

Report of the Task Force on the Military Covenant

September 2010

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Summary of key recommendations

1. Armed Forces Community Covenant

The Community Covenant has its roots in a successful US scheme in which states and towns (incorporating local government and local service providers, the voluntary sector and private companies) voluntarily pledge support for the ‘Armed Forces family’ (including Service personnel, veterans and their respective families, including the bereaved) in their area.

Who could pledge support to the Community Covenant?

- **Local Authorities** (including **county councils**) would provide an ideal focus, depending on local needs (for example, in some areas the regional military structure might work more effectively with county councils; in other areas Local Authorities might be a more appropriate focus). There is nothing to stop a county and a town within that county both pledging support, as in the US.
- **Private companies** could also pledge to work with Local Authorities or sign up individually to offer benefits or services to the military community.
- Community Covenants also provide a framework for **charities** to cooperate with each other, and with the public and private sector, at the local level.
- **Individuals** would be encouraged to show their support as part of the Community Covenant – for example by volunteering to work with a charity, organising events, or making donations.

How could communities be encouraged to get involved?

- It could in principle be possible to **impose a duty** on Local Authorities to make provisions under the Community Covenant. However, the example of the US, and of existing civil-military partnerships in the UK, shows that a **voluntary scheme** can be equally, if not more, effective.
- **Public commitment** (via a pledging ceremony or similar) creates pressure to meet obligations and raises public awareness, encouraging community groups and individuals to take part.
- **Potential benefits** to civilian authorities, companies and charities include: better targeting of resources; sharing facilities and land; good publicity and ongoing good news coverage. Meeting obligations to the military community **should not impose significant costs** on local government.
- **Existing examples** of civil-military partnerships in the UK and of **public support for the military** demonstrate the potential of the Community Covenant to gain local support and improve life for the local Armed Forces community.

Central government role

- Support could come in a number of forms, depending on the level of central government participation deemed necessary. Given the scope for local variations in the adoption and delivery, central government’s role in promoting the “key ingredients” of a Community Covenant could be particularly valuable. Examples could include: provision of a **Community Covenant** template document for organisations to pledge to; **guidance** on key areas of priority (such as disregarding compensation payments for means testing); a central **Community Covenant website** (to link to news stories and information about local schemes); issuing of **formal scroll/certification** or **logo** for businesses; organisation/funding for formal **pledging ceremonies**; funding to cover any **initial start-up costs** (though these should be minimal). Funding might not be available from central government but sponsorship could be sought from private companies or charities.

The Task Force sees Community Covenants as a framework for providing much of the support needed by Service personnel and their families, although we have also identified a number of other low-cost measures which could improve support for serving regulars, reservists, and families (including the bereaved).

2. Recognition for the Armed Forces Family

Policy options

- Veterans' Privilege Card – funded by charitable funding, charging users, or updating Service ID cards.
- Service Families' Card – similar to above, although uses (such as access to military bases) could vary.
- Army Reservists' ID cards – these would be similar to Service ID cards used by Regulars. Charging is not a practical option, as the cards would need to be the property of the MOD.

Rationale

Veterans' Privilege Cards and Service Families Cards would allow veterans and Service families to identify themselves to service providers and to claim any discounts offered by private companies under the Community Covenant. A more secure chip-and-pin card could also allow veterans internet access to online pension details, and could enable access to bases at the discretion of commanding officers. This also applies to Service families. Some Army Reservists have no formal means of identifying their status between deployments, and a Reservist ID card would allow this.

3. Explore options for increasing home ownership among Service families

Policy options

- Encouraging home ownership is a long-term aspiration, and in particular is difficult to achieve while mobility forms a central part of Service life. Most options involve upfront costs, while reduced reliance on Service accommodation would generate cashable savings only when pockets of estate were vacated and could be handed back.
- Options recommended for further exploration include: enhancing accommodation allowances; expanding a pilot shared equity scheme (launched in January 2010 and funds for the first year have been fully taken up); exploring options for boosting take-up of the Government's low cost home ownership programme "HomeBuy", including raising awareness; encouraging a bank or banks to offer favourable mortgage rates to Service personnel. The Task Force suggests holding a PM/Chancellor-chaired summit of major banks at No. 10 to explore this last option further.

Rationale

Service Families Accommodation (SFA) costs around £285m per annum; some of this accommodation is in poor condition, and the cost of upgrading these 50,000 homes is substantial. Encouraging families to move into home ownership would benefit the families by giving them a foot on the housing ladder, and family stability for education, healthcare, partner's career, etc. This would generate savings to the MOD in the long term.

4. Veterans' policy and coordination of veterans' charities

Policy options

- A Veterans' Commissioner or Champion, to act as the champion of veterans and guide veterans' policy (possibly operating through a department external to the MOD such as the Cabinet Office). The Commissioner or Champion could be supported by a cross-departmental advisory committee including representatives of charities.
- Separately from this, options for better coordination of veterans' charities include:
 - Services and Veterans' Charities Advisory Board (SVCAB) responsible for determining priorities for veterans (possibly based on the existing Central Advisory

- Committee on pensions and compensation within the MOD. This could report to a Commissioner (or Champion), if such an option were pursued, or could stand alone.
- A framework for coordinating the activities of veterans' charities (as is provided by Veterans Scotland). This could be coordinated by the suggested SVCAB.
 - A "shopping list" of areas of greatest need could be compiled to help guide charities on how their funding could best be directed. (Possibly compiled by the suggested SVCAB or Commissioner/Champion, although other options should be explored.)
 - Local coordination of charities through the Community Covenant.

Rationale

- There is some contradiction between the MOD's principal aim of delivering military capability and the task of administering veterans' welfare services, and the Task Force has found widespread stakeholder support for a Veterans' Commissioner or similar.
- Collectively the numerous Service charities have considerable resources and many offer excellent support, particularly to veterans. However, the sheer diversity of the sector can cause confusion and there is concern that their full resources are not currently being tapped. Charities' activities can be determined by their own priorities rather than the needs of veterans.

5. Education throughout Service career

Policy options

- Support for Service personnel in career planning, through a clear, and jargon-free personnel strategy.
- Build more personal responsibility into service life to improve the self-reliance of personnel at little or no additional cost.
- Ongoing formal education during military training, including making Service personnel aware of existing schemes and providing more options at an earlier stage of a service career.
- 'Life skills' training throughout service (as opposed to concentrating training at the end of a career). Some Service personnel have little knowledge of everyday tasks such as opening and managing a bank account, securing housing, understanding benefits, or drawing up a will.

Rationale

Those who are well educated in service both stay longer, giving better returns on their training, and are better prepared for their transition to civilian life.

6. Strengthening links between civilians and the military

Policy options

- Covenant or Chief of Defence Staff Commendation – for those institutions and individuals outside the service who do outstanding work for the military community.
- Greater community engagement by the military – encouraging civic participation; greater sharing of facilities; encouraging the military to talk about experiences.
- Increase the visibility of the Armed Forces – building on Armed Forces Day and encouraging homecoming parades and open days.
- Encouraging wider cultural engagement – such as 'War Story', and Imperial War Museum Project; theatre productions such as The Great Game; and stronger links with universities.

Rationale

Public awareness of the work of the services has increased enormously, and there is widespread sympathy for the losses of life and limb sustained by those who serve. However, sympathy does not generate understanding. Many people in Britain have little or no contact with the Armed Forces and have little understanding of military life. There is a need to build on public support to create a greater and more enduring understanding.

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Introduction

The Military Covenant Task Force was asked by the Prime Minister **to develop a series of innovative, low-cost policy ideas to help rebuild the Military Covenant**. The Task Force has focused in particular on **ways of involving charities, private companies and civil society more widely** in supporting Service personnel, veterans and their families. The work of the Task Force represents only part of the Government's work on rebuilding the covenant, and is intended to supplement, rather than to replace or pre-empt, the work being undertaken on the Military Covenant by the Ministry of Defence as part of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR).

The terms of reference of the Task Force are given in annex A. Its composition was approved at the meeting of the External Reference Group (ERG) of the Service Personnel Command Paper (SPCP) held at the Cabinet Office on 12 July 2010. The Task Force was asked to report to the ERG's next meeting, scheduled for 16 September 2010. Consultation was conducted as widely as possible through focus groups, one-to-one meetings, email exchanges and visits. However, the priority of the Task Force was to generate innovative policy ideas within a short time frame, and these form the primary focus of the report. Many of the proposals here are at an early stage of development and would require further exploration to determine practicality and cost. A list of those consulted is given at annex B.

Part 1 of the report gives an overview of the main issues and introduces the **Armed Forces Community Covenant**, the key approach suggested by the Task Force to enable central and local government, charities and society more widely to join together to support the 'Armed Forces Family.' For the purposes of this paper, this consists of serving personnel, veterans, reservists and their respective families, including the bereaved.

The approach adopted in the rest of the report is to follow the Service personnel through their careers into retirement – 'from cradle to grave'. For all but a very few, a service career is not a full career, in that he or she will probably go on to other forms of employment after the Armed Forces. It is therefore important to integrate the steps in a military career, so that each stage helps prepare for the next, and so ensures both a better return on service and a more successful transition to civilian life and ultimately retirement, not only for those serving but also for their families. The report attempts to combine innovative policy ideas with a long-term perspective.

Three big themes emerge from this report:

The first big theme is local partnerships. Serving personnel and their families live alongside civilian communities, and both they and their Local Authorities are proud of that fact and anxious to foster the relationship for their mutual benefit. The most effective delivery of support to and recognition of veterans is also at the local level, within the community of which he or she is a member. And it is here too that the public can move on from sympathy for those who have been wounded in service to begin to understand and empathise with those who are serving and who have served.

The second is the importance of education.¹ Those who are well educated in service both stay longer, giving better returns on their training, and are better prepared for their transition to civilian life. Education is also the tool by which the general public who have no direct experience of the services can understand them, converting their sympathy, which is abundant, into empathy, which

¹ Education offered by the MOD is discussed in section 3.1.

is not. In particular there is an opportunity to promote greater understanding of the Armed Forces in schools (without specifically focusing on recruitment).

The third theme is communication. Those who are serving are too often not fully aware of the rights which they already possess or the opportunities which are open to them. Those who have left the services find themselves in the same position to an even greater extent. Communication is also the means by which to promote a wider understanding of the services.

1. The Military Covenant

1.1 Definition

The Military Covenant was coined as a term in 2000, although some would argue that its inherent obligations date back much further.² The meanings attached to the Military Covenant, when used by the press, have stretched from the need to observe appropriate intervals between operational tours to the speedy provision of up-to-date and sufficient equipment. The Ministry of Defence has been working on a definition of the Military Covenant as part of the SDSR, and it is outside the remit of the Task Force to offer its own. The Task Force has also taken the view that directly operational matters are beyond its remit. We consider that the Military Covenant rests on three reciprocal relationships, which together have provided us with a working definition:

1. **The covenant between the Government and its Armed Forces:** the former expects the latter to carry out their duties in defence of the state to the best of their abilities, up to and including the possibility of death in action. In return the Armed Forces expect that they and their immediate dependants will be cared for and supported both during and after service.
2. **The covenant between the nation and its Armed Forces:** the nation should respect, honour and endorse the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces on its behalf. This must be a two-way relationship, and just as the Armed Forces expect the nation to recognise their 'right to be different', so they must respect the values of the society that they represent and defend.
3. **The covenant within the command chain:** for most serving personnel across all three services, their immediate commanders are the pivot of the Military Covenant and are responsible for its delivery. It is therefore the duty of these commanders – including relatively junior leaders – to know its provisions.

So far the Military Covenant has been part specifically of the Army's doctrine, not of those of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. Given the intention to extend the Covenant to all three services, the term Armed Forces Covenant has been suggested as a more inclusive term. Its precise title is not a matter on which the Task Force has strong views, but in this report we generally use the more familiar and publicly recognised term, the Military Covenant.

1.2 Aim

The Military Covenant should endorse the values which generate fighting power, it should buttress morale, not least by supporting the families and dependants of those who serve, and it should sustain those who have been through the ordeals of warfare. Ensuring the welfare of Service personnel is an end in itself, but it is also the means of ensuring operational effectiveness. Although service welfare is the responsibility of the chain of command, it must also be a matter for welfare professionals such as doctors, dentists, teachers, social workers and psychologists both in the services and in society as a whole.

² On the history of the Military Covenant, see 'Audit of the Military Covenant', a report for the Directorate of Army Personnel Strategy, by Dr Helen McCartney, September 2007. A full list of reports and publications consulted in the production of this report is at annex C.

1.3 Citizenship or citizenship-plus?

This report has been guided by three main principles:

1. **“Equality of opportunity”**. The SPCP, published by the previous government in July 2008, noted that ‘the essential starting point is that those who serve must not be disadvantaged by virtue of what they do’.³ The Task Force has used this principle of “social justice” as a starting point.
2. **“Special treatment” where appropriate**. In some areas, for example when individuals have been seriously injured through service, the case for special treatment (such as the existing policy of issuing free digital hearing aids for some hearing-impaired veterans) is unarguable. In other areas, the Task Force has assumed that it is not the role of the government to provide special privileges for Service personnel across the board. At the same time, we welcome opportunities for individuals and businesses to show their support for the Armed Forces through offering discretionary discounts or services.
3. **Enduring support**. At the moment the Armed Forces enjoy massive public support and sympathy. There is an opportunity to harness these to strengthen the Military Covenant, while ensuring that any measures put in place are robust and endure if and when the public profile of the Armed Forces diminishes.

1.4 A new approach to Service welfare: the Armed Forces Community Covenant

The SPCP in 2008 focused on achieving cross-government delivery of public services. Effective interdepartmental relationships have been established, and each of the key departments has an Armed Forces Advocate. The devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales have also proved very effective in improving the delivery of public services to the Armed Forces. It is worth noting that in Northern Ireland, the unique security situation influences all aspects of service life in the province. Although it is no longer classified as an operational theatre, there have been more than 30 terrorist attacks this year. Lack of political will means that slower progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of the SPCP than on the mainland. Therefore, Service personnel based there are disadvantaged more than their contemporaries elsewhere.

The Coalition government has made it clear that it wishes to build on the achievements of the SPCP, not to replace them. However, there remains a need for greater engagement and understanding at the local level. Different areas of the UK have different populations and different needs. Some communities have a high concentration of serving personnel while others have a low serving population but may have high numbers of veterans, family members or reservists who will need support of a different kind. Some issues may be specific to particular areas and are therefore difficult to resolve centrally. A “one-size-fits-all” approach can only go so far in addressing these diverse needs. The focus of the Task Force has been to ensure that local areas are able to develop a strategy for providing services appropriate to the Service and veterans communities in their area, with support and guidance from central government. This approach is exemplified by the strong links between the military community, Local Authorities and charities which have been built in some areas with a large military presence (box 3 outlines how this works in practice in Hampshire).

Furthermore, the rights outlined in the SPCP are often poorly understood by the Service personnel themselves. As a starting point, a title which included reference to the Military or Armed Forces Covenant would make the intention clear. The Task Force has focused on measures which can be easily communicated and which will make it easier for the Armed Forces Family to access the support they need. The command chain must play a role in the communication of rights, and understanding those rights is also an obligation for those who serve.

³ *The Nation’s Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans*, para. 1.7.

The Task Force’s proposed approach for combining these requirements – building on existing progress while empowering local areas and improving awareness and understanding of the military – is the **Armed Forces Community Covenant**. The Community Covenant has its roots in a successful US scheme in which states and towns (incorporating local government and local service providers, the voluntary sector and private companies) voluntarily pledge support for the military community in their area. Support could come in a number of forms, depending on the level of central government participation deemed necessary. Given the scope for local variations in the adoption and delivery, central government’s role in promoting the “key ingredients” of a Community Covenant could be particularly valuable. The Departments of both Health and Education have already acknowledged that the Community Covenant will present them with further opportunities for engagement with the Armed Forces at the local level.

Box 1: Case study: Community Covenants in the USA

- The United States’ **Army Community Covenant scheme** was announced by the Secretary of the Army in October 2007, and the first official signing took place at Fort Benning, Georgia, in April 2008. It is an Army programme, but is informally extended to the other services.⁴
- States, towns and communities sign up at a **formal “pledging ceremony,”** of which more than 450 have been held so far in 48 states, three territories and Washington D.C. The ceremony represents a public display of support by community leaders to the military community.
- National programme:
 - ✓ **Army OneSource** – a single portal for advice on accessing healthcare, housing and family services, including contact details. A user-friendly interface allows users to search by location for military services and charities close to them.
 - ✓ **USA 4 Military Families** – a Department of Defense programme to develop state-military partnerships and to educate state policymakers, charities and businesses about the needs of the military community. Provides a list of “**top 10 quality of life issues**” for the military community (such as childcare, careers for spouses and school disruption) as a guide to meeting their needs.
 - ✓ **National Resource Directory (NRD)** – online tool for Service personnel, veterans and families. Provides links to services and resources at national, state and local levels, including government agencies, charities and community groups.
- Local/community programmes: The central website provides examples of best practice for individual states and links to external websites provided by states, counties and towns. There is detailed information about the wide range of benefits (including scholarships and tax exemptions) available to the military community in that state, and a list of useful resources in that area (such as dentists, medical care and legal advice).
- For example, Community Covenant provisions in New York state include:
 - ✓ The Long Island **Warriors to Work initiative** to help veterans start new civilian careers.
 - ✓ The **Patriot Plan**, a package of benefits for Service personnel resident in New York state.
 - ✓ A **programme of financial assistance** for financial emergencies and small business hardships due to deployment (provided by the NY National Guard Family Readiness Council).
 - ✓ **Free Empire Passports** for New York State Parks for personnel called to federal/state active duty following 9/11.

We propose three main strands for the UK Community Covenant:

- **Local government and public services.** Community Covenants would allow each local authority to pledge its support to the military community but to meet its obligations in its own way rather than relying on central government prescriptions, so ensuring that services are appropriate for the needs of each community. The precise form this support would take would vary between areas. However, successful initiatives already operating around the UK highlight the potential of closer local links between civilian agencies and the military and suggest ways in which the Community Covenant might operate. Examples include:

⁴ Tanya Armour: “The British Military Covenant: Myth or Reality?”, unpublished dissertation, Royal College of Defence Studies, 2010

- Four Local Authorities (Fife, Hampshire, Kent and Wigan)⁵ currently take part in the MOD's Welfare Pathway pilot programme. The pathway aims to make it easier for the Armed Forces Family to access the help and support available from the MOD, statutory providers and the voluntary sector, by raising awareness of entitlement. Each authority has appointed an Armed Forces Community Champion, who plays a similar role to that of Armed Forces Advocates in central government but at a local level.
- The Firm Base programme, adopted by the Army's regional brigades, has begun to build strong partnerships between local government and the military. 145 Brigade in Hampshire, with 37,000 Service personnel, coordinates its Firm Base programme with two additional members of staff (see box 3). Representatives from the three Armed Forces meet regularly as part of Scotland's Firm Base Forum, in which the Scottish Government also participates.
- All Health Boards and National Health Service (NHS) Trusts in Wales and all NHS Boards in Scotland have a nominated champion for the Armed Forces and Veterans.⁶
- In England Armed Forces (Health) Networks are being developed. These are led by Strategic Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts, embracing General Practitioners, Defence Medical Services, service charities and others. Each region will develop its Network to reflect the needs of its local Armed Forces, families and veterans populations. For example, the Network in place for the South-West Region of England, which has a significant Armed Forces footprint, has a wide range of members including those representing families. It is intended to link them to Welfare Pathway Pilots in future. We commend the best practice that is emerging from the Armed Forces Networks. There are comparable initiatives underway in Scotland and Wales.
- **Local businesses.** Following the US model, under the Community Covenant local companies would be able to offer discounts to Service personnel, veterans and their families, and to provide services suited to the needs of the military community. What could be offered would be at the discretion of the individual companies pledging their support for the Community Covenant. The "**Heroes Welcome**" scheme, launched by the South Bay Traders Association in Scarborough, demonstrates the appetite for this: it is supported by leading hotels, restaurants and other attractions in the town, and offers discounts, service upgrades or acknowledgement to British Service personnel and their families. From modest beginnings "Heroes Welcome" has been taken up by other towns and cities across the UK. The Task Force has encountered several other examples of companies which already offer benefits to the military community or have expressed a willingness to help, and has identified a number of areas where involvement of businesses has been or could be beneficial. For example:
 - Help with legal advice. Some Service personnel still do not complete a will before going on operations, while others complete only a basic service will which can cause difficulties should the worst happen, particularly for those with complicated family arrangements. Professional advice is also required on setting up an enduring power of attorney. Encouragingly, some local solicitors are already offering discounts to Service personnel to help them make legal provisions before they go on active service. This service could be offered more widely under the Community Covenant.

⁵ North Yorkshire and Wales Welfare Pathways have not yet been formally launched.

⁶ This is coordinated through an Expert Group on the Needs of the Armed Forces in Wales, chaired by the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, and including representatives of the three Services, Families Federations and the charities.

- **Financial management.** Service leavers are often ill-prepared for managing their own bank account, paying bills and managing debts (see section 3.1.4). In the past, some private sector providers, including Standard Life Trust and Barclays Trust, have offered training in financial management to Service personnel to help better prepare them for the transition to civilian life. Preliminary discussions suggest they are keen to continue doing so in future. The MOD should consider development of an engagement strategy with the financial services sector to ensure that any offers of financial training are complementary to those already in existence.
- **Insurance products.** Service Group Life Insurance provides life cover to include operational deployments. However, the unique nature of service life can cause problems in obtaining other standard insurance products (for example, it can be difficult to find holiday insurance which covers cancellations due to short notice deployment). There is scope for businesses to develop an all-inclusive insurance product for Service personnel.
- **Employment for families.** Employer cooperation could be sought in helping Armed Forces family members to find jobs. Larger employers could assist by allowing family members to transfer between branches within the UK (for example Tesco already offers this to all its employees). Such arrangements already exist for military spouses employed by the MOD, consideration should be given to extending this across the rest of the Civil Service.
- **Discounted driving lessons and car hire.** Many Service spouses and partners live in rural areas where public transport provision can be inadequate. Local car sharing schemes such as Streetcar, or discounted driving lessons offered by driving schools, could reduce isolation and improve employment prospects for these families.
- **Free or discounted laptop hire on military bases.**⁷ Internet access could help Service families stay in contact with loved ones abroad, and friends in other parts of the UK, apply for jobs and manage the family finances. It would also allow access to virtual support networks for Service families.
- **Charity involvement.** Charities have provided extensive support for Service personnel, for their dependants and for veterans since the Crimean War. Recent initiatives, most obviously the success of Help for Heroes and the growth of Veterans Day into Armed Forces Day, have shown that the public appetite for engagement with the needs of the services is not only undiminished but even increasing. The Community Covenant could provide a framework within which the considerable resources of Service charities can be mobilised at a local level, along with the support and enthusiasm of society more widely, to help support and acknowledge Service personnel, their families and veterans. The role of Service charities in supporting veterans in particular is discussed in 4.3.

⁷ In addition to the internet provision already provided by the HIVEs.

Box 2: Armed Forces Community Covenants in practice

Who could pledge support to the Community Covenant?

- **Local Authorities** or **county councils** would provide an ideal focus – e.g. in the Firm Base programme (see box 3), partnerships are based around the Brigade structure and cooperation occurs across several counties; in other areas Local Authorities might be a more appropriate focus. There is nothing to stop a county and a town within that county both pledging support (as in the US – see box 1).
- **Private companies** could also pledge to work with Local Authorities or sign up individually to offer benefits or services to the military community.
- **Charities** could work in partnership with the public and private sector. Community Covenants also provide a framework for charities to cooperate with each other at the local level.
- **Individuals** would be encouraged to show their support as part of the Community Covenant – for example by volunteering to work with a charity, organising or attending events, or donating money.

Encouraging local communities to pledge support

- In principle it could be possible to impose a duty on Local Authorities to make provisions under the Community Covenant. However, the example of the US, and of successful partnerships in the UK established as a result of the Firm Base programme, show that a **voluntary scheme** can be equally, if not more, effective.
- **Public commitment** (via a pledging ceremony or similar) creates pressure to meet obligations and raises public awareness, encouraging community groups and individuals to take part. **Formal acknowledgement** (such as a scroll, certificate or logo) also creates an incentive.
- Potential **benefits to civilian authorities, companies and charities** include: better targeting of resources; sharing facilities and land; good publicity; ongoing good news coverage; and attracting into the local economy skilled ex-Service employees. Meeting obligations to the military **should not impose significant costs** on local government.

Central government role

- Support could come in a number of forms depending on the desired level of government participation: provision of a **formal Community Covenant** for organisations to pledge to; **guidance** on key areas of priority; central **Community Covenant website** (to link to news stories and information about local schemes); issuing of **formal scroll/certification** or **logo** for businesses; organisation/funding for formal **pledging ceremonies**. Funding (for example to cover any **initial start up costs**) might not be available from central government but sponsorship could be sought from the private companies or charities.

Box 3: Case study: Firm Base programme in Hampshire

- The Firm Base programme is a nationwide Army scheme, linked to the regional brigade structure.⁸ The Task Force visited the Hampshire site to see the scheme in action.
- The Firm Base programme in Hampshire highlights the potential of local cooperation along similar lines to the **Community Covenant**. Although Firm Base is still at an early stage, it has already demonstrated some of **the benefits that can result from local partnerships between civilian and military authorities** (including the private and charitable sectors) in areas with a high military presence.
- **Local needs are identified** with the guidance of the SPCP, as well as through Army welfare services, the MOD, the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey, academic research, charities, knowledge of service providers (e.g. councils), and specific surveys.
- Achievements include: assessment of **local Service children's** educational attainment; **new dental services** in local towns; **cultural activity concession cards** giving 50% discount on Hampshire parks and museums; **Armed Forces Hero award** established by Hampshire magazine with nominations from 145 Brigade; **greater understanding of the Army** among civilian organisations; good relations with **local media** and offers of column space; **£100K from Oxford County Council** to be divided between four main bases in Oxfordshire (to be used for activities which meet core aims of council).

In addition to the Community Covenant, which the Task Force sees as a framework for providing much of the support needed by Service personnel and their families, we have identified a number of low-cost measures which could improve support for serving regulars, reservists and families.

⁸ The Firm Base programme has taken particular root in areas where there are Army Super Garrisons - Aldershot, Catterick and Tidworth. Super garrisons aim to provide greater stability for soldiers without reducing career opportunities by having 5000+ serving personnel in a single geographic area. This report discusses service mobility in section 2.3.

Some of the measures outlined in the remainder of the report could be offered as part of the Community Covenant; we have noted where this is likely to be the case.

2. Service personnel and their families

2.1 Housing

Problem

Service personnel are required to move around the country regularly and sometimes at short notice. This particularly affects the Army, where the culture of “follow the flag” requires units to move between bases, usually accompanied by their families. To meet their accommodation needs, Service Families Accommodation (SFA) is provided (approximately 50,000 homes), at a net cost of around £285m per annum.⁹ The poor condition of some of this accommodation has been widely documented, but the cost of upgrading these homes is substantial. The Task Force has explored options for improving accommodation for Service families in both the medium- and long-term, within the constraints of low or no cost measures.

The bulk of the SFA in England and Wales is owned by Annington Homes (AH) (following its sale and lease back to the MOD in 1996/7), although 6630 (around 13%) homes are still owned by the MOD.¹⁰ Currently the MOD pays rent below market rates, but this arrangement is due to be renegotiated in 2021, after which the cost to the MOD may increase. Any early release from the AH contract is likely to attract a refurbishment cost. The MOD does not own the majority of the overseas estate. Reducing the reliance on, and therefore requirement for, SFA would enable the MOD to reduce the rent paid to AH, but would generate cashable savings only when pockets of estate were vacated and could be handed back.

Defence Estates manage the allocation of SFA according to the MOD rules, and the maintenance is contracted to MODern Housing Solutions (MHS)¹¹ until 2013.

- 1. Improve opportunities for home purchase among Service personnel.** A long-term aspiration is to encourage Service personnel – particularly those with families – to rely less on SFA, directing them towards the private rental sector or home ownership. This requires a major cultural change within the MOD. In the long term it may be coupled with reduced entitlement to SFA (for example, by limiting entitlement to early career), thus lessening the requirement for SFA estate. Options for encouraging and enabling home ownership include:

- **Enhancing accommodation allowances.** In 1990 Service personnel were encouraged to purchase homes by the provision of Long Service Advance of Pay (LSAP), set at a maximum of £8,500 or 16 % of the average house price at that time. Since then it has remained capped at £8,500. In the current climate, it is recognised that even maintaining LSAP, let alone increasing it, may not be affordable. However bringing LSAP in line with current house prices would enable more Service personnel to buy homes. This would involve significant upfront expenditure by the government, but as the payment is an advance on salary rather than a grant, this expenditure would ultimately be recouped (although with some loss due to inflation). In practical terms, an increase in LSAP should be viewed as a long-term option. Additionally, any increase would incur a tax liability for Service personnel which the MOD may also be required to fund.

⁹ NAO report 18 March 2009: Service Families Accommodation.

¹⁰ 2296 of the 6630 MOD-owned properties are on base, which restricts the potential for re-sale.

¹¹ MHS deal with maintenance in England and Wales, except properties managed and maintained under a PFI. There are different maintenance providers in Scotland and NI.

- **Expanding shared equity schemes.** In January 2010 MOD launched a pilot shared equity scheme in England, which has had an excellent response. Its total of £5m in year one has been fully taken up, much of it by those in non-commissioned ranks. Funding of £20m has been allocated across the life of the pilot. There is a strong case for expanding this scheme more widely, and the Task Force recommends exploring options for involving private funding in this.
- **Better use of the MOD estate.** The MOD could, in partnership with developers/local authorities, identify surplus MOD estate in order to offer mixed economy housing which would include priority for Service personnel.
- **Working with banks to offer favourable mortgage rates to Service personnel.** A significant percentage of Service personnel can experience difficulty in obtaining mortgages because they have a poor or inadequate credit history. The possibility has been raised in the past of encouraging a bank or banks to offer favourable mortgage rates to Service personnel, or – at the very least – to initiate a mortgage scheme which recognises the specific needs of those serving. The Task Force suggests holding a PM/Chancellor-chaired summit with major banks to explore this option further.
- **Boost take-up/raise awareness of the Government’s low cost home ownership programme.** Lower-paid Service personnel and recent Service leavers are one of the key worker groups who receive priority assistance through the Government’s low cost home ownership programme “Homebuy”¹² (previously known as Key Worker Living Scheme). However, despite extensive advertising across the MOD, there has been very little take-up of the previous Key Worker Living Scheme. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some Service personnel view the scheme as “social housing” and therefore do not see it as applicable to them (although paradoxically, on leaving the service they often rely on Local Authorities for their accommodation needs). The scheme’s other drawback is its apparent lack of portability – it can be moved but doing so is difficult and complex. Extending the current education campaign is vital to ensure that eligible personnel take advantage of the scheme (for example by including case studies of Service personnel who have benefited, contrasted with the difficulty of obtaining Local Authority accommodation). Including advice on it as part of resettlement is too late, even though eligibility extends to 12 months after leaving service. In Scotland and Wales, guidance has been issued to local authorities and Registered Social Landlords that they should treat Service personnel as a priority group for “Homebuy” (provided they meet the other eligibility criteria for the scheme). They have also been advised that they should disregard any lump sums paid as a result of illness or injury.
- **Work with credit rating companies to improve access to credit.** Mobility causes problems with access to credit, including mortgages, as neither British Forces Post Offices (BFPOs) nor other military addresses are accepted by companies as evidence of continuity of residence. This issue has been considered in the past by the MOD and Treasury, but lack of documented cases has thus far prevented it being pursued further. However, anecdotal evidence suggests this remains a barrier to accessing credit for many Service personnel and their families. The Task Force recommends obtaining hard evidence of credit applications being refused and continuing to work with credit companies to resolve this issue.¹³ Experian, in conjunction with the Task Force, has been exploring the possibility of allocating postcodes to each BFPO address¹⁴ at little or no IT development cost to the 600+

¹² A review of the “Homebuy” scheme is being undertaken by Communities and Local Government (CLG) in the context of the spending review.

¹³ The Task Force has already passed some evidence on to Experian for further investigation.

¹⁴ The MOD would need to engage with the Post Office to obtain postcodes for each BFPO address.

organisations using credit checking systems. Service numbers would be used in the house name field. The benefit of this suggestion is that it should make it easier to “pin” Service personnel and store and access their data. Experian advises that this proposal will not necessarily mean that it will be easier to get credit since that will still depend on the applicant’s credit profile. However, it does mean that each applicant will be more likely to have a credit history.

- **Ensuring 50% council tax discounts are applied evenly for those posted overseas.** Currently Local Authorities treat eligibility for 50% council tax discounts inconsistently. While this is a matter for individual Local Authorities, the Task Force notes that this inconsistency causes problems for some families posted overseas.

2. Improving SFA in the short term. Although a long-term goal should be to increase the access of Service personnel and their families to privately rented accommodation or enable them to purchase homes, an average of 60% of the entitled service population currently exercise their entitlement to SFA. This average masks the fact that the percentage is higher for the Army. The Task Force has identified a number of low-cost measures which could improve the overall experience of service accommodation in the short to medium term; however, it must be recognised that the provision of SFA is complex and these solutions represent starting points for further exploration only:

- **A single independent housing provider for Service Families Accommodation.** Currently SFA is owned, administered and maintained by three separate organisations, an arrangement which often causes confusion over whom to contact. One possible solution might be to hand over all management and maintenance for SFA to an independent housing provider, who would have a direct interest in the maintenance of the property which the provider would own. However, this may attract an AH dilapidation cost (see above).
- **Improved customer care for those living in service accommodation.** Those who live in SFA often find themselves dealing with a process-driven and distant organisation (Defence Estates Operations Housing is based at a single location in Brampton), and lacking any individual support or advice when problems arise. The seven regional Housing Information Centres (the bodies responsible for the management of the housing stock in each region) are predominantly call centres, and their wide dispersal across the country makes face-to-face communication difficult. They appoint housing officers to supervise each patch but the contact details of these officers are not given to prospective tenants (they have to await a call back). To provide a more personal face-to-face service some local chains of command have appointed their own housing officers.¹⁵ These models could be adopted on other SFA locations to improve customer care. As an alternative, the Canadian approach, in which a commercial organisation is contracted to manage an end-to-end process for moving, could be considered. It offers a ‘one-stop shop’ for all accommodation needs, queries and complaints, at a cost to the government.
- **Treating the Service family as a unit.** Defence Estates’ (DE) application of the MOD’s accommodation policies is rightly based on maximising operational effectiveness. However, this policy sometimes marginalises the needs of family welfare. This leads to dissatisfaction not only among families but also among Service personnel, with repercussions on the very operational effectiveness the policy seeks to serve. There is scope to consider how Defence Estates’ application

¹⁵ For example in Aldershot, whose HIC the Task Force visited, 145 Brigade has appointed a military liaison officer, to provide a point of contact on location to help resolve any issues. The RAF has established a number of Service Community Support Officers who act as a liaison between occupants and the DE. The Royal Navy has given its Establishment Warrant Officers and their Royal Marine equivalents similar responsibilities.

of the existing accommodation policy could better meet the needs of the family as a unit.

- **Greater flexibility in move out/in dates.** Currently families are allowed 28 days to relocate. This sometimes causes problems with schooling due to conflict with term dates. There is scope to incorporate greater flexibility into the sometimes rigidly applied policy, with each case being considered on its own merits.¹⁶

2.2 Support for families¹⁷

Problem

Service spouses and partners are not only affected by constant relocation but also are often left to manage alone during overseas deployments and on operations. Isolation comes in three forms: isolation from friends and family; isolation due to remote military bases; and isolation from the support of other Service families for those who either opt to live away from the service ‘patch’ or are forced to through lack of SFA in a particular area.

Policy options

- 1. Service Families Card.** There is no single MOD-recognised Service family’s card (each military facility provides its own version). A universally accepted card would provide a means of identifying their status, enabling them access to public services and to claim service discounts offered by businesses. This could be provided by charging a one-off fee or through charitable funding – see Veterans Privilege Card (section 4.2.1) for further options. The production costs of providing individual base cards would be reduced, thus decreasing the overall cost to the MOD. In principle such a card could also be extended to bereaved families.
- 2. Access to military bases for Service families.** At the moment a Service family may only be able to access the base on which their spouse or partner serves, which is not necessarily the one closest to their home. Wider access, enabled by a Service Families Card, would allow them to access essential services such as HIVEs at their local base. Increased access would have to be agreed with the local Commanding Officers as they will be responsible for base security but ideally an MOD-wide policy should be established regarding access.
- 3. Dedicated welfare support for families within unit.** Unit welfare support is currently provided within the command chain, in some cases by providers who are not always professionally qualified to support and guide Service families. The key recommendation here is that the level of welfare support afforded to all of the three services should be provided by professionally qualified welfare officers, while ensuring they are tailored to the particular needs of each service.¹⁸
- 4. Improved childcare provision.** The provision of childcare is the responsibility of Local Authorities; however, there are crèches on some but not all MOD establishments. These are accessible to all personnel based on the particular site. Given the transient nature of the service population some families report difficulty in finding childcare and there appears to be a demand for more crèches which cater for the needs of single parents or those families working outside ‘standard’ working hours. The RAF has made excellent use of charitable funds to provide more on-base support. The RAF Benevolent Fund has been working with “4Children”, a national charity, to deliver activities and after-school drop-in clubs for

¹⁶ The intent of the SPCP to support transfer of public sector employees required to relocate with a military partner is not currently included as a factor for consideration by HIC staffs.

¹⁷ The MOD’s definition of the “family” for entitlement to certain allowances and Service Families Accommodation is restricted to Service personnel who are married or in a civil partnership. There have been suggestions that this does not sufficiently reflect the make up of some of today’s more complex and extended relationships.

¹⁸ For example, naval families tend to live in their own properties well away from bases and often nearer to their extended families. The welfare support mechanisms they require with this wide distribution are very different from those of an RAF station or Army base, where families often live in service accommodation clustered near the base.

children. Charitable funding could be sought to expand this model across the MOD estate, in order to move towards an MOD-wide childcare provision.

5. **Make Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks portable.**¹⁹ CRB checks are required for each paid or voluntary engagement with children and young people, e.g. one required for being a scout leader, another for a rugby coach, another for working/assisting in a school. The checks are carried out by the local police. If they were transferable from one policing area to another and from one activity to another many Service personnel and their families would be able to participate more fully in communities into which they are posted. This would reduce isolation and improve engagement between the service community and their civilian neighbours.
6. **Increased availability of communications while on deployment.** The MOD has made significant inroads in improving communication between families and Service personnel on operational tours. However, postal services to Forward Operating Bases are regularly disrupted because of lack of helicopter capacity, other forms of communication are often closed down if there has been an incident, computer terminals are few, and the amount of time allowed free of charge is limited.²⁰ While increasing the number of terminals might have resource implications, the Task Force suggests exploring the possibility of sponsorship of communications by private sector or charitable providers. A Joint Personnel Administration (JPA)-compliant method of communication with families has been explored by the MOD but further development has been put on hold. Consideration should be given to revisiting this idea.

It is worth noting that many of these policy options will not be applicable to Northern Ireland. For example, Service families in the province are prevented from identifying themselves as such due to the security situation. This can cause difficulties for partners in explaining their career history to prospective employers and for Service children in obtaining the necessary support in schools, among other issues.

2.3 Reducing Service mobility

The principal obstacle to ‘equality of opportunity’ for Service personnel and their families – particularly in the Army – is the mobility currently required by service careers. **The New Employment Model (NEM) for Service personnel is being considered by the MOD as part of the SDSR and is outside the remit of the Task Force.**²¹ However, it is worth noting that reduced mobility would be a significant step towards resolving some of the problems faced by Service personnel and their families. The current system of allowances directly related to mobility – for example, Involuntary Separation and Continuity of Education allowances – costs many millions of pounds per annum; reduced mobility and a review of allowances could result in a considerable saving over the longer term.

Possible measures for further exploration in relation to increasing stability include:

1. Examining the possibility of subsequent postings being in the same region rather than in a different one.
2. Examining whether there is scope to increase the use of “super-garrisons”, such as Tidworth and Catterick.
3. Basing units in the areas from which they recruit where possible. This would ensure that families are close to their own friends and relatives, providing extra support when personnel go abroad on operational tours.

¹⁹ This is one of the main benefits of the proposed Vetting and Barring Scheme from the Independent Safeguarding Authority, currently under review by the Government.

²⁰ The RAF Association’s “Miles More Minutes” campaign seeks to provide an extra 10-minute phone card to all RAF deployed on operations.

²¹ The NEM seeks to provide a greater degree of stability at certain stages of a Service person’s career.

4. In order to minimise disruption to schooling, the MOD could explore whether movements involving the relocation of Service families can be confined to the end of the school year (or at least the end of a term). This is already the norm in many other Armed Forces of the developed world, including those of the United States and Australia. Consideration could also be given to creating stability for a stage of education, particularly at GCSE and A-level or equivalent.

2.4 Support for the wounded and bereaved

Problem

The treatment of casualties in theatre, their evacuation to the United Kingdom, and their further treatment all receive the highest praise. For example, for the last two years Hasler Company, based at Devonport Naval Base, Plymouth, has managed one of the main elements of the Naval Service Recovery Pathway, supporting injured personnel (predominantly Royal Marines) to achieve their full recovery potential, in or out of service. A major facet of the Pathway is an extensive resettlement process, incorporating a number of work placements while still in service to help individuals achieve fulfilling employment in civilian life. There are plans to extend Hasler Company's capability, in order to meet a growing requirement to support those with complex injuries and to enable injured personnel from all three services to benefit from its expertise.

The Army is addressing the issues surrounding convalescence and either return to service or discharge, through the Army Recovery Capability²², in which the Army pays for the staff, Help for Heroes the infrastructure, and the Royal British Legion (RBL) the ongoing support. Coordinated by a Personnel Recovery Branch, it is in the process of developing a network of twelve regionally based Personnel Recovery Units, supported by purpose-built Personnel Recovery Centres, which the first was opened in Edinburgh in 2009. The initiative still has a number of hurdles to cross before it achieves full operating capability in 2012.

The Task Force also notes the disadvantage experienced by some categories of Service widows under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 1975.²³ While the cost implications of addressing this issue put it outside the remit of the Task Force, we note that resolving these apparent anomalies would be an important step in ensuring that bereaved families receive the support they need. Concern has also been expressed about providing support for the wider bereaved family. Under the Community Covenant support could be provided from local community and charitable networks; as Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen Families Association (SSAFA) is already doing in some cases.

- 1. More support for wounded veterans to retrain.** Those severely wounded with disabling injuries are well supported in the service and by their mates, but need extra support if they leave the service. As an example of good practice the Rifles has appointed a Casualty Officer, funded by the Army Benevolent Fund, to help the wounded transition into other employment, including finding places on relevant post-graduate courses. Other regiments who do not already do so should consider using their own regimental funds for resettlement, or seeking other charitable funding. The Royal Navy has an extant resettlement process (as described above), which is managed by the Employment Co-ordinator and charities and works with the Defence Career Partnering (DCP) Recovery placement scheme to identify suitable temporary employment opportunities.

²² The Royal Air Force's equivalent provision is Holding Flight.

²³ These include the widows of servicemen who had not 'elected' to join the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 2005 but who by definition could not so elect as they were dead; those who marry retired ex-servicemen who had already retired before 1973, who are not granted any pension; and the widows of those who retired before 1973, who receive only 30 percent of their husband's pension, as opposed to 50 percent rising to 62.5 percent.

2. **A coherent national approach to trauma research.** Improvements in the survival of casualties depend on rapid introduction of new technologies. A coherent national approach to trauma research – encompassing key partners including the Department of Health (DoH), Medical Research Council and universities – would help develop such technologies. In line with the MOD’s wish to ensure ongoing improvements in trauma care, the DoH should continue to lead the co-ordination of investment through the National Institute for Health Research and across the Research Councils in acute trauma, repair, reconstruction and long-term rehabilitation in a military or civilian context. This will help ensure that future research needs are coherently mapped and mutually reinforcing. A closer alignment between the development of NHS Major Trauma Centres and the placement of DMS personnel is also encouraged.
3. **Better communication of Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.** Those serving are not always fully aware of the scope of the scheme (for example, it is widely thought that the scheme only covers wounds received in action, when in fact it covers the full range of possible injuries in service). A notable exception is Hasler Company, where injured personnel have their own dedicated Service Personnel and Veterans’ Agency (SPVA) representative as their single point of contact (to assist with their claim and award). Better communication, as proposed by the Boyce report, would also help correct some of the public misconceptions about the scheme – for example, press reports often fail to distinguish between lump sum payments and the guaranteed income payments which can accompany them.
4. **Local access to NHS primary care services.** The statutory provider for primary healthcare for serving personnel is Defence Medical Services (DMS). However, in some cases, due to geography or particular clinical needs, wounded personnel will require care or support from the local NHS or Local Authorities. Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) have no legal duty to provide such care, although to date they have generally been prepared, after discussion, to do so. The NHS White Paper has proposed significant changes in NHS commissioning which could prevent such *ad hoc* arrangements. It is proposed that consideration is given to ensuring that the existing informal arrangement is formalised.
5. **Coroners’ inquest training.** The Task Force understands that under the previous government, legislation was being prepared by the Ministry of Justice to improve training for coroners in handling the inquest process. The Task Force notes that such training would greatly benefit Service families and improve press reporting, which in the past has sometimes been confused, and hopes this preparation will continue.
6. **Local authority and some Service charities’ treatment of compensation payments.** Lump sum payments made to wounded Service personnel and other compensation payments are handled differently by Local Authorities and some Service charities when assessing need and eligibility for social care: some include it in means testing, others do not. Lord Boyce’s Armed Forces Compensation Scheme review states that the compensation payments “are not intended to pay for care provided by the public sector in the UK”.²⁴ The report also contains a range of ways to calculate benefits. This is a matter for individual Local Authorities, but disregarding compensation payments for means testing would be an excellent way of demonstrating their commitment to the Community Covenant. Similarly the Task Force also encourages Service charities to exclude lump sum payments from their eligibility calculations.

2.5 Reservists

Problem

While deployed, Reservists are treated no differently from their regular military counterparts. However, the needs of Reservists and their families are in some ways unique. While they are deployed, their families are subject to many of the same pressures, but lack the “on-base” support

²⁴ The Review of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme – “The Boyce Report”, February 2010, para 2.16.

available to Regular Service families. Furthermore, on returning from deployment Reservists quickly revert to their civilian lives, somewhat removed from military support networks and the comradeship they provide. Employers – although aware of their deployment – may struggle to understand the Reservist’s experience and to appreciate the value of the skills which the Reservist brings back to the work place.

In addition to their contribution to operations, the Reservists are also well-placed to help build links between the Armed Forces and the local communities in which they live and work. In many parts of the UK Reservists and Cadets are the only service presence, and so become the glue which unites the Armed Forces to the nation at the local level. The regionally based Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations (RFCAs), which have links to Local Authorities, already play an important role in some areas as part of the Firm Base programme (see box 3).

Policy options

- 1. Build on links between RFCAs and youth groups.** As a result of their responsibility for the Cadets, the RFCAs are involved with other youth groups through Youth United.²⁵ The Adjutant General has engaged the Army with the Prince’s Trust. There is further scope for collaboration, including sharing facilities; this should be fully exploited.
- 2. Recognised form of ID for Reservists.** Currently some Reservists²⁶ have no formal means of identifying their status between deployments. Identity cards would allow them to claim any services or discounts offered by private companies under the Community Covenant. A chip-and-pin card could provide a more secure system. Combined with a card reader, such a card could allow remote access to the secure online Service personnel system (JPA), which can currently only be accessed during Territorial Army office opening hours via a limited number of terminals. It could also potentially allow access to military bases, subject to commanding officer approval.
- 3. Information to reservists’ GPs.** As part of the demobilisation medical following deployment, consent should be obtained from Reservists to allow their defence medical records to be transferred to their civilian GP.²⁷ This communication could then act as the formal handover of medical care from the Defence Medical Services back to the NHS GP. NHS GPs would therefore be able to respond should Reservists develop physical or psychological problems on their return.
- 4. Better information for GPs on available help for Reservists.** In November 2006 the MOD launched the Reserves Mental Health Programme, under which any Reservist deployed after 2003 who has a mental health problem can access the programme by a referral from their GP. This is particularly important, as Reservists experience a greater increase in mental health problems than Regulars when they return from deployment.²⁸ Knowledge of the existence of the programme needs to be more widespread: in 2008 84% of GPs were unaware of its existence. We suggest that information on the programme be included as part of the provision of the DMS medical record to the Reservist’s NHS GP. We also note and support other efforts to raise awareness of all veterans’ health needs among GPs, including the recent publication of ‘Meeting the Healthcare Needs of Veterans – A guide for general practitioners’ by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) and the RBL, and the future development of a Veterans’ Healthcare eLearning package by the RCGP on behalf of the DoH (England).
- 5. Support from employers.** Reservists, unlike Regulars, can lack the intimate support of their military comrades on return from overseas deployments, making it more difficult to

²⁵ Youth United is a National Non-Government Organization (NGO) working for the betterment of society through the continuing efforts of the youth of the country.

²⁶ RAF Reserves are issued with an RAF ID card on joining; Naval Reserves get an RN Reserves ID card on joining the RN or RMR and receive a regular RN ID card on mobilization, handing it back on de-mobilization.

²⁷ Consent would need to be obtained to comply with NHS/Data Protection Act requirements.

²⁸ Browne et al: “Explanations for the increase in mental health problems in UK Reserve Forces who have served in Iraq,” *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 190(2007), pp 484-9.

adjust to civilian life. Employers could help by encouraging them to discuss their experiences – for example through informal presentations to colleagues. Employers should also be made aware of the early warning signs that someone may be experiencing problems.

6. **Encourage retiring Service personnel to join the Reserves.** Encouraging those retiring from Regular service to become Reservists could usefully exploit their operational experience and broaden the range of moral support available to demobilised reservists. Such cross-over could be increased by, for example, including an opportunity to opt-in to Reserve Service at the point of termination. Reservists might particularly benefit from the support of former Regular officers with experience of frontline combat.
7. **Lord Lieutenants' Awards** for employers who have supported employees serving as Reservists.²⁹ This could raise awareness and further incentivise employers to enable their staff to deploy (currently employers are entitled to appeal against mobilisation). It could operate in a similar way to the Covenant or Chief of Defence Staff's Commendation (see section 5.1).
8. **Encourage professional bodies to recognise relevant deployment experience.** The experience of some Reservists on deployment could enhance their civilian career opportunities but it is too often not properly recognised. Professional bodies, organisations and employers need to be encouraged to develop a process that credits staff who have been deployed. This could also apply to DMS personnel deployed in NHS Trusts (see para 2.4.2).
9. **Consider extending Pupil Premium to Reservist children** (on a case by case basis). Evidence suggests that children of Reservists sometimes experience behavioural problems as a result of their parents' deployment. If this occurs, schools should be able to address it with additional funding which would need to be applied for on a case by case basis. This would obviously have cost implications which would need to be considered.

2.6 Foreign and Commonwealth Personnel

Problem

There are currently around 17,000 Foreign and Commonwealth Personnel serving in the UK Armed Forces, of whom 11,000 are in the Army. Those classified as 'Foreign' are from the Republic of Ireland, while those from the Commonwealth are drawn from countries such as Fiji or the many Commonwealth countries in Africa. Gurkhas are not included in this total. They are enlisted and attested in Nepal, while Foreign and Commonwealth Personnel travel to the United Kingdom on visitors' visas and enlist here.

Foreign and Commonwealth Personnel face a number of problems which do not apply to their British colleagues. For example, about 30 per cent of those in the care of 33 Field Hospital RAMC as a result of its tour in Afghanistan were Foreign and Commonwealth Personnel.³⁰ While those with injuries held in Army Recovery Centres are guaranteed excellent care, if or when they return to their countries of origin after discharge their long-term support will present some challenging problems. No straightforward solution suggests itself, although this is an area to which the Service charities might like to give attention.

The families of Foreign and Commonwealth Personnel also face unique challenges. Once enlisted and attested, Foreign and Commonwealth Personnel are treated as exempt from immigration control under the Immigration Act 1971 and so are not required to pay a fee to remain in the UK as members of the Armed Forces (unlike civilians coming to the UK to work, who would be required to pay for a visa for themselves and their dependents). However, since 6 April 2010 the

²⁹ Employers can already qualify for a SaBRE (Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers) certificate signed by the Defence Secretary.

³⁰ As reported by Lt Col Chris Millet RAMC at COBSEO AGM, 27 October 2010.

fees for initial entry to the UK for the spouses, partners and children of those in the Armed Forces have increased. Families are now required to apply for ‘settlement’ visas at a cost of £644 (to increase to £750 from November 2010), whereas previously they were categorised as dependants of UK employees and were able to apply for immigration visas at a cost of £215. UKBA took the decision to increase the visa fee following an annual review of fees, when it became clear that the fees applied to migrants who settled permanently in the UK had varied depending upon the application route that they used. UKBA argues that bringing fees for the families of Foreign and Commonwealth Personnel into line with those paid by others who settle in the UK ensures consistency across all visa routes leading to settlement. The Task Force acknowledges the logic of this position, but suggests that, given the unique nature of the commitment made by Foreign and Commonwealth Personnel, there is a case for a degree of unique treatment in this case.

Furthermore, it appears that in some cases families have had difficulty in accessing clear and consistent advice on the new visa arrangements. UKBA has issued revised guidance to their Entry Clearance and Immigration Officers, and has also recently issued revised guidance on the application of the Immigration Rules to the spouses, partners and children of Armed Forces personnel who have accompanied the serviceman or woman to an overseas base on a time-limited visa and then seek to re-enter the UK. However, this advice seems to have been slow to filter down to those families affected by the changes. The Task Force has been made aware of a few cases where families report being given conflicting advice, leading to delays and uncertainties in processing their visa applications.

Policy option

1. **An Armed Forces Visa for families of Foreign and Commonwealth personnel.** The Task Force commends the exemption already applied by UKBA to Foreign and Commonwealth Personnel which allows them to remain in the UK while serving without paying visa fees. While accepting the possible financial implications of changes in visa fees, we recommend that a similar provision should be made for the spouses or partners of Foreign and Commonwealth Personnel and their dependant children. The introduction of a free Armed Forces Visa would enable families to join their serving spouse or partner in the UK and to travel in and out of the UK unaccompanied by the Serviceman or woman.

2.7 Other issues

1. **Ensure serving personnel are able to vote.** The problem of Armed Forces’ voting was recognised in 1945, and has still not been fully addressed. If an underlying aim of the Military Covenant is to sustain the rights of citizenship for those who defend the nation, members of the Armed Forces (and their dependants) need to be able to exercise their right to vote. The complications of registration are currently being addressed, but difficulties are also caused by delays in post reaching personnel deployed or serving overseas. To ensure that these serving personnel (and their dependants) are able to vote consideration should be given to extending the time between the issue and return of voting papers for postal votes. The Task Force understands that this is already being explored by Government and strongly supports it.

3. Transition to civilian life

3.1 In-Service education and preparation for resettlement

Problem

Education plays an important role in improving retention and operational capacity, as well as in easing resettlement. The Army in particular recruits from a much wider range of academic ability

and social background than the other services. Those recruits who come from deprived backgrounds – often with a record of family unemployment and limited educational attainment – are those most at risk, both of leaving the service early and of then failing to settle satisfactorily back into civilian life.³¹ The Task Force has identified a number of further measures which could improve retention and ease resettlement.

Box 4: Adjusting to “civvy street”

Interviews carried out with former Service personnel as part of research conducted by the homeless charity Crisis highlight the difficulties some Service leavers experience when leaving the institutionalised life of the military.

- “If you’re single on your payslip all your food and accommodation is taken out and that’s your pocket money. So when you come out and you get your first payslip you think, wow. You don’t realise everything that needs to come out of it like food and everything so it’s easy to get in trouble.”
- “I wasn’t married when I was in the army so I never had to pay a bill.”
- One ex-Serviceman remembers his first civilian job: “I used to stand up when my boss came in the office.”
- One veteran recalls “thinking your heating goes off in the summer and comes on in the winter – you think these things just happen.”
- Another remembers ignoring a water bill because “it must be a joke – you don’t have to pay for water do you?”

Policy options

- 1. Support for Service personnel in career planning.** A clear and jargon-free personnel strategy would help Service personnel better understand their career options and provide information about the management within the services of recruitment, retention, professional development, health, and transition back into civilian life. In particular, such a strategy would help Service personnel understand the difficult choices which may accompany a military career, including the balance between career advancement and family obligations.³²
- 2. Build more personal responsibility into service life.** There can be a tendency to treat Service Personnel paternally, especially the younger recruits. This does not prepare them for civilian life. Relatively simple measures – such as the Pay As You Dine scheme which helps recruits budget for their monthly food bill – could improve the self-reliance of personnel at little or no additional cost.
- 3. Ongoing formal education during military training.** All the indications are that education leads to greater retention, to a better return on service, and to a more fulfilling career within the Armed Forces.³³ Although those who enter the Armed Forces at the age of 16 are often anxious to escape school, there is a strong case for continuing to educate those recruits aged 16-18 alongside their military training. Consideration should be given to a pre-service apprenticeship or another scheme, where service life and training are incorporated with finishing education. Ensuring that Service Personnel are aware of the civilian accreditations of existing (sometimes mandatory) training, and know how to record them on their CVs, is crucial in service training. Many academic and vocational courses are already available to Service personnel, but there is scope to consider whether some of these could be made available earlier in service, with appropriate return of service conditions attached. Currently many of these are only offered to personnel who have served more than four years. They also need to be made aware of these and their benefits, and be given the opportunity to attend them. This is a responsibility of the Chain of Command.

³¹ *Veterans First Point: Annual Report 2009-2010*, pp 6-7

³² Although the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel) issued *The Service Personnel Strategy* in April 2010, this was intended mainly as an internal policy document and is not aimed at the general reader. The publication of the Ministry of National Defence for Canada, *Military HR Strategy 2020: facing the people challenges of the future* (2002), is instructive and the sort of thing we have in mind.

³³ This concept is known as ‘Ready to leave – Happy to stay’

4. **‘Life skills’ training throughout service.** From our research it appears that the skills in which education is most required are those which will enable Service personnel to stand on their own feet in the civilian world. These include opening and managing a bank account, securing housing, understanding benefits, drawing up a will, and responsible social behaviour. There are potential resource implications in attempting to offer such training internally. However, some private sector providers have expressed an interest in offering training in financial management – Standard Life Trust and Barclays Trust have done so in the past – and this option warrants further exploration. These elements are also included routinely in resettlement courses, and redistributing the funding from end of service to during service would enable such courses to be funded from existing budgets – a ‘cradle to grave’ approach.
5. **Target better educated recruits.** The coincidence of buoyant recruiting and possible reductions on overall strength in 2010-11 presents an opportunity to raise the minimum entry requirements for recruitment. This would need to be accompanied by a job offer which more fully matches the aspirations of better educated Service personnel. A shift in the profile of recruits could help mitigate the problems sometimes encountered by those with lower levels of education at later stages of their careers and on transition out of service.
6. **A healthier approach to alcohol.** Depression and the harmful use of alcohol are much more common problems in the Armed Forces than post-traumatic stress disorder or mental health symptoms.³⁴ The Armed Forces’ culture of ‘work hard, play hard’ is important in promoting comradeship but can encourage the harmful use of alcohol. Evidence suggests that alcohol education has little effect on its own, **but that raising alcohol prices on bases** and greater discipline (such as alcohol testing) can reduce consumption.³⁵ The Armed Forces should continue to promote the use of existing, and the introduction of more, non-drinking social spaces and recreational facilities in each base.

3.2 Easing the transition

Problem

The common crisis point is the moment when personnel leave the service; Service leavers and their families need strong support during this rite of passage. In addition to the in-service support proposed above, the principal issues are to retain contact after leaving the service; to make sure that those who need support know how to access it; to reassure them that to do so is not to lose face; and to remove their sense of isolation after the close-knit community of service life.

Policy options

1. **Veterans’ Privilege Cards.** Currently Service ID cards must be handed back on leaving the service. This can have a strong psychological impact, with Service leavers feeling they are losing an important part of their identity. Veterans’ Privilege Cards could provide a sense of continuity as well as allowing access to any benefits offered under the Community Covenant. Options for providing cards are discussed in more detail in section 4.2.1 below on *Veterans*.
2. **Online access to Service pensions.** A Veterans’ Privilege Card (with chip and pin functionality) could enable veterans to access their pension details on line, just as they can check and manage their bank accounts. This would provide continuity with service life (as they are used to accessing pay details online) and also make financial management more convenient.

³⁴ One study found that 67% of men and 49% of women in the regular Armed Forces drink at “harmful” levels, compared to 38% of men and 16% of women in the general population. See Fear et: “Do the UK Armed Forces drink more than the general population? Patterns of Drinking in the military and comparisons with the general population,” *Addiction* 102 (2007), 1749-1759.

³⁵ Personal communication from Prof Simon Wessely (Kings College London), 23 August 2010.

3. **Partnering with industry to recruit ex-Service personnel.** Examples of where this works in practice include DCP, a partnership between the MOD and private enterprise designed to create employment opportunities for wounded personnel, and British Military Fitness, which actively recruits homeless veterans. DCP currently works with national companies, but its activities could be further expanded to include local employers.
4. **Passport to Work.** The idea of this proposal is to incentivise employers to take on Service leavers by contributing towards their wages and/or training for the first six months. The money thus goes towards helping Service leavers into work rather than funding unemployment benefits for the same period (similar in principle to the Future Jobs Fund but on a smaller, lower-cost scale). Particular issues which would have to be carefully thought through include:
 - The amount paid to employers. Setting employer subsidies at around £65 per week would equate to the cost of Jobseekers' Allowance. However, higher rates would provide a greater incentive for employers to take on a Service leaver. The aim is for the scheme to be cost-neutral in the medium term, so the balance between the funding put in and the overall savings in benefit payments would have to be carefully considered.
 - Effect on the job market. Subsidies for employing Service leavers must not threaten the jobs of existing workers.
 - Eligibility. Around 17,000 trained Service personnel leave the service each year. It would be important to target only those most likely to benefit.
5. **Encourage greater involvement of Service personnel with Service charities.** The more Service charities are involved with Service personnel while they are in uniform, the more aware of their role those same people will be when they are out of uniform.
6. **Opt-out rather than opt-in for contact with Service charities.** During resettlement, Service charities should be encouraged to engage with Service leavers. At the moment those leaving the services are given the option to opt in should they wish contact from the Service charities; we recommend that the option be changed to opt out, an initiative which the MOD is currently considering.

4. Veterans

The standing of Veterans in the community has risen in the last few years, partly through initiatives such as Veterans Day (now retitled Armed Forces Day). From the early 1990s, Remembrance Sunday was more carefully observed than it had been before thanks to a public increasingly keen to commemorate the two world wars. Since 2003 the losses sustained in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have kept the needs of veterans in the public eye, not least through the shows of support for the living, alongside respect for the dead, at Wootton Bassett.

Policy on veterans remains confused for a number of reasons. One is that the United Kingdom identifies as a veteran anybody with one day's service (a much wider definition than that used by most other countries).³⁶ The current categorisation means that in 2005 there were about 4.8 million veterans in the United Kingdom and, by including their dependants, it placed around 10 million people (about 18% of the UK population) in the wider veterans' community.³⁷ Many of these people do not even know they are considered to be veterans or, if they do, do not want to be so

³⁶ Most countries expect that a veteran should have at least completed basic training, and in some cases that they should have been on an operational tour. New Zealand, for example, says that a veteran 'has qualifying service in a war or emergency that has been authorised as such by the government'. Christopher Dandeker, Simon Wessely, Amy Iversen and John Ross, 'What's in a name? Defining and caring for "veterans": the United Kingdom in international and perspective', *Armed Forces and Society*, 32 (2006), pp 161-77. See also Royal British Legion, *Profile of the ex-Service Community in the UK*, November 2005; the fullest and most recent study of the problems of veterans is that by Michael Hockney of July 2009.

³⁷ Royal British Legion, *Profile of the ex-Service Community in the UK* (November 2005), p. 7

identified.³⁸ Consideration must be given to revisiting the current definition of a “veteran” so that it commands greater acceptability. For example it might apply only to those who have completed their basic training.

A further challenge is that the title of “veteran” covers a diverse range of individuals. In particular, despite the association of veterans with the two world wars, a younger generation of veterans has emerged with a new set of needs and problems (including an increasing number of women; those surviving previously fatal wounds; and longer life expectancy): in 2009 the Royal British Legion reported that 30 % of veterans aged 25 to 44 had a long-term illness or disability, and calculated that 20 % of all veterans had a long-term condition related to service.³⁹ Many simply want to move on to their civilian lives and should be encouraged to do so.

Despite increasing public and press awareness of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or mental health symptoms, these problems affect a relatively small number: in 2009, 3103 cases of mental health problems were identified in the UK Armed Forces (15.5 per 1000), of which only 140 were identified as PTSD.⁴⁰ Other forms of stress, especially depression and alcoholism, are much bigger problems in the veterans’ community.⁴¹ Veterans’ mental health is the subject of a separate study commissioned by the government and prepared by Dr Andrew Murrison MP.⁴²

In order to better tackle the various issues faced by the different groups of veterans, the Task Force has identified three main categories:

1. **‘Early’ Service leavers** – most likely to be from the Army⁴³ and likely to leave before they have completed four years service or who have been compulsorily discharged for reasons other than medical discharge (usually misconduct, unfitness, etc), while still in their mid-20s. Early Service leavers are only entitled to a very basic and limited package of support.
 - This is the group which receives least preparation for resettlement and which is most likely to face problems with the transition to civilian life. In 2009-10 Veterans First Point in Edinburgh found that nearly 70% of those who have sought help from them have completed less than ten years of service, and 37.5% less than five years. This group may include those ex-Service personnel who are more likely to offend. In 2010, around 3% of the prison population in England and Wales were veterans⁴⁴ (down from 5.6% in 2000).⁴⁵
 - The majority of early leavers experience a successful transition back into civilian society. It is likely that the group most likely to face difficulties (such as homelessness or offending) are those who enter the service with pre-existing problems, such as those from disadvantaged backgrounds, with a record of family unemployment and limited educational attainment.⁴⁶

³⁸ Dandeker and others, *Improving the delivery of cross departmental support and services for veterans*, July 2003 – NB this research was undertaken prior to introduction of Armed Forces Day and the issue of Veterans badges.

³⁹ Royal British Legion, *Policy analysis of the Honour the Covenant Campaign*, para 5.1

⁴⁰ MOD (2010): *UK Armed Forces Mental Health: Annual Summary 2009*.

⁴¹ One study found that 67% of men and 49% of women in the regular Armed Forces drink at “harmful” levels, compared to 38% of men and 16% of women in the general population. See Fear et. “Patterns of Drinking in the UK Armed Forces,” *Addiction* 102 (2007), , 1749-1759.

⁴² “Fighting Fit – A mental health plan for servicemen and veterans,” report by Andrew Murrison MP, 6 October 2010.

⁴³ Veterans First Point in Edinburgh found that 81.6 percent of all those seeking help have served in the Army as opposed to the other two services or the Merchant Navy.

⁴⁴ DASA statistics, 2010.

⁴⁵ Royal British Legion, *Profile of the ex-Service Community in the UK* (November 2005), p. 16

⁴⁶ Dandeker and others, *Improving the delivery of cross departmental support and services for veterans*, 2003

- This problem group of early leavers are less likely to identify themselves as veterans and in some cases may want little to do with the military. This presents particular challenges in ensuring they are aware of and receive the support currently available.
2. **Service leavers entitled to full resettlement.** Service leavers are defined by the MOD as personnel who are medically discharged after **any** period of service or who voluntarily leave after four to six, or six-plus years service.
 - Those who serve the full 22 years receive a full resettlement package in the last six months of service (and can access the resettlement package up to two years prior to leaving), as well as a pension and a gratuity.
 - Problems experienced by this group tend to be short term. In particular, breaking with a community as all-encompassing as the Armed Forces requires a period of adjustment.
 3. **Those veterans who have reached old age.** This group is mostly made up of those who served in the Second World War or undertook National Service. Their needs are generally those of old age rather than direct products of their service, although in some cases they may also be suffering from the delayed onset of problems related to their military service. The number of veterans overall can be expected to halve by 2027 as a result of mortality.⁴⁷

Northern Ireland Aftercare Service

In Northern Ireland, there are particular issues relating to veterans that need to be addressed. In 2007, the MOD established the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) and Royal Irish Regiment Aftercare Service to provide medical, vocational, welfare and benevolence support to the UDR and Royal Irish (Home Service) veterans. It is subject to review at the four-year point (2011). Funding was originally ring fenced until 2016, but there appears to be an assumption that the funding stream will cease at the five-year point. HQ Northern Ireland is currently challenging this assumption. Due to the demand-led nature of some services, the costs of provision have been lower than budgeted, enabling savings to be handed back (approximately £500K per year). One possibility currently under consideration is to extend this scheme to cover all veterans based in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland⁴⁸ under the Army Recovery Capability, which estimates suggest could be achieved at little or no additional cost. The Task Force fully supports this proposal.

4.1 Administration of Veterans

Problem

The principal aim of the MOD, rightly, is to deliver military capability rather than to administer welfare services; the latter falls under the remit of other government departments, with additional support provided by the Service charities. The MOD's legal obligation is for the timely and accurate payment of pensions and compensation. Over the last decade, the MOD has also accepted a wider moral responsibility for the welfare of Service and ex-Service personnel. This has been expressed through policy initiatives and the Government's acceptance of the Service Personnel Command Paper. Arguably, however, it is contradictory for a Ministry to be an employer and provider of services to its direct employees while also lobbying for those whom it has ceased to employ, especially when their grievances may derive directly from their relationship with their employer. The veterans need a champion; this issue goes to the heart of what we understand as a functioning Military Covenant.

⁴⁷ Royal British Legion (2006): *Profile and Needs of the Ex-Service Community 2005-2020*.

⁴⁸ Combat Stress currently estimate this at 300,000 veterans from the Second World War onwards; it is possible that NI may have around 150,000. The UDR and R IRISH (HS) had 63,000.

The veterans' services element of the Service Personnel and Veterans' Agency (SPVA) is primarily a pensions' delivery unit, and any additional functions it has taken on board are not necessarily core activities. Its Veterans Welfare Services (VWS) are focused on war pension and compensation issues, rather than on the care of veterans and their families in the community. It does not see its role as lobbying on behalf of veterans but as assisting them with determining entitlements to statutory provisions.

US, Canada and Australia have created veterans' ministries to resolve these tensions. This seems to be an excessive response to a manageable problem. The Task Force suggests alternative policy options below.

Policy options

1. Veterans' Commissioner or Champion

Consideration should be given to the concept of a Veterans' Commissioner or Champion, to represent the interests of veterans and also to frame veteran-specific policy. Such a person could be **appointed by the PM** (possibly operating through a department external to the MOD such as the Cabinet Office). Another option for the exercise of such duties might be to **enhance the duties of the Chief Executive of the SPVA**. Further discussion across the public/private and charitable sectors should be undertaken to develop the potential role, responsibilities and authority of such an appointment.

2. Delivery of Veterans' Welfare

A Veterans Commissioner or Champion could be supported by an advisory committee made up of personnel representatives of the services, other government departments, devolved governments and the relevant Service charities. Delivery of veterans' welfare is the responsibility of many separate organisations, public and charitable. It is best achieved at the local level (see below) but it will still require some measure of co-ordination. Again, a department external to the MOD (such as the Cabinet Office) could be the most appropriate home for a small dedicated team.

4.2 Recognition for Veterans

Problem

Currently veterans have no convenient way to identify themselves. A recognised identity card would allow veterans to identify themselves to service providers and to claim any discounts offered by private companies. Another possibility could be a chip and pin card which could also allow veterans to access intranet and pension details online, as discussed above (section 3.2.2). Such a card would need to be more secure and more closely administered than a discount card. Any card would not necessarily grant veterans access to military establishments but would enable them to identify themselves to seek permission to do so. The Royal Marines (RM) already allow access to a discrete group through the "Red Card" scheme. This entitles senior retired non-commissioned officers who have completed 22 years service to access any RM Sergeants' mess.

Policy options

1. Veterans' Privilege Card for all veterans.

There are a number of options available for providing such a card:

- **Charging users.** If there were obvious benefits from such a card (as is the case in the US) veterans would be willing to pay for the initial card and for its replacement if lost. This could cover the costs of the card (£10 for a chip and pin card) and some of the administrative costs.
- **Update Service ID card.** With chip and pin technology, the veteran could retain the same ID card as that held while in service. A more low-tech solution would be simply to punch a hole in the Service ID card.

- **Charitable funding.** One military charity has expressed an interest in funding a veterans' card scheme, and this option could be pursued further if desired.

2. Broaden identification with the term “veteran.” The word veteran needs to be rebranded to ensure that the current body of “veterans” identify with it. The public face of veterans is the Royal British Legion, but in 2005 only 7% of the current veteran population reported that they were members⁴⁹, and in the minds of many the RBL is associated disproportionately with the two world wars.

4.3 Coordination of veterans' charities

Problem

There are a large number of different Service charities: numbers ranging from 161 to over 700 to just short of 2000 have been cited. Collectively these charities have considerable resources, and many offer excellent support to veterans. However, the sheer diversity of the sector means that veterans in need can be confused as to whom to turn. There is concern that the full resources available to veterans are not being tapped: too many charities mean that too much is going on overheads; some are sitting on significant reserves; others were set up for purposes which are no longer relevant; and their activities tend to be determined by their own priorities rather than the needs of veterans.⁵⁰ So confused is the current landscape that in theory nothing prevents a veteran falsely claiming funding from separate charities for the same problem⁵¹. The Confederation of British Service and Ex-Service Organisations⁵² (COBSEO) brings together the principal organisations in the ex-Service charitable sector and aims to improve collaboration, co-ordination, and latterly co-location. It acts as a point of focus for common issues and has been successful in interacting with government, but is not an entity in itself. COBSEO is a confederation and acts only with consensus.

Policy options

- 1. The Big Lottery Fund (BLF) has allocated £35m** to its ‘Forces in Mind’ programme to support veterans of more recent conflicts (including Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia, among others). Preliminary discussions suggest the Fund, via an independent UK-wide Trust, intends to allocate some of this money to coordinate veterans' charities. Proposals on outcomes will be dependent on the content of the bids. The trust will be established by July 2011.
- 2. The Task Force also suggests other options for achieving this coordination** (these are not necessarily mutually exclusive):
 - **Services and Veterans' Charities Advisory Board** – a Central Advisory Committee already exists within the MOD in order to provide advice on pensions and compensation. An enhanced body, to include key ex-Service organisations and single Service representatives, could set priorities and steer the overall MOD and ex-Service organisations' agenda. It could possibly exercise these additional responsibilities under a Veterans Commissioner or Champion (see above).
 - **Options for strengthening COBSEO** – It may seem logical to address the problems of co-ordination by enhancing COBSEO; however, this is too simplistic an approach. COBSEO is currently limited in its operation by both its constitution and its funding

⁴⁹ Royal British Legion, *Profile of ex-Service community in the UK*, November 2005 p. 24.

⁵⁰ A recent RUSI report concluded that: ‘At a time when the charities’ sphere of activity looks set to expand due to streamlining within the MOD, and when achieving previous levels of income is far from certain, a more efficient charity sector with a clear division of labour and responsibilities is crucial’. Royal United Services Institute, *Whither welfare? Structuring welfare in the military community*, Occasional Paper, April 2010, p. 10

⁵¹ A COBSEO-endorsed, SSAFA Forces Help-designed, web-based, Casework Management System has been introduced which should prevent this from occurring in the large Service charities.

⁵² COBSEO is funded from subscriptions and contributions from its member charities.

(which is derived from its members). Therefore, its potential to be a major player is restricted by the willingness of the charitable organisations it serves. It has had several successes but without greater support from its members it cannot give effective consideration to an enhancement of its role.

- **A framework for coordinating the activities of veterans' charities.** COBSEO is seeking to develop further co-operation among charities, through the establishment of seven cluster groups (similar to the model already used by Veterans Scotland⁵³). Each cluster group could bring together parties/agencies with specific interests, for example Retirement and Care Homes, with a nominated ex-Service charity as a lead. Such collaboration could develop more effective and efficient services provided the individual charities are supportive. Another example is the cooperation between RBL, Combat Stress and DoH as part of the Strategic Partnering Programme.⁵⁴
 - **A “shopping list” of areas of greatest need** could be compiled to help guide charities on how their funding could best be directed, either by the bodies suggested above or by the Veterans Commissioner or Champion. Other government departments could consider a similar approach to that adopted by the DoH, in which areas of need are identified based on data collected at local level.⁵⁵
 - The Community Covenant could provide **a framework for charities to link up with local services to determine the needs of veterans in their area.** It should be noted that Local Authorities would have an incentive to coordinate charities as it gives them a chance to tap into huge resources. Case study: Mike Jackson house (see box 5).
- 3. A “one stop local shop” for veterans.** UK-wide support for veterans is currently provided by the SPVA's Veterans Welfare Service through its SPVA Veterans' Helpline which can put them in contact with their local welfare managers (71 individuals). This support at the national level could be enhanced by greater involvement from charities locally – such as the Combat Stress Outreach Capability, which plans to deploy 14 teams throughout the country – so as to establish centres similar to Veterans First Point across the UK. **Veterans First Point** is a single drop-in service for veterans in central Edinburgh, providing a trained psychologist and adopting an integrated approach to veterans' problems (finance, housing, isolation, unemployment). COBSEO is exploring the creation of “offices of veterans' affairs” at a local level on lines similar to Veterans First Point. A “one stop shop” for veterans would require local community involvement and awareness. The support of Local Authorities will be key to the successful utilisation of such a network. Local Authorities would need to alert other agencies likely to encounter veterans and their needs (the housing agencies and the health services most obviously) of its existence.
- 4. A single veterans' charity online portal.**⁵⁶ Currently a veteran seeking help is faced with information organised around the identities of numerous and often competing charities, rather than the needs of the individual veteran. A single online portal – either at a local or national level – would allow a veteran in need to be quickly directed to the relevant charity. Currently the Veterans' UK website (administered by SPVA) provides details of around 100 ex-Service

⁵³ Veterans Scotland has already achieved a greater measure of cooperation among charities through co-locating the principal Service charities in one building and creating four pillars – care, housing, membership, and support – under which each of the Service charities in Scotland must identify its activities.

⁵⁴ Strategic Partnering Programme enables charitable organisations to work in partnership with the DoH, NHS and Social Care to help shape and deliver policies and programmes for the benefit of the charitable organisation and improved health and wellbeing outcomes.

⁵⁵ Joint Strategic Needs Assessments have been a statutory duty for all PCTs and upper tier local authorities since 2008. JSNA establishes a clear overarching position of local health and wellbeing needs; incorporating contributions from a range of stakeholders, including wider statutory partners, providers from public, private and voluntary sector, and members of the local community.

⁵⁶ DMC Head of Online Media engagement is currently investigating provision of an Armed Forces portal within www.direct.gov.uk

organisations; however, there is a need for a more interactive, user-friendly service centred on the needs of the veteran. Such a portal, like “Start Here”⁵⁷, could potentially be coordinated by one of the major Service charities on a national level, or by the SPVA as part of its Veterans’ Welfare Service. Alternatively, information about local charities could be provided alongside information about public services and discounts through the Community Covenant (as is the case in the US).

- 5. Remove barriers to cooperation between charities and the military.** Currently the MOD guidelines states that Service charities must be charged for any use of service facilities, on the grounds that the MOD ‘cannot subsidise any non-public organisation on purely charitable grounds’.⁵⁸ These guidelines are based on Treasury rules governing the charging for use of publicly funded assets, and it would be for the Treasury to allow any exemptions. However, we note that this presents a barrier to greater cooperation between the military and charitable organisations and would encourage consideration of this option in line with the theme of the Big Society.

Box 5: Charity coordination in practice: Mike Jackson House

- Mike Jackson House, a supported temporary housing project in Hampshire for homeless veterans, illustrates how cooperation between private, public and charitable sector can help support the military community.
- It provides 25 self-contained one-bed flats as well as communal meeting and training rooms. It is built on land donated by the MOD and is funded by capital grants from CLG, Rushmoor Borough Council, Hampshire County Council and Service charities. It works with local housing associations and employers to help veterans find permanent housing and work.
- Mike Jackson House is run by a housing association, ECHG, which runs the Single Persons Accommodation for the Ex-Services project (SPACES), based at Catterick Garrison in North Yorkshire. SPACES provides an accommodation placement service for single personnel leaving the services, working to help veterans find temporary or permanent housing through private landlords, Local Authorities, housing associations, charity housing projects and supported housing.

4.4 Mental health

Veterans’ mental health is the subject of a separate report by Andrew Murrison MP. Recommendations, which we endorse, include:

- Building a **greater focus on mental health** into service and discharge medical examinations.
- Establishing a **Veterans’ Information Service** to allow follow-up of discharged regulars and reserves after 12 months, including transfer of relevant details to the veteran’s GP (opt-out rather than opt-in).
- An **increase in the numbers of mental health professionals** (to one per two Mental Health Trusts), who will undertake outreach work to identify cases and refer to veterans organisations and other professionals.
- An **online mental wellbeing website**, based on the model pioneered by social enterprise Big White Wall (www.bigwhitewall.com), to engage those reluctant to access traditional clinical services.

5. The Armed Forces and Society

At one level the relationship between the Armed Forces and society is in a much better state than it was five years ago. Public awareness of the work of the services has increased enormously, and contact through Remembrance Sunday, Armed Forces Day, and television broadcasting from Wootton Bassett has generated sympathy for the losses of life and limb sustained by those who

⁵⁷ <http://www.starthere.info/trbl/>

⁵⁸ Joint Service Paper 462, page 19, paragraph 3.

serve. However, sympathy does not generate understanding. In particular, many people in Britain have little or no contact with the Armed Forces or military life. Many of the recommendations which follow build on this sympathy and set out to consolidate it, but they also seek to create a greater and more enduring understanding.

Government can do much to encourage and enable expressions of public support, and the **Armed Forces Community Covenant**, already suggested above, could become a framework for the development of some of the ideas which follow. The most successful campaigns are likely to be those based on grass roots support or which particularly capture the public imagination (such as the great success of Help For Heroes). It is difficult for Government to recreate such success, but it can do much to enable and empower communities who wish to offer their support.

Policy options

1. **“Covenant or Chief of Defence Staff’s Commendation”.** Those institutions and individuals outside the service who do outstanding work for the military community should be eligible for the award of a “Covenant Commendation”, presented by the Chief of the Defence Staff. This could be awarded to an individual (such as a nurse who has supported wounded soldiers), a business (such as an employer who provides exemplary support to the military) or even a town (such as Wootton Bassett). This would demonstrate that the military acknowledges and appreciates the support shown by the wider community.
2. **Opportunities to show support.** Local communities might like to consider the development of ‘Friends of the Armed Forces’, an initiative of the Royal British Legion, and of the ‘Show your support campaign’, which has grown out of Armed Forces Day.
3. **Moving beyond Armed Forces Day.** Armed Forces Day works well at the national level, and there are undoubted successes at the local level too. For some communities (such as those a long way from any major military presence) there may be other opportunities for much more effective events, such as Remembrance Sunday. At the local level, Homecoming Parades have proved to be particularly popular.
4. **Encourage military parades and open days.** Military parades, military bands, opportunities to see the equipment of the Armed Forces, and open days at military bases all have a very positive effect on civilian support for the Armed Forces. Treasury rules (see section 4.3.5) can create barriers here. However, the cost to the military can be kept low and could even make money: the Edinburgh Military Tattoo now sells out completely before its first performance and generates funds for Service charities. Possible future reductions in uniformed personnel may make public interaction more difficult to achieve; however, this could present an ideal opportunity for veterans and cadets to raise the profile of the Armed Forces.
5. **Encourage Olympic involvement.** Greater military involvement in the 2012 Olympics could raise the public profile of the Armed Forces. Examples include a ‘Fitness Trail’ (similar to the ‘Piping Trail’ held throughout Scotland, culminating at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe); and the involvement of Service personnel (including seriously injured) in supporting roles in the Games.
6. **Encourage greater civic participation among the Armed Forces community.** All members of the Armed Forces can make a contribution to wider understanding of the military: as parents, they can speak in their children’s schools about their jobs; as local residents, they can engage with the local council. The more military personnel meet civilians in their daily lives the greater will be civilian understanding. Making CRB checks portable, as noted above, would also help enable this.
7. **Military medical professionals in NHS Trusts.** Successful medical care is largely dependent upon those uniformed secondary care personnel who are embedded in NHS Hospital Trusts. The benefits that military staff can bring to the NHS are as important as the skills that the NHS imparts to those personnel. Mutual understanding and respect for

these different requirements is an essential component in retaining critical military skills for casualty care. These ambassadors for the Armed Forces already play a highly visible role in the local community.

- 8. Public presentations by returning Service personnel.** The emerging practice of those returning from operations delivering talks on their tours of deployment (Post-Operation Presentations or POPS) has been very well received. This allows those who have done a job, including those of other ranks, to talk about it first-hand rather than via the media and without coming across as a deliberate marketing exercise. POPS should be directed at those who are not already initiated in the ways of the Armed Forces, perhaps to schools and to the parents of pupils. The MOD should ensure that unnecessary regulatory barriers do not prevent these events taking place.
- 9. Sharing military facilities with civilians.** When a military establishment and a civilian community sit alongside each other they should make arrangements for the sharing of sporting facilities and other facilities: for example the public should be able to use a military swimming pool when it is not in regular use by the troops, and schools might use football pitches at weekends. The Task Force encourages the MOD and the Treasury to revisit the rules and guidelines which currently require DE to charge for such use, with a view to providing free or low-cost access to military facilities (social and sporting) as a means of underpinning local Community Covenants.
- 10. Remove barriers to community engagement.** Policy encourages public engagement but in practice barriers sometimes discourage it. For example, the practice of charging for public appearances by personnel or units makes such engagement more difficult. (See above regarding Treasury rules in section 4.3.5). Similarly, restrictions on entry to bases for local politicians (such as councillors) can restrict opportunities for wider community engagement with the military. Consideration should be given as to how such barriers could be reduced.
- 11. Encourage personnel to talk and write about their experiences.** This could increase understanding of what the services do and provide possible therapeutic benefit to personnel through sharing their experience. Existing examples include:
 - 'Operation Homecoming', sponsored by Boeing in the United States, is an excellent example of what can be achieved, enabling Servicemen and women to find a voice which they did not know they had and allowing them to engage with local people: their writings have now been published in book form.
 - 'War Story' at the Imperial War Museum, supported by Boeing. The project, 'War Story', engages with personnel before and after their operational deployments.
 - Edinburgh Public Libraries have run a scheme which enabled veterans to speak about their experiences.
- 12. Greater contact with regional media.** The regional media are very good allies of the Armed Forces, thriving on good news stories of Service personnel from their areas or on activities centred on local bases. The Community Covenant provides an ideal opportunity for greater engagement with local media, an aspect of the initiative which has proved highly successful in the USA (see box 1).
- 13. Support cultural events relating to the Armed Forces.** There is scope to engage with the public through wider cultural channels. For example, Sir David Richards' decision to support a full day of plays on Afghanistan, 'The Great Game', at the Tricycle Theatre in London helped create a greater understanding of the conflict and the role of the British Army within it; showed the British Army in an unfamiliar light, as supporter of the arts and as ready to engage with a more critical and radical audience; and generally generated good publicity.
- 14. Build stronger relationships with universities.** Between the late 1960s and the end of the Cold War, the MOD promoted wider understanding of strategic issues by supporting the establishments of Defence Lectureships in British universities and by sending mid-career officers to universities as Defence Fellows. Since the creation of the Defence Academy,

study of defence issues has been drawn further into professional military education. Greater engagement could benefit both the military (through links with language, anthropology and comparable departments) and promote understanding of the military among an important section of society.

- 15. Encourage participation in the parliamentary process.** The House of Commons Defence Committee is the Parliamentary conduit for greater public understanding of the Armed Forces and their missions: the chiefs of staff, families' federations and key Service charities should be routinely asked to give evidence.

Annex A – Armed Forces Covenant Task Force Terms of Reference

Background

1. On the back of the Government’s stated commitment to rebuild the Military Covenant, the Prime Minister has decided to establish an Armed Forces Covenant Taskforce in order to explore fresh ways of thinking about how to restore the Covenant and to find innovative solutions to the most difficult problems facing serving and former Service personnel and their families. The Strategic Defence and Security Review is already undertaking a review of the Covenant, attempting to establish a definition of the covenant and to determine criteria for success in rebuilding it. The role of the Taskforce is not to pre-empt the conclusions of this review, but to seek innovative, low-cost approaches to some of the known issues faced by Service personnel and their families.

2. The Taskforce will need to work across government, looking for alternatives to “big government” solutions and involving the private and voluntary sectors where possible. It will report to the External Reference Group, which will continue to play an important role in defining the problems which need to be solved.

Role

3. The role of Taskforce is to identify, assess and recommend innovative ways in which the Government, and society as a whole, can fulfil its obligations to rebuild the Military Covenant. To this end it should:

- a. Identify the most important gaps in what the Nation and Government currently do to fulfil the Military Covenant, drawing on the views of key stakeholders, and in particular the direction given by the External Reference Group. Areas of focus may include:
 - Ensuring fair access to public services for Service personnel and their families, including NHS services, housing and schools;
 - Ensuring spouses and other family members of Service personnel receive adequate support (including provision of good quality housing and access to childcare) are not disadvantaged in education or employment due to frequent moves of home;
 - Support for Service leavers and former Service personnel, including help finding employment, readjustment to civilian life, and mental health support;
 - Ensuring good quality treatment and long-term support for those injured in conflict;
 - Support for bereaved families, including short term and longer-term support for spouses and dependants;
 - Building greater respect for and understanding of the military within society more widely.
- b. Drawing on examples of international best practice, explore a range of ideas for addressing these gaps, including radical or unconventional options. These ideas should involve looking beyond Government for sources of funding and encouraging actions and contributions from society itself.
- c. Consult widely across different tiers of Government and the private, voluntary and charity sectors on the viability of these ideas.
- d. Prepare a report outlining the most promising ideas including timescales, costs (and where they would be borne), benefits and risks.

- e. Present their conclusions to the External Reference Group and the PM as required by the beginning of September 2010.

Governance and Composition

4. The Taskforce will be based nominally in the Cabinet Office under the supervision of Chris Wormald and the Secretariat. It will be tasked by the External Reference Group. Its membership will be made up of:

- a. An MOD Senior Civil Servant, as the only full-time member of the Taskforce, on secondment to the Cabinet Office for the duration of the taskforce's work;
- b. Professor Hew Strachan, a member of the ERG;
- c. A part-time representative of the MOD Covenant Team;
- d. A part-time representative of the No 10 Strategy Unit Home Affairs Team;
- e. A PhD student or graduate intern;
- f. A secondee from one of the main think tanks or campaign groups; and,
- g. A secretary provided by the MOD Covenant Team.

In addition, external representatives will be consulted as required, including:

- Think tanks [RUSI, etc];
- Representatives from the private and voluntary and charitable sectors; and,
- Representatives from the services.

5. The Taskforce will determine its own working methods. However a likely approach is that the team will operate virtually, coming together at regular intervals (e.g. in workshops etc) to exchange ideas, under the chairmanship of Prof Strachan.

6. The Taskforce will maintain contact with those conducting other strands of work on the Armed Forces Covenant, and ensure that its work is consistent with emerging findings of the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

Annex B – Summary of those consulted

Membership of the External Reference Group August 2009 – July 2010

ARMED FORCES ADVOCATES

Cabinet Office	ERG Chair Director General Domestic Policy Group, Cabinet Office
Department for Work and Pensions	Director of Benefit Strategy, Welfare and Wellbeing Group
Department of Health	Chief Executive Sheffield Teaching Hospitals and DH co-chair of the MOD/UK Depts of Health Partnership Board
Department for Transport	Legal Advisor
Department for Education	Director, School Formation and Investment
Business, Innovation and Skills	Director, Student Finance Strategy
Department for Communities and Local Government	Director, Housing Strategy & Support
Her Majesty's Treasury	Policy Advisor, Defence, Intelligence and Diplomacy Team
Home Office	Deputy Chief Executive, UK Borders Agency
Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs	Director, Benefits and Credits
Welsh Assembly Government	Director General for Public Services and Local Government Delivery
Scottish Executive	Director-General for Health and Chief Executive NHS Scotland

EXTERNALS

Confederation Of British Service and Ex-Service Organisations (COBSEO)

Royal British Legion (RBL)

Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA)

War Widows Association (WWA)

Naval Families Federation

Army Families Federation

RAF Families Federation

Prof Hew Strachan, Oxford University

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE REPRESENTATION

Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff for Personnel & Training

Director, Service Personnel Policy

Others consulted

Focus groups with:

Service Personnel Directors

Service Charities

Other Government Departments

Families Federations

Royal College of Defence Studies Students

HQ Northern Ireland

145 Brigade and representatives of Hampshire County Council

51 Brigade and 2 Division

Services Personnel and Veterans' Agency, Norcross

Dr Helen McCartney, Sarah Ingham (both King's College London) and Anthea Lemmon attended and assisted with the focus groups

The Rt Hon James Arbuthnot, Chairman, House of Commons Defence Committee

Dr Susan Atkins, Service Complaints Commissioner

Lisa Bainbridge, Head of Public Policy, RBL

Admiral Sir Jonathan Band, formerly First Sea Lord

Allison Barrie, RUSI

Colonel Beverly Bergman, Military Medical Liaison Officer, Chief Medical Officer and Public Health Directorate, Scottish Government

Lt Col Sally Coulthard, Defence Career Partnering

Squadron-Leader Jason Chalk, DCDS PERS-PM-SO2

Major General Peter Currie, Lt Govnr, Royal Hospital Chelsea

Professor Christopher Dandeker, King's College London

General Sir Richard Dannatt, former Chief of the General Staff

Kate Farrell, Project Compass – Programme Manager, Crisis

Captain Malcolm Farrow RN, Assistant General Secretary, Forces Pension Society

Lt Gen Sir Rob Fry, formerly Royal Marines, Trustee, Help for Heroes

Dr Claire Fyvie, Clinical Director, Veterans First Point

Major Andrew Godefroy, Canadian Army

Professor David Greenaway, former Chairman of the Armed Forces Pay Review Board

Major-General Andrew Gregory, DG Pers, Army

Chris Harris, for the Mark Wright Project

Abigail Harwood, Experian

Paul Hayllor, Project Co-ordinator, Veterans First Point

Sam Heywood, Imperial War Museum

Air Cdre Dan Hill, Head of Strategy and Programmes, DCDS (PERS)

Michael Hockney

Brigadier David Homer, Head of TESR

Major-General Buster Howes, Commandant General Royal Marines
 Lt Gen Sir Alistair Irwin, former Adjutant General, President of Poppy Scotland and Veterans Scotland
 Surgeon Rear Admiral Lionel J Jarvis, Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Health)
 Lt Col Phil Joyce, Hasler Company Royal Marines
 Gillian Key-Vice, Head of Government Affairs, Experian
 Lt Gen Sir John Kiszely, former Director, Defence Academy, and President, RBL
 Peter Lamb, Strategy and Business Development – Manager, HP Enterprise Services
 Air Vice-Marshal Paul Luker, Reserve Forces and Cadets Association
 Dawn McCafferty, RAF Families Federation
 Julie McCarthy, Army Families Federation
 Mark McGann, Deputy Director, Policy, Big Lottery Fund
 Brigadier Justin Maciejewski, 12 Mechanized Brigade
 Rebecca Maciejewski
 John McKinnon, Secretary and Chief Executive, Ministry of Defence, New Zealand
 Lt General Mark Mans, Adjutant General
 Commodore Michael Mansergh, Director Navy Personnel
 Major Steve Melbourne RM, Hasler Company Royal Marines
 Major General A.G. Melick, Head, Cadet, Reserve and Employer Support Division, Australian Army
 Major General Mungo Melvin, Royal College of Defence Studies
 Rob Moorhead, Department of Health
 Brigadier Hugh Monro, HM Chief of Inspector of Prisoners, Scottish Government
 Alister Murphy, Armed Forces and Veterans' Issues Team Leader, Scottish Government
 Air Vice-Marshal David Murray, ACDS (PERS)
 Pat Murray, Head of Press, Big Lottery Fund
 Dr Andrew Murrison MP
 Alex Neil MSP, Minister for Communities and Veterans, Scotland
 Group Captain Paul O'Neill, DACOS Pers Strat, RAF
 Richard Ottaway, General Manager and Secretary for War Pensions, Veterans' Affairs, NZ
 Ian Parker, Head of Estates Practice, Hampshire County Council
 Bryn Parry, Help for Heroes
 Major-General Jacko Page
 Claire Phillips, Deputy Director - Violence, Social Exclusion, Military Health and Third Sector Programme Department of Health
 Peter Poole, Combat Stress
 Elizabeth Quintana, RUSI
 General Lord Ramsbotham, former Adjutant General and HM Inspector of Prisons (England)
 Wg Cdr D J Read, Pensions Compensation and Veterans, MOD
 General Sir David Richards, Chief of the General Staff and Chief of the Defence Staff (desig)
 Kim Richardson, Naval Families Federation
 Dr Emyr Roberts, DG - Public Services & Local Government Delivery, Wales
 Lt Gen Sir Bill Rollo, DCDS (PERS), and former Adjutant General
 Commodore Angus Ross, DGHRCs- Corp Services Advisor
 David Rutter, Department of Health
 Major-General David Shaw, GOC, 2 Division
 Grp Capt Carol Smith, DCDS Pers-SCW-AFW Asst Head
 Lt Col Mike Smith (retd), Casualty Officer, The Rifles
 Air Vice Marshal Tony Stables, Chairman of COBSEO
 Colonel Edward W Thomas, USAF Commander, 673rd Mission Support Group, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson
 Tony Symmonds, Secretary, Armed Forces Pay Review Body
 Tracey Vennai, Deputy Head, Pensions Compensation and Veterans, MOD

Professor Pascal Vennesson, European University Institute, Florence (on France)
Dr S A Wareing, Firm Base, 145 Brigade
Professor Simon Wessely, Director of the King's Centre for Military Health Research
Brigadier Mark Wheeler, New Zealand Defence Forces
Corps RSM Mark Wicks Royal Marines
Vice-Admiral Peter Wilkinson, formerly DCDS (PERS)
Commodore Simon Williams, Director Naval Personnel Strategy
Rear-Admiral James Wisecup, United States Navy
Dr Kevin Woods, Scottish Government and Armed Forces Advocate

Annex C – Publications and reports consulted

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Annex D – Further research required

In order to achieve progress on the Military Covenant in the short and medium term, it is important to make use of existing evidence to identify gaps in provision. There are also areas where further research would be beneficial. The Task Force realises that in the current financial climate the MOD is unlikely to fund further research, but it believes that some of the UK funding councils, especially the Economic and Social Research Council and Medical Research Council, might well support targeted studies. There are also other bodies, such as the King's Centre for Military Health Research, which are well qualified to conduct the necessary research.

Possible areas for further exploration include:

- ❖ Outcomes of service for Reservists, and comparability with Regulars (health, employment, etc).
- ❖ The relationship between childcare provision and retention.
- ❖ Mapping the likely impact of mental illness as a result of service over time.
- ❖ The profile of the service community in prison: length of service, family background, age, etc.
- ❖ The relationship between educational attainment and long-term retention.
- ❖ The relationship between a particular outcome in service and family circumstances, background and need.

Annex E – Abbreviations

AH	Annington Homes
BFPOs	British Forces Post Offices
BLF	Big Lottery Fund
CLG	Communities and Local Government
COBSEO	Confederation of British Service and Ex-Service Organisations
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
DCP	Defence Career Partnering
DE	Defence Estates
DMS	Defence Medical Services
DoH	Department of Health
ECHG	English Churches Housing Group
ERG	External Reference Group
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
HIC	Home Information Centre
JPA	Joint Personnel Administration
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessments
LA	Local Authority
LSAP	Long Service Advance of Pay
MHS	MODern Housing Solutions
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NAO	National Audit Office
NEM	New Employment Model
NHS	National Health Service
PCTs	Primary Care Trusts
POPs	Post-Operation Presentations
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RAF	Royal Air Force
RBL	Royal British Legion
RCGP	Royal College of General Practitioners
RFCAs	Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations
RM	Royal Marine

RMR	Royal Marine Reserve
RN	Royal Navy
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
SaBRE	Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers
SDSR	Strategic Defence and Security Review
SFA	Service Families Accommodation
SPCP	Service Personnel Command Paper
SSAFA	Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association
SVCAB	Services and Veterans' Charities Advisory Board
SVPA	Service Personnel and Veterans' Agency
UDR	Ulster Defence Regiment
VWS	Veterans Welfare Services