. Service leavers prior to 1 October 2015 who used the CTP Future Horizons programme were excluded from analysis. Since 1 October 2015, all Service leavers who have used a billable CTP service have been included
- Break in time series. The 2016/17 FY is the first year in which all Service leavers who used a billable CTP service have been followed up. This, coupled with changes to the methodology, means that comparisons with previous years are not possible

Table 26: UK Armed Forces personnel and families satisfied with the standard of Service accommodation, estimated percentage

2012 – 2021

		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
UK Armed Forces personnel	Service Family Accommodation	56	57	60	57	50	46	51	51	51	53
	Single Living Accommodation	55	56	56	58	55	50	49	52	49	51
Service families	Service Family Accommodation	..	..	..	63	53	57	57	57	56	54

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2021 and Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) 2021

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

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

1. AFCAS: Service Family Accommodation: minor wording change 2013 and 2015
2. AFCAS: Single Living Accommodation: minor wording change 2012, 2013 and 2015; comparative analysis has indicated that a change to the wording of the response options in 2011 has resulted in some respondents ticking 'SFA – inside the base/camp' when they should have ticked 'SLA of any type'. Therefore, no reliable figures can be given for 2011
3. AFCAS: Excludes N/A and 'Don't know'
4. AFCAS: Relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Single Living Accommodation; excludes those living in Substitute Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Single Living Accommodation
5. FAMCAS: Responses are filtered for those respondents who live in Service Family Accommodation or Substitute Service Family Accommodation, and answered the questions, and did not answer 'Don't know' [56% in 2021]
6. FAMCAS: Comparisons with years prior to 2015 are not possible. This question was introduced in 2015 to bring it in line with AFCAS
7. FAMCAS: Only relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Service Family Accommodation
- .. Represents data unavailable

Table 27: UK Armed Forces personnel and families satisfied with response to maintenance request (Service accommodation), estimated percentage

2012 – 2021

		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
UK Armed Forces personnel	Service Family Accommodation	46	46	46	42	32	28	29	33	37	38
	Single Living Accommodation	39	35	36	38	33	28	26	30	30	33
Service families	Service Family Accommodation	..	..	..	45	32	34	35	41	37	38

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2021 and Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) 2021

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

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

1. AFCAS: New questions in 2011
2. AFCAS: Minor wording change in 2012, 2013 and 2015
3. AFCAS: Excludes N/A and 'Don't know'
4. AFCAS: Relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Single Living Accommodation; excludes those living in Substitute Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Single Living Accommodation
5. FAMCAS: Responses are filtered for those respondents who live in Service Family Accommodation or Substitute Service Family Accommodation, and answered the questions, and did not answer 'Don't know' [56% in 2021]
6. FAMCAS: Comparisons with years prior to 2015 are not possible. This question was introduced in 2015 to bring it in line with AFCAS
7. FAMCAS: Only relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Service Family Accommodation
- .. Represents data unavailable

Table 28: UK Armed Forces personnel and families satisfied with quality of maintenance service (Service accommodation), estimated percentage

2012 – 2021

		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
UK Armed Forces personnel	Service Family Accommodation	56	57	60	57	50	46	51	51	51	53
	Single Living Accommodation	55	56	56	58	55	50	49	52	49	51
Service families	Service Family Accommodation	..	..	..	63	53	57	57	57	56	54

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2020 and Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) 2021

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

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

1. AFCAS: New questions in 2011
2. AFCAS: Minor wording change in 2012, 2013 and 2015
3. AFCAS: Excludes N/A and 'Don't know'
4. AFCAS: Relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Single Living Accommodation; excludes those living in Substitute Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Single Living Accommodation
5. FAMCAS: Responses are filtered for those respondents who live in Service Family Accommodation or Substitute Service Family Accommodation, and answered the questions, and did not answer 'Don't know' [56% in 2021]
6. FAMCAS: Comparisons with years prior to 2015 are not possible. This question was introduced in 2015 to bring it in line with AFCAS
7. FAMCAS: Only relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Service Family Accommodation
- .. Represents data unavailable

Table 29: UK Armed Forces personnel and families satisfied with value for money of Service accommodation, estimated percentage

2012 – 2021

		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
UK Armed Forces personnel	Service Family Accommodation	56	57	60	57	50	46	51	51	51	53
	Single Living Accommodation	55	56	56	58	55	50	49	52	49	51
Service families	Service Family Accommodation	..	..	..	63	53	57	57	57	56	54

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2021 and Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) 2021

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

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

1. AFCAS: Minor wording change in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015
2. AFCAS: Excludes N/A and 'Don't know'
3. AFCAS: Relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Single Living Accommodation; excludes those living in Substitute Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Single Living Accommodation
4. FAMCAS: Responses are filtered for those respondents who live in Service Family Accommodation or Substitute Service Family Accommodation, and answered the questions, and did not answer 'Don't know' [56% in 2021]
5. FAMCAS: Comparisons with years prior to 2015 are not possible. This question was introduced in 2015 to bring it in line with AFCAS
6. FAMCAS: Only relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Service Family Accommodation
- .. Represents data unavailable

Table 30: New social housing lettings to UK Armed Forces serving and veteran population¹ and non-veterans in England, length of time in local authority prior to new social housing letting, number and estimated percentage

2016/17 – 2019/20

Length of time in local authority prior to allocation	2016/17			2017/18			2018/19			2019/20		
	UK Armed Forces serving and veteran population		non-UK Armed Forces population	UK Armed Forces serving and veteran population		non-UK Armed Forces population	UK Armed Forces serving and veteran population		non-UK Armed Forces population	UK Armed Forces serving and veteran population		non-UK Armed Forces population
	Serving or left within the past five years	Left more than five years ago		Serving or left within the past five years	Left more than five years ago		Serving or left within the past five years	Left more than five years ago		Serving or left within the past five years	Left more than five years ago	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
New to local authority	17.3	13.4	9.7	21.2	14.9	11.1	20.3	13.8	9.8	16.6	12.4	8.5
Less than 1 year	6.9	4.5	5.4	9.6	4.5	4.9	9.1	4.9	5.7	9.5	5.4	6.4
1-2 years	7.2	4.3	5.0	6.9	3.0	4.1	8.0	6.2	7.6	6.9	4.0	5.7
2-3 years	13.7	9.0	10.1	5.1	2.1	3.2	5.2	2.4	3.5	5.1	2.7	3.5
3-4 years				4.4	2.8	3.3	3.6	2.5	2.8	3.2	2.6	3.2
4-5 years				2.6	3.2	3.3	5.2	3.9	4.8	4.2	2.9	4.1

Table continued over

Length of time in local authority prior to allocation	2016/17			2017/18			2018/19			2019/20		
	UK Armed Forces serving and veteran population		non-UK Armed Forces population	UK Armed Forces serving and veteran population		non-UK Armed Forces population	UK Armed Forces serving and veteran population		non-UK Armed Forces population	UK Armed Forces serving and veteran population		non-UK Armed Forces population
	Serving or left within the past five years	Left more than five years ago		Serving or left within the past five years	Left more than five years ago		Serving or left within the past five years	Left more than five years ago		Serving or left within the past five years	Left more than five years ago	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
More than 5 years	55.0	68.8	69.9	50.2	69.6	70.1	48.5	66.3	65.8	54.4	70.1	68.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	760	4,230	173,710	550	2,480	147,840	820	3,490	221,040	770	3,030	214,070

Source: CORE Social Housing Lettings 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20, DLUHC

1. Has previously served in the UK Armed Forces
2. Sample is presented at household level
3. Any discrepancies in totals are due to rounding

Table 31: UK Service population¹ and non-Service population in England, length of time on waiting list for current social housing/accommodation, estimated percentage

2015/16 – 2019/20

Length of time on waiting list prior to allocation	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
	Service population and families	Non-Service population and families	Service population and families	Non-Service population and families	Service population and families	Non-Service population and families	Service population and families	Non-Service population and families	Service population and families	Non-Service population and families
Less than 6 months	57.9	56.3	67.8	52.9	69.1	57.2	54.6	59.8	68.2	55.4
6 months – 1 year	14.6	13.3	15.2	16.6	8.5	15.2	17.4	12.5	16.7	14.9
1-2 years	8.1	10.3	6.5	10.1	6.1	9.5	7.7	9.6	7.6	8.7
2-3 years	6.6	5.9	2.1	7.3	3.2	5.4	4.7	5.4	u	6.4
3-5 years	3.7	6.2	3.4	5.2	4.3	6.2	5.0	6.1	3.5	5.9
More than 5 years	9.1	8.0	5.0	7.9	8.7	6.5	10.7	6.6	2.4	8.7
Total	100	100	100.0	100.0	100	100	100	100	100	100
Sample size²	303	4,653	259	4,140	271	4,485	289	4,288	199	4,394

Source: English Housing Survey 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20, full household sample

1. Has served or were currently serving in the Armed Forces
2. Sample is presented at individual rather than household level
3. Excludes those at address for 10 years or more
4. u indicates sample size too small for reliable estimate

Table 32: UK Service population¹ and non-Service population in England, satisfaction with social rented sector,² estimated percentage

2017/18 – 2019/20

Satisfaction with social rented sector		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
		Service population and families	Non-Service population and families	Service population and families	Non-Service population and families	Service population and families	Non-Service population and families
Satisfaction with accommodation	Satisfied	80.1	76.6	81.2	78.8	81.3	73.1
	Sample size ³	466	5,953	457	5,808	319	5,411
Satisfaction with tenure	Satisfied	76.5	80.3	83.0	80.9	85.7	76.8
	Sample size ³	453	6,311	482	5,983	330	5,676
Satisfaction with area	Satisfied	85.4	79.3	83.2	80.3	84.4	75.9
	Sample size ³	467	6,148	470	5,919	320	5,626
Satisfaction with repairs/maintenance	Satisfied	62.0	62.0	70.9	63.8	69.8	61.8
	Sample size ³	381	4,938	399	4,706	259	4,530

Source: English Housing Survey 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20, full household sample

1. Has served or were currently serving in the Armed Forces
2. All social renters
3. Sample is presented at individual rather than household level

Table 33: UK Service population¹ and non-Service population in England, satisfaction with private rented sector, estimated percentage

2017/18 – 2019/20

Satisfaction with social rented sector		2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
		Service population and families	Non-Service population and families	Service population and families	Non-Service population and families	Service population and families	Non-Service population and families
Satisfaction with accommodation	Satisfied	81.5	81.4	78.0	82.8	78.0	81.7
	Sample size ²	268	4,498	299	4,682	233	4,478
Satisfaction with tenure	Satisfied	69.1	67.4	61.6	66.6	67.4	69.0
	Sample size ²	222	4,498	228	3,807	218	3,723
Satisfaction with area	Satisfied	88.1	85.6	90.8	86.3	81.9	83.5
	Sample size ²	272	4,657	322	4,866	251	4,594
Satisfaction with repairs/maintenance	Satisfied	58.7	72.8	73.8	71.4	64.8	74.5
	Sample size ²	324	3,903	273	3,966	204	3,958

Source: English Housing Survey 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20, full household sample

1. Has served or were currently serving in the Armed Forces
2. Sample is presented at individual rather than household level

Table 34: Former Armed Forces status for households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness in Scotland, number and percentage

2010/11 – 2020/21

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number	1,006	894	795	772	741	690	742	828	801	670
Percentage	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.5	2.7	2.6	2.0

Source: Scottish Government

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2020-2021/>

Coverage: Scotland

