



Strategy for our Veterans

UK Government Consultation Response



Contents

Foreword	1
Introduction	3
Section 1 – Progress since November 2018	7
Section 2 – Summary of initial analysis of Strategy for our Veterans UK Government Consultation	9
Cross-cutting Factor 1: Collaboration between organisations	12
Cross-cutting Factor 2: Co-ordination of Veterans’ services	13
Cross-cutting Factor 3: Data on the Veteran community	15
Cross-cutting Factor 4: Public perception and understanding	16
Cross-cutting Factor 5: Recognition of Veterans	17
Key Theme 1: Community and relationships	19
Key Theme 2: Employment, education and skills	20
Key Theme 3: Finance and debt	21
Key Theme 4: Health and wellbeing	22
Key Theme 5: Making a home in civilian society	24
Key Theme 6: Veterans and the law	25
Section 3 – Government response to the Consultation	26
Section 3.1 – Summary of current UK Government support to veterans	26
Section 3.2 – Initial UK Government Action Plan (2019-2021)	33

Foreword

Jointly from Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office and Minister for Defence People and Veterans

Most of us are fortunate to live in a country, in an era, where war is a distant event. Not so the members of our Armed Forces, who for their courage and sacrifice deserve the gratitude and respect of the nation – and, significantly, our support – during their service and ever after. Our vision, set out in this Action Plan, is to make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran.

In 2018, the first UK-wide Strategy for our Veterans, published jointly by the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments, outlined our commitment to supporting veterans across society. This report draws on public responses to the Strategy to show how we plan to change lives for the better, for the long term, by championing veterans' needs and removing unfair barriers to their progress.

No two veterans are the same and neither are their needs. Service Personnel know this from their own experience. It is also recognised by veterans' charities and the many local authorities, academics, volunteer groups, public sector colleagues and private companies that responded to the consultation on how best to bring the Strategy to life and achieve its ambitions. As the ministers appointed to lead the new Office for Veterans' Affairs, we welcome the range of opinions and thoughtful nature of so many replies. They underline the powerful public support for veterans rooted within UK society.

Establishing the Office for Veterans' Affairs at the heart of Government last year ensures that, for the first time, veterans' interests and needs are overseen by a dedicated ministerial team. We are proud to be leading the Office for Veterans' Affairs at this time of great change and opportunity. The Queen's Speech spelled out the Government's commitments to incorporate the Armed Forces Covenant further into law and to bring forward proposals to tackle vexatious claims that undermine Serving Personnel and veterans alike.

Our manifesto also committed to introducing a veterans' railcard, reducing National Insurance contributions for employers of ex-Service Personnel and guaranteeing job interviews for veterans applying for public sector roles. Work to implement these plans is already underway across Government, building on existing valuable public sector schemes to support Service Personnel and their families after they have left the Armed Forces.

There is much, much, more still to do. The consultation confirmed that there is no room for complacency and this Action Plan is just the beginning. Challenges for our veterans include dealing with persistent issues around data sharing, outdated record systems and an overly complex verification process for confirming that an individual has served in our Armed Forces.

We must also promote the outstanding contribution veterans make to society and our economy, and the value they offer businesses from their experience of leadership, teamwork, discipline and loyalty. This Action Plan represents a step-change in the government's approach to veterans and reflects our enduring gratitude to those who risk their lives for our safety and for the security of the nation. We look forward to working with you all to achieve its ambitions to support our brave veterans.



**Paymaster General and
Minister for Cabinet Office**
Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Oliver Dowden", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.



**Minister for Defence People
and Veterans**
Johnny Mercer MP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized "JM", with a horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Introduction

In November 2018, the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments jointly published the Strategy for our Veterans (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-for-our-veterans>). By 2028, the aim is that every veteran will feel more valued, supported and empowered, and in accordance with the Armed Forces Covenant, will never be disadvantaged in accessing public or commercial services as a result of their service. To achieve this, the Strategy set out an enduring Vision and Principles, as well as Outcomes against five Cross-Cutting Factors and six Key Themes that affect veterans' lives. A recap is on pages 5 and 6.

In support of the Strategy, the UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments each undertook its own consultation exercise to inform how it could achieve the Strategy's aims within their respective areas of responsibility, beyond what was already provided. The Strategy itself, as agreed government policy, was not subject to public consultation.

The Strategy for our Veterans UK Government Consultation Paper covered the UK, except for devolved matters in Scotland and Wales (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strategy-for-our-veterans-uk-government-consultation-paper>). The consultation used focused questions to seek public views on how the Strategy might be implemented. The questions built on the research and engagement conducted to produce the Strategy, against a backdrop of what was already delivered. We are grateful to all those who took the time to contribute to the consultation. This was the first time such a wide-ranging public consultation had been held on veterans' issues and we were delighted to receive a high level of response from across the Armed Forces community, private and charitable sectors.

This document is the response to the UK Government Consultation Paper, containing a summary of the contributions and the initial action plan to move towards achieving the Strategy's Outcomes. These are important first steps, but they are only the first steps. There will be further action plans and we will develop a mechanism for accountability and reviewing delivery regularly. We will provide annual updates on progress.

The Scottish and Welsh Governments will be responding separately to their consultations, and the three governments will continue to collaborate to enable delivery across the whole of the UK.

Structure of this document

This response is structured into the following sections:

Section 1 – Progress since November 2018

This lists the progress that the government has made since the publication of the Strategy for our Veterans.

Section 2 – Summary of initial analysis of Strategy for our Veterans UK Government Consultation

This section provides a summary of the initial analysis of contributions to the Strategy for our Veterans UK Government Consultation Paper. This is a broad initial analysis of the data and more detailed analysis of separate aspects will be undertaken by individual departments to inform future action plans.

Section 3 – Government Response to the Consultation

The UK Government response to this consultation is divided into two sections:

Section 3.1 – Summary of current UK Government support to veterans

This section summarises what the UK Government currently does to specifically support veterans, in addition to that already available to them as civilians. This has been included because the consultation identified that some respondents were unaware of what UK Government currently provides, and many suggestions of what government should do to implement the Strategy referred to services that are already provided.

Section 3.2 – Initial UK Government Action Plan (2019 to 2021)

This initial action plan contains commitments we'll aim to deliver within the next two years. As with the Strategy, the basis for this is the work that is already underway across the UK to support veterans, as shown in Section 3.1. This initial action plan focuses on central UK Government actions and we will develop a mechanism for accountability and reviewing delivery regularly. However, central government cannot achieve the aims of the Strategy on its own, which is why we will continue to work in conjunction with service deliverers across the UK who support veterans to produce future iterations of the action plan.

VISION

This Strategy has a 10 year scope to 2028. Through the 10 year timescale, the Strategy addresses the immediate needs of older Veterans as well as setting the right conditions for society to empower – and support – the newer generation. Initiatives and proposals will work towards an enduring Vision articulated by three key principles.

Those who have served in the UK Armed Forces, and their families, transition smoothly back into civilian life and contribute fully to a society that understands and values what they have done and what they have to offer.

PRINCIPLES

The principles articulate in greater detail the strategic objectives of the vision

Veterans are first and foremost civilians and continue to be of benefit to wider society

Veterans are encouraged and enabled to maximise their potential as civilians

Veterans are able to access support that meets their needs when necessary, through public and voluntary sectors

These Principles encompass Regular and Reservist Veterans and where appropriate, their families and the bereaved. The focus is on those Veterans of the UK Armed Forces resident in the UK. In due course, we will consider encompassing Veterans who return to or choose to live overseas. These Principles are consistent with, and underpinned by, the Armed Forces Covenant.

SUMMARY OF 2028 OUTCOMES

Cross-cutting Factors	
1. Collaboration between organisations	Improved collaboration between organisations offers Veterans coherent support.
2. Co-ordination of Veterans' services	The co-ordination of Veterans' provision delivers consistent aims and principles over time and throughout the UK, ensuring Veterans, their families and the bereaved are treated fairly compared to the local population.
3. Data on the Veteran community	Enhanced collection, use and analysis of data across the public, private and charitable sectors to build an evidence base to effectively identify and address the needs of Veterans.
4. Public perception and understanding	The UK population value Veterans and understand their diverse experiences and culture.
5. Recognition of Veterans	Veterans feel that their service and experience is recognised and valued by society.
Key Themes	
1. Community and relationships	Veterans are able to build healthy relationships and integrate into their communities.
2. Employment, education and skills	Veterans enter appropriate employment and can continue to enhance their careers throughout their working lives.
3. Finance and debt	Veterans leave the Armed Forces with sufficient financial education, awareness and skills to be financially self-supporting and resilient.
4. Health and wellbeing	All Veterans enjoy a state of positive physical and mental health and wellbeing, enabling them to contribute to wider aspects of society.
5. Making a home in civilian society	Veterans have a secure place to live either through buying, renting or social housing.
6. Veterans and the law	Veterans leave the Armed Forces with the resilience and awareness to remain law-abiding civilians.

Section 1 – Progress since November 2018

In 2019, the Government launched the new Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) and allocated it a £5 million budget for 2020/21. Established in the centre of government in the Cabinet Office, it will champion veterans across the whole of government and ensure realisation of the Vision set out in the Strategy for our Veterans. Its role is to lead and co-ordinate the government's activities in supporting veterans and developing the services they require to ensure successful transition back into civilian life. It will work closely with departments across Whitehall, Devolved Governments and the wider veterans' sector. The OVA reports to the Right Honourable Oliver Dowden CBE MP in his capacity as Minister for Cabinet Office and the Minister in Cabinet responsible for veterans, and to Johnny Mercer MP, as Minister for Defence People and Veterans, a joint Cabinet Office and Ministry of Defence Minister.

The Government has committed in the Queen's Speech and its manifesto to go further than the consultation responses and deliver even more for veterans by:

- reducing National Insurance contributions for employers if they employ ex-Service Personnel
- introducing a Veterans' Railcard
- offering a guaranteed job interview for veterans for any public sector role they apply for
- introducing new legislation to tackle vexatious claims that undermine our Armed Forces
- further incorporating the Armed Forces Covenant into law

Work to deliver these pledges is already underway across Government.

Since the publication of the Strategy for our Veterans in November 2018, UK Government has also made the following progress towards delivering the Strategy's Outcomes, in chronological order:

- Recommended the 2021 Census includes a new question to identify people who are serving or who have served in the UK Armed Forces, in the white paper Help Shape our Future.
- Conducted a public consultation on new statutory guidance to improve access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces, their families and veterans. The consultation closed in March 2019 and the guidance will be published in due course.
- Introduced the Veterans Recognition card (phase 1) for those leaving the Armed Forces since December 2018, as recognition of their service and to assist organisations verify their previous service.
- Established a team, under the Lord Chief Justice, to deal with the extensive Northern Ireland Legacy Inquest programme and deal with all outstanding inquests (52 in total) within five years starting in April 2020.
- Amended the Ministry of Defence housing policy to allow veterans to stay in Service accommodation for up to 12 months after discharge.
- Announced an additional £1 million to support veterans who are, or who are at risk of becoming, homeless across the 10 combined authorities and the Greater London Authority.
- Introduced a new tariff level four description into the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme for the most seriously mentally unwell.
- Launched the Integrated Personal Commissioning for Veterans (IPC4V) framework for the small number of Service Personnel who have the most complex and enduring physical, neurological and mental health conditions that are attributable to injury while in Service.

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- Conducted a public consultation on legal protections for Armed Forces personnel and veterans serving on operations outside the UK.
 - Expanded the study into mortality rates and causes of death, including suicide, for all military personnel who served between 2001 and 2014 (including those who deployed to conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan) to include the most recent Service Leavers. This will be updated on an ongoing basis to provide near real-time monitoring of suicides.
 - Initiated a new study by the University of Manchester, funded jointly by Ministry of Defence and NHS England, into veterans who take their own lives. The study will look at the risk factors in the year leading up to a suicide, and use the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Mental Health Database along with records from coroners' inquests to look at factors which led an individual to take their own life.
 - Increased government and Armed Forces charity sector collaboration through government officials attending Cobseo Cluster meetings.
 - Announced additional funding of £5 million for Department for Work and Pensions enabling the appointment of dedicated Armed Forces Champions for the first time.
 - Commissioned the Veterans' Mental Health High Impact Service (HIS) for veterans who are in a mental health crisis and need urgent and emergency care and treatment.
 - Published a statistical bulletin comparing working age UK Armed Forces veterans and working age non-veterans residing in England and Wales, using 2011 Census data.
 - Launched the Defence Holistic Transition Policy (Joint Service Publication 100) and associated Defence Transition Services, to identify and support those who need additional support when leaving the Armed Forces.
 - Committed to implementing the Stormont House Agreement to address Northern Ireland legacy issues.

Section 2 – Summary of initial analysis of Strategy for our Veterans UK Government Consultation

How the consultation was delivered

The public consultation ran for 14 weeks, between November 2018 and February 2019. It comprised 24 questions against the five Cross-cutting Factors and six Key Themes of the Strategy for our Veterans, against a backdrop of what was already being delivered to support veterans. The scope of the consultation was limited to considering access to services within the UK.

Responses were gathered through:

- an online survey, email or letter,
- face-to-face events for targeted guests. Four large events were held in London, Stockport and Belfast that invited experts from across public, charitable and academic sectors who provided services to veterans. Seven smaller events were held with veterans, current Service Personnel and potential employers to gain their insights.

How the consultation was analysed

The consultation received a high level of responses, for the first time generating a large volume of qualitative data which offered valuable insight into public and organisational opinion about veteran issues.

To make maximum use of this data, we engaged the services of a professional qualitative analytical company to undertake the primary analysis of all the responses. The specialists used a mixed methodology approach to analyse the written responses to the consultation, to accommodate the volume of responses within the six-week contract. This combined manual random sampling of individual and organisational responses with NVivo¹ analysis of the full dataset. This was an initial broad analysis and more detailed analysis of separate aspects of the data will likely be undertaken by individual departments to inform future action plans.

Suggestions identified by the results of the analysis were investigated for their feasibility and coherence with existing policy. Some suggestions referred to policies or activities that were already underway (see Section 3.1), some informed the action plan (see Section 3.2), some were judged to be unfeasible at this time and others required more investigation, which will continue.

Separately, the MOD team summarised the notes from the face-to-face events. The two strands of data were then cross-referenced to form the basis of this Consultation Response.

Summary of responses

We received 2,177² responses to this consultation: 2,007 from individuals in a personal capacity and 170 on behalf of an organisation. Respondents self-identified that they were from the following locations:

Table 1 – Self-identified location of respondents

	% as an individual	% on behalf of an organisation
England	75%	75%
Scotland	10%	11%
Wales	4%	4%
Northern Ireland	2%	7%
Outside of UK	7%	1%
Blank	1%	2%

¹ NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software developed by QSR International to classify, sort and arrange non-numerical data, and examine relationships in the data.

² Data cleansing removed survey responses where none of the consultation questions had been answered.

The percentage of respondents answering each question was as follows:

Table 2 – percentage of respondents answering each question

Question	Question type	% of individuals who responded	% of organisations who responded	% of total responses
1	Freetext	22%	66%	26%
2	Closed – On a scale of 1-5	89%	61%	87%
2	Freetext to support closed	60%	58%	60%
3	Freetext	38%	56%	39%
4	Freetext	17%	60%	20%
5	Freetext	25%	62%	28%
6	Freetext	25%	54%	27%
7	Freetext	20%	47%	22%
8	Freetext	28%	62%	30%
9	Closed – Yes/no/don't know	59%	60%	59%
9	Freetext to support closed	50%	58%	50%
10	Closed – Yes/no/don't know	57%	52%	57%
10	Freetext to support closed	22%	36%	23%
11	Closed – Yes/no/don't know	59%	56%	59%
11	Freetext to support closed	40%	51%	41%
12	Closed – Yes/no	17%	51%	20%
12	Freetext to support closed	11%	48%	14%
13	Freetext	25%	54%	27%
14	Freetext	10%	45%	13%
15	Freetext	5%	35%	8%
16	Freetext	26%	49%	28%
17	Freetext	28%	46%	29%
18	Freetext	23%	44%	24%
19	Freetext	27%	42%	28%
20a	Freetext	13%	27%	14%
20b	Freetext	10%	16%	10%
20c	Freetext	23%	39%	24%
21	Closed – Yes/no/don't know	43%	52%	44%
21	Freetext to support closed	23%	46%	25%
22	Closed – Yes/no/don't know	47%	51%	47%
22	Freetext to support closed	29%	42%	30%
23	Freetext	31%	43%	32%
24	Freetext	24%	43%	25%

The consultation was designed to inform how the Strategy could be implemented by seeking suggestions of potential solutions to investigate. However, the analysis found that many of the responses offered opinions on the issues faced by veterans. This contained a range of experiences during time served in the Armed Forces and often referred to old policies that have since changed. These have informed this Consultation Response, although the focus has remained on first steps to implement the Strategy for our Veterans.

In addition to the above written responses, the face-to-face events were attended by 237 people, which allowed more detailed discussion of the questions and extensive notes were taken. The four large events considered all the consultation questions, while the seven smaller events were focused depending on the stakeholder group.

Summary of responses for each Cross-cutting Factor and Key Theme



Cross-cutting Factor 1: Collaboration between organisations

2028 Outcome:

Improved collaboration between organisations offers Veterans coherent support.

Key Focus Area:

Establish where greater collaboration could be achieved in services for Veterans, especially between charitable and public sector organisations.

Consultation Question

1. If you have experience of a successful multi-organisational collaboration that we could potentially learn from, please provide details including what sector it was in, who the recipients were, which organisations were involved, what was successful about this collaboration, how you were involved, and contact details of one of the organisations (if possible).

Overall, experience of existing collaboration was mixed. Examples of specific collaborative initiatives were identified by both individual and organisational respondents, offering great opportunities to explore the mechanisms that enabled their success.

Suggestions towards potentially achieving the Outcome included:

- engaging a range of government departments, charities and specific service providers
- informing charities of the location of veterans
- identifying existing provision and any gaps in provision
- greater involvement of veterans themselves in collaboration initiatives
- better publicising and communicating of provision to raise awareness, including with advice providers
- finding a resolution to data protection issues to facilitate more collaboration
- more sharing of best practice, particularly at regional and local levels
- using existing mechanisms better, rather than creating new ones



Cross-cutting Factor 2: Co-ordination of Veterans' services

2028 Outcome:

The co-ordination of Veterans' provision delivers consistent aims and principles over time and throughout the UK, ensuring Veterans, their families and the bereaved are treated fairly compared to the local population.

Key Focus Area:

Mechanisms for the co-ordination of UK Government and wider public sector provision on Veterans issues.

Consultation Questions

2. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being not at all, 5 being extremely effective), how effective is the UK Government in delivering support to Veterans to enable them to be valued, contributing and supported? What are your reasons for this score?
3. What other mechanism could be effectively used to co-ordinate provision?

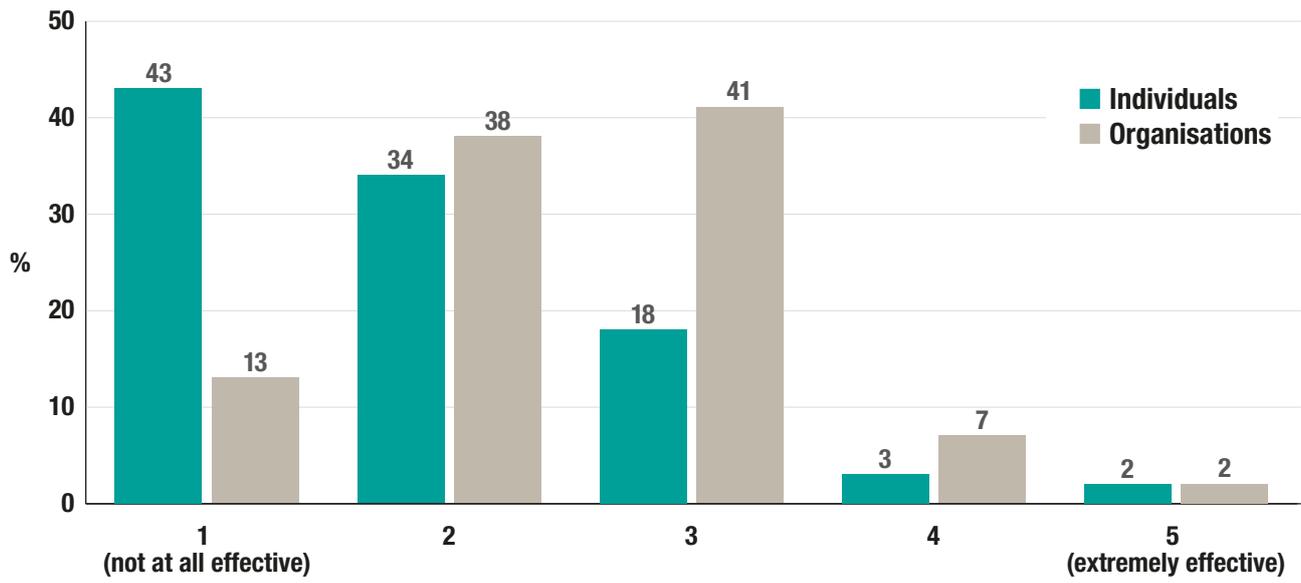
The main points raised were:

- When asked how effective the UK Government currently is in delivering support for veterans, Graph 1 shows that individual respondents judged delivery as less effective (77% scoring 1 and 2) compared to organisational respondents (79% scored 2 and 3). Comments from individuals who responded included that there was no support from government, that the charity sector provided a great deal of support instead and that support was not effectively implemented.
- Organisations commented that implementation was inconsistent across the UK, there needed to be more co-ordination as veteran needs often cut across service deliverers and there needed to be greater understanding of local differences in veteran needs.

Suggestions towards potentially achieving the Outcome included:

- strengthening co-ordination of services that are already in place
- greater promotion of existing initiatives more widely, such as the Veterans Gateway
- creation of a single point of contact for accessing support, particularly through expansion of Veterans Gateway
- improving co-ordination between organisations across regions, particularly at local level
- establishing a single responsible agency for co-ordination of support, such as a dedicated department or ombudsman
- better co-ordination of military charities
- starting transition before leaving the Armed Forces and applying the policies consistently
- greater information sharing across relevant government departments and charities

Graph 1 – Question 2: How effective is the UK Government in delivering support to Veterans to enable them to be valued, contributing and supported?





Cross-cutting Factor 3: Data on the Veteran community

2028 Outcome:

Enhanced collection, use and analysis of data across the public, private and charitable sectors to build an evidence base to effectively identify and address the needs of Veterans.

Key Focus Areas:

Exploitation of existing datasets, encouraging innovative use and analysis to provide a comprehensive evidence base.

Identification of areas where organisations could collect more data on Veterans so that a richer evidence base may be developed.

Consultation Questions

4. What barriers does your organisation currently face on sharing existing data on Veterans?
5. What more could be done to improve data collection?
6. What gaps do you perceive there are in the currently available data on Veterans and their families?
7. What more can be done to further encourage declaration and/or identification of service at the earliest opportunity to enable better data on the numbers of Veterans in the criminal justice system?

The main points raised were:

- Overall, there was a desire for increased data collection. However, there was a tension between that, and wanting to respect individual privacy and choice on whether to be identified. Respondents were cautious of creating unnecessary intrusion or unjustly forcing individuals to declare, recognising that 'veteran' status can pose a security risk for some.
- The major barrier identified by both individuals and organisations was data protection, specifically the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). For organisations, it was felt to restrict data sharing and their ability to ask whether an individual was a veteran. For veterans themselves, it was felt that it required them to repeat their story to each organisation and they were wary of how their data would be used.
- The main data gaps identified were related to family members, the homeless, mental health, and those of non-UK origin.

Suggestions for potentially achieving the Outcome included:

- introduction of a national database of veterans, which could then be linked to by government departments
- use of the 2021 Census to capture those declaring as veterans
- clarifying understanding by organisations of data-sharing regulations, i.e. GDPR
- collecting data and consent to share from Service Leavers, through an opt-in scheme, and contacting them in future
- standardisation of data collection, through use of a question set or template and clarification on GDPR, to better use data that is already collected
- implementation of the veterans' identification card, as a possible way through GPDR/DPA and as a way to identify individuals within the criminal justice system

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- increasing data sharing between government departments and, where appropriate, other organisations such as charities
 - improved consistency in asking of new entrants to the criminal justice system whether they are a veteran



Cross-cutting Factor 4: Public perception and understanding

2028 Outcome:

The UK population value Veterans and understand their diverse experiences and culture.

Key Focus Areas:

Identify how a more balanced national conversation about Veterans can be achieved.

Address public misperceptions about Veterans.

Consultation Questions

8. How could the misconceptions about Veterans be effectively challenged?

The main points raised were:

- The need to portray veterans positively to the public and employers was prominent across individual and organisational respondents, as it was felt that there was a lot of focus on negative reporting.
- There was support for providing a more balanced image of veterans, using accurate, factual information.

Suggestions for how to potentially achieve the Outcome included:

- publicising the range of skills and training that veterans have, including soft skills, and can offer to employers and communities
- promoting positive real-life stories or case studies to challenge misconceptions, such as successful transition and work within communities
- tackling stereotypes around demographics, such as old and male
- publicising the reality of life in the Armed Forces and the wide range of outputs the military supports, aside from conflicts
- encouraging community engagement and involvement in local areas
- having veterans visit schools to talk about experiences



Cross-cutting Factor 5: Recognition of Veterans

2028 Outcome:

Veterans feel that their service and experience is recognised and valued by society.

Key Focus Area:

Recognition for those who have served in the UK Armed Forces, especially for those who have sacrificed the most, so they feel their service was appreciated and their experience is valued.

Consultation Questions

9. Do Veterans and their families deserve greater recognition than they receive currently?
10. Do the families of deceased Service Personnel, whose deaths are attributable to Service, receive appropriate support and recognition?
11. Should there be recognition for those suffering life-changing injury in the service of their country?

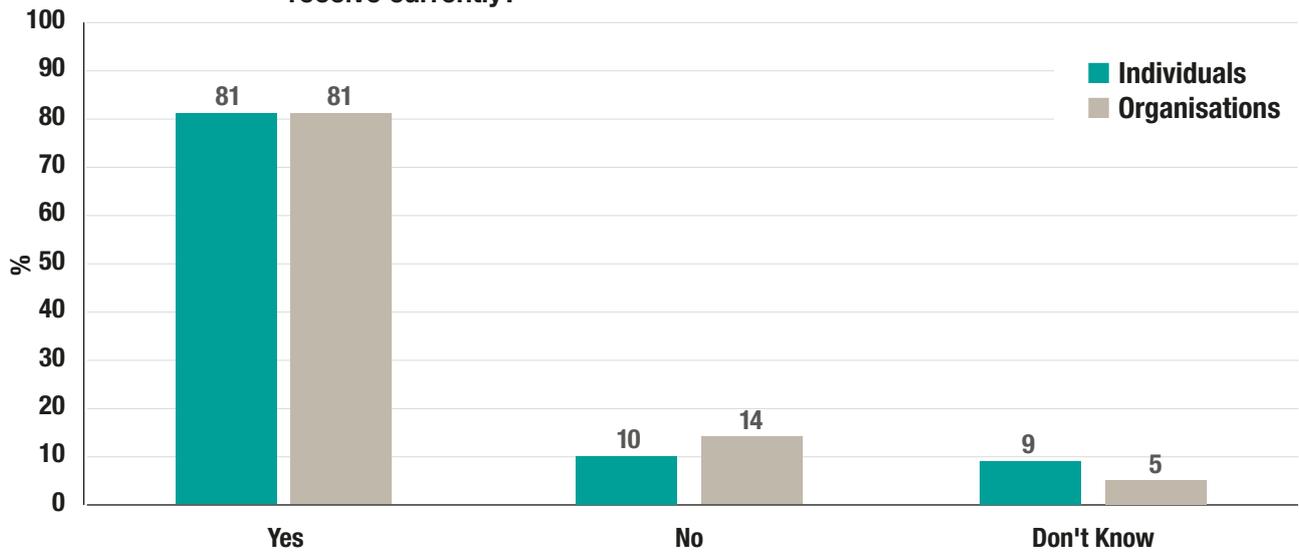
The main points raised were:

- As shown in Graph 2, the majority of those who responded believed that veterans and their families deserved greater recognition (question 9). Financial support and preferential treatment, particularly regarding healthcare and housing, were strongly supported as forms of recognition.
- For question 10, Graph 3 shows that the opinion on whether families of deceased Service Personnel received appropriate support and recognition was more split compared to questions 9 and 11. It was felt that while short-term support existed, more long-term support was needed. Some respondents raised the issue of war widows pensions.
- The majority of respondents to question 11 believed that those with life-changing injuries should be recognised, as shown by Graph 4, and that more support was needed, with mental health as a prominent theme.

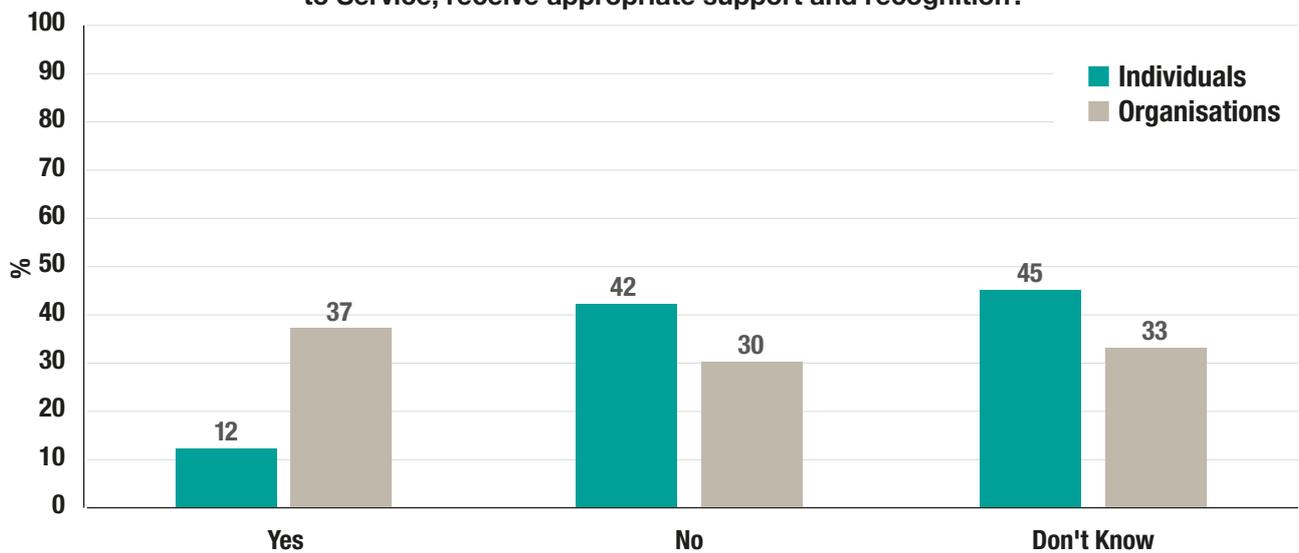
Suggestions for how to potentially achieve the Outcome included:

- providing financial assistance, particularly for accommodation and priority access to housing
- preferential treatment, particularly in terms of healthcare and housing
- implementing a veterans' identification card
- introducing a recognition scheme of discounts and offers
- wider provision of medals or awards
- having a separate Veterans Day
- longer-term support for bereaved families and those with life-changing injuries
- improved informing of what a bereaved family may be entitled to

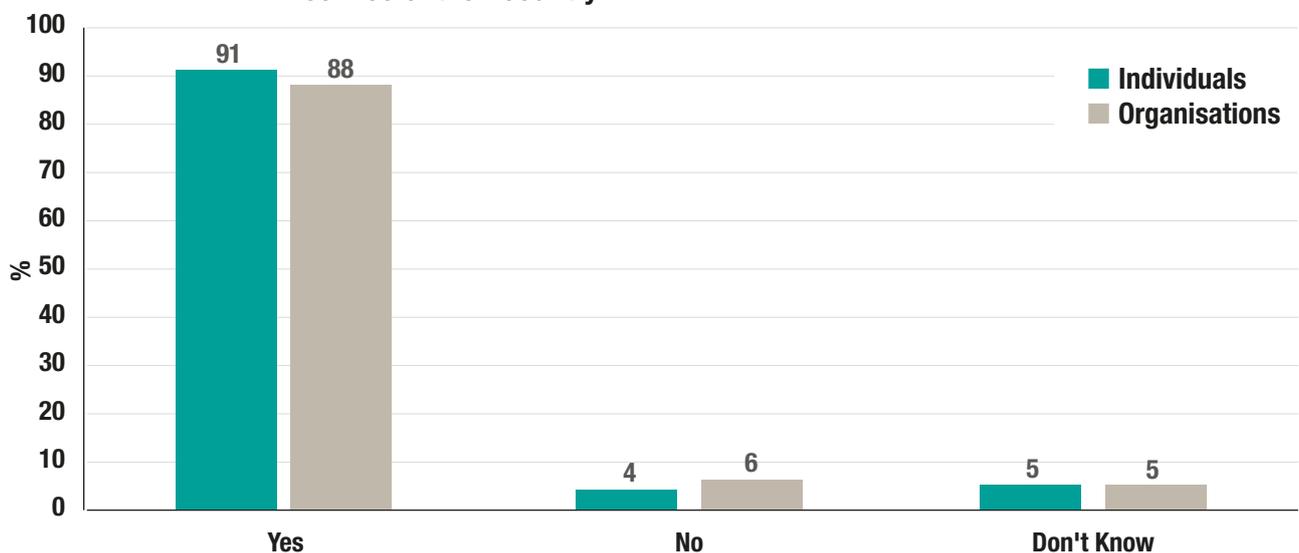
Graph 2 – Question 9: Do Veterans and their families deserve greater recognition than they receive currently?



Graph 3 – Question 10: Do the families of deceased Service Personnel, whose deaths are attributable to Service, receive appropriate support and recognition?



Graph 4 – Question 11: Should there be recognition for those suffering life-changing injury in the service of their country?





Key Theme 1: Community and relationships

2028 Outcome:

Veterans are able to build healthy relationships and integrate into their communities.

Key Focus Areas:

Exploring how existing loneliness initiatives can be inclusive of Veterans.

Encouraging integration into a Veteran's chosen communities, whether retaining a link to the Service or not.

Consultation Questions

12. Do you specifically include Veterans in your initiatives to tackle loneliness and/or social isolation?
13. Where they have not already, how could Veterans be encouraged to integrate into communities?

The main points raised were:

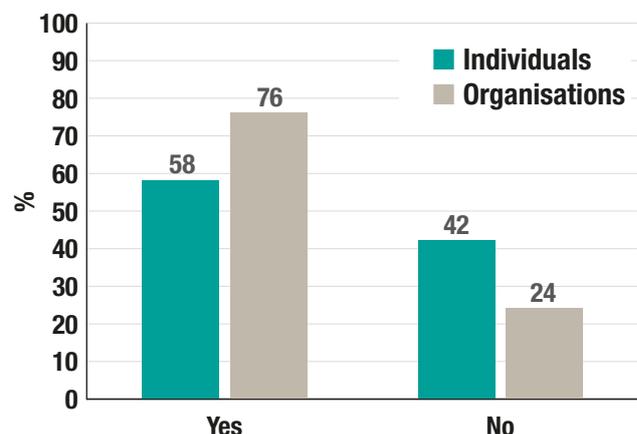
- While respondents suggested veterans were specifically included in loneliness initiatives, as shown in Graph 5, most did not include details of them.
- The responses suggested that there was both a need for military-related and non-military related initiatives, to cater for individual preference on whether to retain a link to the Armed Forces and the perception that they struggle to relate to other civilians.
- Loneliness was not purely a veteran issue, and individuals have different experiences and needs.

Suggestions for how to potentially achieve the Outcome included:

- encouraging volunteering as a way to integrate
- encouraging veterans to use their skills with community groups and projects to the benefit of the community
- promoting reintegration into society and local groups

- better advertising, publicising and signposting existing initiatives and activities to increase awareness of what's available
- holding veteran-specific events, so they can share experiences and culture with fellow veterans
- community organisations encouraging veterans to integrate into the community, by holding special events
- befriending services
- increased support for carers of veterans

Graph 5 – Question 12: Do you specifically include Veterans in your initiatives to tackle loneliness and/or social isolation?





Key Theme 2: Employment, education and skills

2028 Outcome:

Veterans enter appropriate employment and can continue to enhance their careers throughout their working lives.

Key Focus Areas:

Continuing to prepare Service Personnel while in-service for employment outside the military environment and understanding what barriers they may face.

Supporting those leaving the Armed Forces, by offering services that are flexible to an individual's needs.

Consultation Questions

14. If you are an employer, what else do you think Veterans need to prepare them for civilian employment?
15. If you are an employer, what do you do to maximise the previous experience of employees like Armed Forces Veterans?
16. What are the potential barriers (systemic, cultural, psychological, educational, experience, etc.) to Veterans sustaining employment?

The main points raised were:

- Both individual and organisational respondents identified the cultural adjustment to the civilian workplace and the transfer of skills from military to civilian employers as the key challenges for veterans.
- Employers should identify and make best use of veterans' skills in the workplace.
- Organisations particularly highlighted the need to recognise that veterans were not a homogenous group, and needs differed depending on their experiences.

Suggestions for how to potentially achieve the Outcome included:

- encouraging work placements and exposure to civilian workplace
- increased support with interview skills and CV preparation
- matching Service qualifications to civilian qualifications, either by accreditation or a translation-type service
- assistance to understand and demonstrate transferrable skills
- adjusting body language and communication skills to the civilian workplace
- support in developing self-confidence to seek employment opportunities
- employer mentoring or coaching
- starting preparation for transition earlier in a military career
- educating employers on the benefits and value of employing veterans



Key Theme 3: Finance and debt

2028 Outcome:

Veterans leave the Armed Forces with sufficient financial education, awareness and skills to be financially self-supporting and resilient.

Key Focus Areas:

Preparing Serving Personnel for the financial realities of civilian life.

Reducing potential financial disadvantage encountered due to Service by Veterans.

Consultation Questions

17. What are the current financial issues faced by Veterans and their families?
18. How can the current financial issues be tackled?
19. What financial information, training or support would Service Personnel benefit from receiving before they left the Armed Forces?

The main points raised were:

- The lack of household budgeting and financial planning skills was the main issue identified by respondents, particularly around planning for the financial changes associated with transitioning out of the Armed Forces.
- There were links for many respondents with other Key Themes, particularly employment and housing.

Suggestions on how to potentially achieve this Outcome included:

- providing financial management training, to include for example household budgeting, credit options and savings
- encouraging financial planning during transition, for the potentially different costs of living, and provide a brief on finances as part of transition
- holding regular, mandatory financial briefings for Serving Personnel to encourage better financial management
- introducing incentivised savings plans
- offering free financial advice
- better publicising of existing schemes to raise awareness
- involving spouses and family in financial training sessions
- granting Armed Forces pensions tax exemption and exemption from benefits assessments
- helping veterans to better understand benefits, pensions and housing options by providing more information



Key Theme 4: Health and wellbeing

2028 Outcome:

All Veterans enjoy a state of positive physical and mental health and wellbeing, enabling them to contribute to wider aspects of society.

Key Focus Areas:

Enabling consistency of medical outcomes for Veterans, through a smooth transition of provision from in-Service to post-Service and sharing effective practices amongst clinical and healthcare communities.

Providing bespoke treatment for those Veterans who have bespoke needs because of their service.

Targeting any identified health and wellbeing needs of Veterans in comparison to the general population.

Consultation Questions

20. What are the shortfalls in current provisions of ongoing rehabilitation, recovery and continuous health care through life for those Veterans with service attributable physical and/or mental illnesses or injuries?
21. Is there evidence that there are further physical and/or mental health and wellbeing issues that affect Veterans more or differently than the general population?

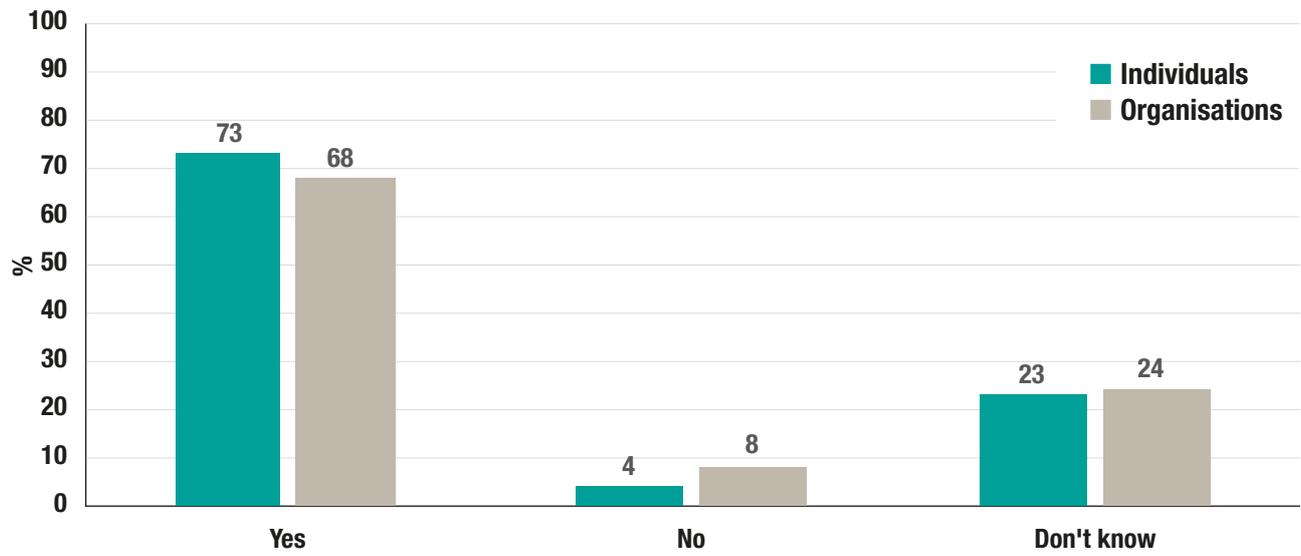
The main points raised included:

- There was support for providing more consistent longer-term care, particularly in terms of differences across locations, and priority access to medical care. There was no clear consensus on where to focus improvements, but a need for a smooth transition between service providers was raised.
- Graph 6 shows that respondents felt that there were further physical and/or mental health and wellbeing issues that affected veterans more than the general population.
- There was a strong link to the Cross-cutting Factor of Data and the Key Theme of Community and Relationships.

Suggestions for how to potentially achieve the Outcomes included:

- rolling-out veteran-friendly accreditation for GP practices more widely
- increasing training on veterans issues for other medical front-line staff
- transferring medical notes from MOD to GPs on discharge
- aligning IT systems between service providers
- improving signposting of services

Graph 6 – Question 21: Is there evidence that there are further physical and/or mental health and wellbeing issues that affect Veterans more or differently than the general population





Key Theme 5: Making a home in civilian society

2028 Outcome:

Veterans have a secure place to live either through buying, renting or social housing.

Key Focus Areas:

Enabling Service Personnel to find suitable private accommodation.

Assisting those leaving the Service early to find accommodation.

Consultation Questions

22. Do Service Personnel and their families need to be better prepared to find accommodation on leaving the Armed Forces?

23. What more could be done to specifically assist those leaving the Armed Forces earlier than planned to find suitable housing?

The main points raised were:

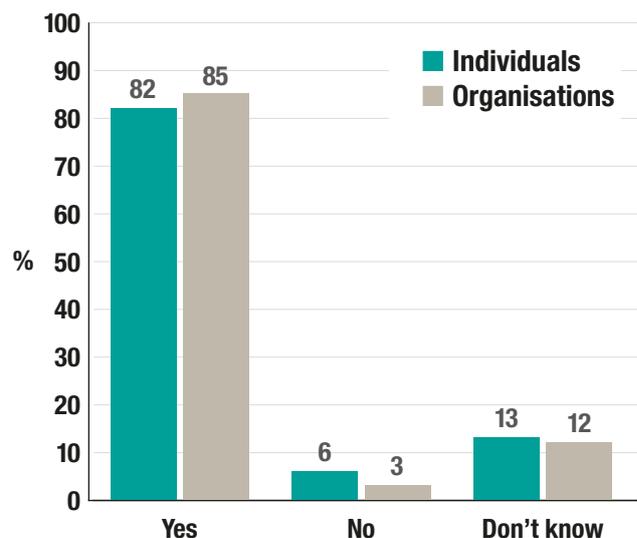
- Graph 7 shows that there was strong agreement by individual and organisational respondents that Service Personnel and their families need to be better prepared to find accommodation on leaving the Armed Forces.
- Many respondents identified that the transition between military-provided housing and civilian housing can be difficult, with differences in cost and the need to be better prepared for finding accommodation.

Suggestions on how to potentially achieve the Outcome included:

- providing interim housing for those leaving the Services or consider allowing them to remain in Service accommodation for a limited period
- prioritising veterans for social housing
- providing advice and support at transition on housing options, preferably specific to the area the individual is moving to, and the reality of cost differences
- encouraging long-term planning and early financial preparation for future accommodation

- introducing an in-service savings scheme to help plan for future accommodation
- providing access to finance for housing-related costs, such as deposits
- providing financial advice on buying

Graph 7 – Question 22: Do Service Personnel and their families need to be better prepared to find accommodation on leaving the Armed Forces?





Key Theme 6: Veterans and the law

2028 Outcome:

Veterans leave the Armed Forces with the resilience and awareness to remain law-abiding civilians.

Key Focus Areas:

Building on provisions in-Service and during transition to lower the risk that future Veterans will engage with the criminal justice system.

Expanding the good practice initiatives that work collaboratively across sectors to support Veterans and reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

Consultation Question

24. What more can be done to support Veterans in the criminal justice system, including reducing likelihood of reoffending?

The main points raised were:

- Improved data collection and research on the number of veterans in the criminal justice system and the reasons for that were identified as key to fully understanding this Key Theme.
- Addressing issues in the other Key Themes, such as housing, finance, employment, would contribute to reducing likelihood of reoffending.

Suggestions for how to potentially achieve the Outcome included:

- research to identify why and for what crimes veterans are in the criminal justice system
- providing specialist support to those who need it to reduce reoffending, such as drug rehabilitation, alcohol, mental health
- mentoring and/or peer-to-peer support for those in the criminal justice system
- improving data collection
- improving mental health screening
- signposting to other organisations who can support
- providing educational support to develop skills for after release

Section 3 – Government response to the Consultation

Following consideration of the initial analysis of this consultation by the relevant departments, the UK Government response splits into the following:

Section 3.1 – This summarises what the UK Government currently does to support veterans, in addition to services available to all civilians in the UK. Some suggestions in the analysis referred to policies or activities that were already underway, identifying that respondents may be unaware of what UK Government currently provides to specifically support veterans. Devolved matters in Scotland and Wales are not included.

Section 3.2 – The initial UK Government Action Plan contains commitments that central UK Government aims to deliver by the end of 2021. This initial action plan is focused on central UK Government, but we cannot achieve the aims of the Strategy on our own and it was clear from the consultation that there is appetite for co-ordinated action across regional and local levels. That is why we will continue to work with service deliverers across the UK who support veterans to produce future action plans, particularly to mature the work already underway with the Cobseo Clusters. We will develop a mechanism for accountability and reviewing delivery regularly. We will provide annual updates on progress.

Section 3.1 – Summary of current UK Government support to veterans

The analysis of the consultation identified that some respondents were unaware of what the UK Government currently does to support veterans, because their suggestions for what government could do to implement the Strategy referred to services that are already provided. Within the UK, veterans access public sector services in the same way as their fellow civilians, through a combination of UK Government, Devolved Government and local authority provision. The unique circumstances of each nation and region mean that in practice the level and method of service can, and should, be different as they are tailored to local needs, even if the principles and broad outcomes are consistent.

In addition to those public sector services available to all civilians, the UK Government also provides the following specifically to support veterans (devolved matters in Scotland and Wales are not included):

Cabinet Office

The **Office for Veterans' Affairs**, established in October 2019, will enable better co-ordination of government departments and other partners to deliver co-ordinated support for veterans. It will promote the outstanding contribution veterans are already making to our economy and society and ensure no individual who needs help is left behind after they leave service.

Department for Education

The **Further Education and Higher Education Scheme**, jointly funded with the MOD and the Devolved Governments, provides access for eligible Service Leavers to a first full Level 3 (GCE A level or vocational equivalent), or a first higher education qualification (a foundation degree or a first undergraduate degree or vocational equivalent).

Further Forces is a fully-funded programme which supports those leaving or those who have left within the last five years to train as a Further Education teacher and work towards a Certificate in Education or PGCE.

Veterans Bursary into Teaching, introduced in September 2018, offers bursaries for priority undergraduate courses to those leaving or those who have left within the last five years to help them transition into teaching. This replaced the Troops for Teachers Programme.

Education of younger generations about conflict and encouraging veterans into schools can be part of schools providing a broad and balanced curriculum, for example through the flexibility within the history curriculum or under their Personal, Health and Social Education (PSHE) programme (where appropriate). The delivery of the curriculum is for schools themselves. Resources are available from a range of bodies, including the Imperial War Museums, the Historical Association and Royal Historical Society, and some schools will also offer opportunities to hear directly from veterans during lessons. Additionally, a Combined Cadet Force (CCF) within a school may have an affiliation to a particular regiment/battalion and the cadets may learn about its history from veterans or Serving Personnel via this relationship. This activity is extra-curricular.

Department for Health and Social Care and National Health Service (NHS) (England)

Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS) is for Serving Personnel approaching discharge from the military and veterans with mental health difficulties. The service provides a range of treatment, from recognising the early signs of mental health problems and providing access to early support, to therapeutic treatment for complex mental health difficulties and psychological trauma. Help may also be provided with housing, employment, alcohol misuse and social support.

Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS) is an enhanced out-patient service for veterans who have military-related complex mental health difficulties that have not improved with previous treatment. The service provides intensive care and treatment that may include (but is not limited to) support for drug and alcohol misuse, physical health, employment, housing, relationships and finances, as well as occupational and trauma focused therapies.

The commissioning of the **Veterans' Mental Health High Impact Service (HIS)** was launched by NHS England and NHS Improvement in October 2019. For veterans who are in a mental health crisis and need urgent and emergency care and treatment, HIS will first be commissioned as a pathfinder service delivered through a collaborative network of providers to facilitate the join up of mental health commissioning pathways. The new service aims to provide veterans with crisis care, therapeutic inpatient support, care co-ordination across organisations and support and care for their family members and carers where appropriate. The service will commence with the provision of regional pathfinders from April 2020. Findings from the pathfinders, together with a programme of engagement, will inform a final service model that will launch in April 2022.

The **Veterans Trauma Network (VTN)** is the first NHS pathway for veterans' physical health, providing care and treatment to those with a service-attributable health problem. Located in 10 major trauma centres across England, with links to five specialist NHS trusts, the network works closely with Defence Medical Services (DMS), national centres of clinical expertise, the TILS and CTS, as well as military charities, to provide a complete package of care. It is run largely by healthcare professionals who are either veterans or Serving Personnel. GPs can use a single email to refer veterans to the service, where they will benefit from specialist care by military and civilian experts. The service was expanded to cover Wales in 2019.

Armed Forces personnel in transition: Integrated Personal Commissioning for Veterans Framework (IPC4V) is a personalised care approach for the small number of Serving Personnel who have complex and enduring physical, neurological and mental health conditions that are attributable to injury while in the Service. It provides a framework for effectively planning and delivering personalised care in line with the Armed Forces Covenant. Central to this is an improved discharge planning process, starting approximately nine months before these individuals leave the military. This means that the MOD, health and social care, Armed Forces charities and other organisations involved in the care of these individuals are brought together at an earlier point in the care pathway to ensure care and support arrangements are in place as they transition to civilian life and beyond.

The **Veterans Prosthetics Panel** provides funding on a named veteran basis to NHS Disablement Service Centres (DSC) to ensure that veterans who have service-related limb loss can access high quality prosthetics regardless of which centre they attend.

Personalised care for veterans with a long term physical, mental or neurological health condition or disability. Veterans with a complex and lifelong health condition may be eligible for the veterans personalised care programme. Eligible individuals will have a single personalised care plan for all their health and wellbeing needs that is developed with them and a range of organisations, including health and social care and military charities.

The **Veteran-friendly GP practice accreditation scheme**, introduced by NHS England and NHS Improvement, together with the Royal College of General Practitioners, is intended to help ensure practices are equipped to best care for veterans and their families and has already accredited over 600 surgeries.

The **Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA)** aims to improve NHS care for the Armed Forces community by supporting trusts, health boards and other providers to identify, develop and showcase the best standards of care. Forty-one hospital trusts have already been accredited as 'Veteran-Aware', having demonstrated their commitment to eight core manifesto standards, including signing the Armed Forces Covenant, raising awareness of veterans' healthcare needs among staff, and establishing links with local support providers. The VCHA is working with many more trusts to achieve accreditation.

Step into Health provides a dedicated pathway for the Armed Forces community to access the numerous career opportunities available in the NHS.

The **Veterans ReGroup pathfinder service** is for veterans in the criminal justice system in the Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire areas. The service provides a joined up and holistic care pathway for veterans on the verge of criminal behaviour, those within the criminal justice system and those exiting prison, with a key aim of reducing the risk of these individuals offending or reoffending. Veterans ReGroup will be delivered for a period of 18 months with key insight and outcomes, informing future commissioning arrangements for an England-wide service.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Armed Forces Champions, located in Jobcentre Plus districts, work with the MOD Career Transition Partnership and support organisations in their districts, as well as local and national employers to identify work trials and employment opportunities. They support Service Leavers and their families through helping Jobcentre Plus staff to understand their needs. Some Champions and other DWP staff will visit major bases to support Service Leavers and ensure that they understand the benefits they may be entitled to. They also help to upskill Unit Welfare Officers to enhance their knowledge of the welfare system and enable them to support Service Leavers as part of the transition process.

Under **Universal Credit rules**, those receiving War Disablement Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Guaranteed Income Payments do not have their Universal Credit reduced to take account of this income.

The **Armed Forces Independence Payment (AFIP)** was introduced by DWP and MOD from 8 April 2013. AFIP is a simplification of the financial support available for members of the Armed Forces who have been seriously injured as a result of military service since 6 April 2005. Since 8 April 2013, these individuals automatically receive ongoing payments to help with the additional costs associated with their injuries, rather than face separate disability assessments. Eligible seriously injured Service Personnel receive at least as much under this arrangement as they would from the highest rates of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment.

Under the **benefit cap exemption rules**, receipt of Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Guaranteed Income Payments and War Pension Scheme payments exempts a recipient and household from the benefit cap.

The opportunity for early voluntary entry to the new **Work and Health Programme (WHP)** is available for veterans who would benefit from specialist employment support to find work. For the purpose of access to the WHP, a veteran is defined as a person who has served in the Armed Forces for any day within the last three years. This early voluntary entry is also available to partners of veterans and partners of serving members where appropriate.

Access to benefits for medically-discharged personnel. DWP uses Service Medical Board evidence where it can so a severely disabled person doesn't have to undergo additional examinations for Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit purposes.

Home Office

If a non-UK member of the Armed Forces, including Gurkhas, is medically discharged from the Armed Forces they are eligible for Indefinite Leave to Remain status, even if they have not completed a minimum of four years of service.

Ministry of Defence (MOD)

Veterans UK is the MOD's dedicated veterans' support organisation and works in partnership with wider MOD, other government departments and external organisations to provide support and advice to veterans. It administers the different Armed Forces Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Schemes. It publishes the Service Leavers Guide, which offers information and advice on a range of topics to help Service Leavers transition into civilian life: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/service-leavers-pack>. It also operates the **Integrated Personal Commissioning for Veterans Framework (IPC4V)**, which as discussed above, provides bespoke support for the most seriously injured.

Within Veterans UK, the **Veterans Welfare Service** provides welfare support to veterans and if necessary, it also redirects requests to a range of organisations. The **Vets UK Helpline** is a 24/7 staffed answering service provided in partnership with the charities Combat Stress and the Samaritans. The **MOD Medals Office** is responsible for the provision of medals authorised by Her Majesty the Queen and the Veterans Badge. The new **Defence Transition Services (DTS)**, introduced to support the **Defence Holistic Transition Policy**, aims to support Service Personnel and their families as they transition into civilian life.

Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust is the independent trust that manages the Armed Forces Covenant Fund of £10 million per annum, which finances grant programmes in support of the Armed Forces community. One example is the Veterans' Support Office in Northern Ireland,

which works with charities, veterans' support organisations and statutory bodies across the UK to identify best practice and to sponsor their introduction, where appropriate, in Northern Ireland. It also takes up individual cases where and when charitable or statutory bodies are not able to address an individual issue or case.

Defence Relationship Management works with organisations throughout the UK to help them understand the Armed Forces community, the value of signing the Armed Forces Covenant and supporting the employment of veterans. They administer the **Employer Recognition Scheme**, which recognises employer support for the Armed Forces Covenant and encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employers that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support for the Armed Forces community including veterans. A number of these businesses and organisations, particularly gold award winners, promote the employability of veterans.

Directorate of Defence Communications (DDC) delivers campaigns to promote the Armed Forces Covenant and reactive communications to handle negative news stories, working in collaboration with Defence Relationship Management, the Services, other government departments and other partners, such as the British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS). In 2018, they worked in collaboration with the Forces in Mind Trust to commission YouGov to explore the public perceptions of ex-Service Personnel and to understand what influences people's opinions. This has enabled DDC to form a better understanding of how to deal with negative perceptions.

Defence Statistics proactively shares the veteran information it holds with the public by publishing Official and National Statistics. Information within the publications are scrutinised to ensure no personal information is inadvertently disclosed. All reports are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-national-and-official-statistics-by-topic/mod-national-and-official-statistics-by-topic>. They also have data-sharing projects with government departments, devolved governments and researchers, where MOD's Service Leavers database is being matched to survey and administration data in order to identify veterans as a group, not as individuals.

Armed Forces Day has been an annual event celebrating and honouring the contribution of the Armed Forces community since 2006. Veterans are part of this and encouraged to engage with the day.

Since December 2018, those leaving the Armed Forces are issued with a **Veterans Recognition card**, as recognition of their service and to assist organisations verify their previous service.

The **Defence Holistic Transition Policy** launched in October 2019. This expands MOD transition support beyond the previous focus on employment, recognising that transition is far wider than this and is a significant life change for the Service Person and their families during discharge. The long-standing employment support delivered by the Career Transition Partnership will continue.

The **Career Transition Partnership (CTP)** is the MOD's official provider of resettlement services to those leaving the Armed Forces, accessible from two years before discharge through to two years after. CTP supports Service Leavers in their transition through a range of career and employment support, including skills development workshops, seminars, online resources, events, resettlement training advice, vocational training courses, career consultancy, one-to-one guidance and job-finding support.

The CTP jobs board provides free access to employers and ex-Service Personnel, ensuring maximum gain and exposure for both parties. Civilian Work Attachment opportunities are also advertised on Right Job or can be sourced by contacting employers directly. There are four key programmes, which ensure all members of the Armed Forces receive the right support depending on their circumstances and time served:

- Core Programme, available to those who have served more than six years and all medical discharges.
- Employment Support Programme, available to those who have served between four and six years.
- Early Service Leaver Programme: CTP Future Horizons, available to those who leave before the four-year point or those who lose entitlement to other programmes because of a compulsory discharge.

- Specialist Support Programme: CTP Assist, a specialised career service to support approximately 900 wounded, injured and sick Service Leavers per year to achieve a sustainable and fulfilling career, regardless of time served.
- CTP also provides a free recruitment service for employers wanting to recruit ex-Armed Forces people and raises awareness among employers of the talent pool available and the wealth of transferrable skills Service Leavers bring to the job market.

Enhanced Learning Credits can be used for up to five years after leaving the Armed Forces, to fund eligible training opportunities.

The **Further Education and Higher Education Scheme**, jointly funded with Department for Education and the Devolved Governments, provides access for eligible Service Leavers to a first full Level 3 (GCE A level or vocational equivalent), or a first higher education qualification (a foundation degree or a first undergraduate degree or vocational equivalent).

The MOD partners with **Joining Forces (Credit Unions)** to encourage current and former members of the Armed Forces to manage their finances well, plan for the future and avoid making poor financial decisions. Credit unions are not-for-profit financial co-operatives, owned by, and run for, their members. Joining Forces operates a payroll deduction or a pension deduction whereby an agreed amount is deducted at source (before the salary is paid in to the bank) thereby encouraging savings or good management of a loan.

MoneyForce is a joint initiative between Standard Life Charitable Trust, The Royal British Legion and the Ministry of Defence, which aims to assist all Service Personnel, their partners, families and dependants, to be better equipped to manage their money and financial affairs.

The **Defence Discount Service**, launched in 2012, is the official MOD discount provider for the Armed Forces community, including veterans.

The **mental health helpline**, in partnership with Combat Stress, is a team of specially-trained professionals that are available 24 hours a day to provide free confidential advice and support.

The **Veterans and Reserves Mental Health programme (VRMHP)** provides assessment and treatment advice for veterans (who have been deployed since 1982) and reserves (who have been deployed overseas since 1 January 2003) who believe that their deployment may have affected their mental health.

The **Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Irish Regiment (Home Service) Aftercare Service** provides holistic welfare, medical, vocational and benevolence support.

The **Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO)** is the MOD's tri-Service focal point to provide Service Personnel and their dependants with civilian housing information, for both those wishing to move into civilian accommodation during their career and those moving during transition into civilian life.

Service accommodation policy allows Service Leavers and their families to remain in Service accommodation, subject to availability, for up to twelve months after leaving the Armed Forces.

The **Forces Help to Buy scheme pilot** introduced in 2014 helps Service Personnel to get on or stay on the property ladder by borrowing up to half their annual salary (up to a maximum of £25,000) interest free to purchase or extend a property. Applications can be made by Service Personnel who have more than 6 months remaining before leaving the Services (or by exception, for medical reasons). The scheme has been extended to December 2022.

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for Ex-Services (SPACES) programme assists single Service Leavers to secure appropriate accommodation as they leave the Armed Forces, reducing the likelihood of them becoming homeless or rough sleepers, through provision of housing advice and an accommodation placement service.

The **Operational Legacy Support Team** provides support to veterans and Service Personnel with regard to legacy operations.

The **MOD** offers legal advice and support to all veterans who are contacted by the Coroners Service Northern Ireland and works closely with the Regimental Associations and with Service charities to ensure that they are supported every step of the way.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Local-connection exemption recognises the mobility of the Armed Forces community by requiring that local authorities exempt former members of the Armed Forces from any local-connection requirement in their social housing allocation schemes for up to five years after discharge.

Additional preference, that is to say high priority, is given to certain members of the Armed Forces community who have urgent housing needs when accessing social housing.

Duty to Refer was introduced by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 and came into force from October 2018. It requires named public authorities to refer service users who they believe may be homeless or threatened with homelessness, and who give their consent, to a local housing authority of their choice within 56 days. Under this, the MOD must refer those about to leave the Armed Forces where they believe the individual may become homeless on discharge, subject to eligibility. The Duty to Refer will help to ensure those faced with the threat of homelessness are identified earlier and given the necessary support needed to tackle and prevent homelessness.

Government-funded shared ownership schemes give members of the Armed Forces priority for these properties, which is retained for 24 months after service and may be transferred to their bereaved spouse or civil partner.

Ministry of Justice

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) has changed its systems to enable **early identification** of veterans at the earliest possible stage of an individual's contact with the criminal justice system. Prison and probation staff are actively encouraged to 'ask the question' about previous service in the Armed Forces and repeat the question at later stages, as not everyone will disclose at their first opportunity. The National Probation Service captures this information through their Equality Information Form at first point of contact and for those entering custody it is done during the screening process at reception, on the Basic Custody Screening Tool.

The Probation Institute have developed **specialist training for prison and probation staff** focusing on the needs of veterans.

Peer mentoring schemes are in place, both within prisons and to support veterans on release back into the community. These services are provided by military charities directly or via 'through the gate' services.

A partnership project between HMPPS, Royal British Legion Industries and Anglia Ruskin University has pulled together a **UK-wide service directory** on Armed Forces charities and providers who offer support in the criminal justice system. It is now available online. The project found that 79% of prisons across England and Wales have a **Veterans in Custody Support Officer**. These officers use their knowledge and experience to co-ordinate external services provided by military charities focussing on an individual's needs and their family's needs. Governors have delegated responsibility for reviewing the needs of their population annually, planning appropriate services to meet population needs. Where there is an identified need, governors have the discretion to appoint a Veterans in Custody Support Officer.

In January 2015, HM Prison and Young Offenders Institution Parc, which is managed by G4S on behalf of HMPPS, opened the **Endeavour Unit**. This is a 62-man wing which houses veterans alongside prisoners in the custodial system. Mixing these cohorts is intended to encourage first-timers to learn from the self-discipline and orderly behaviour of veterans. The Unit aims to support those who have served, but then committed crimes, to get their lives back on track. It is believed that minimising their exposure to the wider offending culture in the main blocks will hopefully prevent reoffending. The wing also bases its principles on that of the British Army – integrity, discipline and respect for others. Those veterans located within the unit have access to specialist support services and staff work closely with Integrated Offender Management Cymru.

Section 3.2 – Initial UK Government Action Plan (2019-2021)

This initial action plan contains commitments that central UK Government aims to deliver by the end of 2021. This is the first step and it will remain a living document. We will develop a mechanism for accountability and reviewing delivery. We will provide annual updates on progress.

Target date	Description	Lead	Cross-cutting Factor / Key Theme
Completed	Establishment of Office for Veterans' Affairs – announced in summer 2019 and allocated of £5 million by the recent government Spending Round, the Office for Veterans' Affairs has been established in the Cabinet Office to better co-ordinate activity across government and collaborate with other partners.	Cabinet Office	CCF 1 CCF 2 CCF 3 CCF 4 CCF 5 KT 1 KT 2 KT 3 KT 4 KT 5 KT 6
Completed	Establishment of charity-facing posts within the MOD – established to improve collaboration between government and the Armed Forces charities sector, based on the review by the Veterans Strategy charity secondee.	MOD	CCF 1 CCF 2
February 2020	Publication of Veterans Key Facts – a short production summarising key data on veterans, drawn from published sources of data.	Cabinet Office	CCF 3 CCF 4
February 2020: start recruitment April 2020: fully operational	Increase the number of Jobcentre Plus Armed Forces Champions and District Leads – using around £5 million allocated in the 2019 Spending Round, DWP will be able to nearly triple the resource and to fund dedicated, full-time champion posts. Planning the best way to deploy this resource has started, based upon moving from the current position of around 45 unfunded, part-time posts to funding an Armed Forces lead in each Jobcentre Plus District and 100 support posts.	DWP	CCF 1 CCF 2 KT 2 KT 3
March 2020	Publish consolidated guidance for local authorities on allocating social housing for the Armed Forces community – publication of guidance to promote a consistent approach, which will set out how local authorities can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify applications from the Armed Forces community • ensure those who suffer from mental ill health are given appropriate priority • ensure divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service Personnel are exempt from local-connection requirements. 	MHCLG	CCF 1 CCF 2 KT 5

Target date	Description	Lead	Cross-cutting Factor / Key Theme
April 2020	Publish guidance to enable standardisation of how to ask about previous Armed Forces service – publication of technical guidance on how the questions should be asked to enable veterans to declare their previous Service, based on that produced by the Office of National Statistics for the 2021 Census. This will give organisations the confidence that they are asking the correct question and enable consistency in data collection.	MOD	CCF 1 CCF 2 CCF 3
April 2020	Exploit Loneliness Strategy initiatives – explore how veterans could benefit from initiatives developed and invested in through the cross-government Tackling Loneliness agenda. This will include scoping how best to target, include or adapt tools produced across government, which support professionals to recognise and act on loneliness and reduce the stigma attached to loneliness. Government will also explore how those delivering them could be familiarised with the Armed Forces.	Cabinet Office	KT 1
April 2020	Review of definition of ‘priority treatment’ within healthcare – a UK-wide working group has been set up to redefine priority treatment, making it more meaningful and appropriate for veterans and clinicians.	DHSC / NHS (England)	CCF 2 KT 4
May 2020: Commission Pathfinder service May 2022: final service model	Pilot and commission an improved range of the Veterans’ Mental Health Service (including a High Impact Service (HIS)) – develop a pathfinder for veterans who are vulnerable to, or in a mental health crisis and need urgent and/or emergency care and treatment. HIS will first be commissioned as a pathfinder service delivered through a collaborative network of providers to facilitate the join up of mental health commissioning pathways. The new service aims to provide veterans with crisis care, therapeutic inpatient support, care co-ordination across organisations and support and care for users and their family members and carers where appropriate. Findings from the HIS, together with a programme of engagement, will help to inform commissioning arrangements for a final integrated mental health service model (including for HIS).	DHSC / NHS (England)	CCF 1 KT 4
June 2020	Review the Joint Service Housing Advice Office – to ensure output meets the needs of Service Personnel, Service Leavers and their families.	MOD	CCF 2 KT 5
July 2020	Address perceptions of veterans – ongoing co-operation with Forces in Mind Trust and Cobseo to jointly maximise positive messaging around the contribution of veterans, with an anticipated outcome a targeted communications plan.	Cabinet Office	CCF 4 CCF 5 KT 2 KT 4 KT 5
October 2020	Creation of a veterans portal on GOV.UK – collating content from across multiple government websites into one easily navigable location.	Cabinet Office	CCF 1 CCF 2

Target date	Description	Lead	Cross-cutting Factor / Key Theme
April 2021	<p>Develop and publish a veterans digital and data strategy – setting out the principles by which government intends to optimise the use of data and digital technology to provide support and services to the veterans community. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying ways to better communicate what support is already available reviewing potential improvements to the process for verifying previous service in the Armed Forces developing opportunities for collaboration 	Cabinet Office	CCF 1 CCF 2 CCF3 KT 1 KT 2 KT 3 KT 4 KT 5 KT 6
Autumn 2021: interim electronic records mechanism	<p>Delivery of Programme CORTISONE – the future MOD Medical Information Systems capability will support seamless connectivity to the NHS and ease the transfer of a Service Leaver’s medical records to their new GP practice. Outputs will be delivered in stages.</p>	MOD	CCF 2 CCF 3 KT 4
2023	<p>Continue roll-out of the veteran-friendly GP practice accreditation scheme across England – to help ensure practices are equipped to best care for veterans and their families.</p>	NHS (England)	CCF 1 CCF 2 CCF 3 CCF 5 KT 4
TBC	<p>Appoint a Northern Ireland Veterans’ Commissioner – to act as an independent point of contact to support and enhance outcomes for veterans in Northern Ireland.</p>	NIO	CCF 2
TBC	<p>Provide funding for the Northern Ireland Veterans’ Support Office and Northern Ireland Veterans’ Commissioner – the UK Government will provide financial support for the Veterans’ Support Office and funding for the new Veterans’ Commissioner over three years.</p>	NIO	CCF1 CCF2
TBC	<p>Initiate a review of the Aftercare Service in Northern Ireland – consider whether the remit of the Aftercare Service should be widened to cover all UK Armed Forces veterans living in Northern Ireland with service-related injuries and conditions.</p>	MOD	CCF1 KT2 KT3 KT4 KT5

Manifesto commitments

In addition to the initial action plan above, the Government committed in the Conservative party manifesto to the following measures to support veterans:

- reduce National Insurance contributions for employers if they employ ex-Service Personnel
- introduce a Veterans' Railcard
- offer a guaranteed job interview for veterans for any public sector role they apply for
- introducing new legislation to tackle vexatious claims that undermine our Armed Forces
- further incorporating the Armed Forces Covenant into law.

Future action plans

Central UK Government cannot achieve the aims of the Strategy on its own and it was clear from the consultation that there is appetite for co-ordinated action across regional and local levels, which is why we will continue to work in conjunction with service deliverers across the UK who support veterans to produce future iterations of the action plan. In particular, we will mature the work already started with the Cobseo Clusters.

More detailed analysis of separate aspects of the consultation data will likely be undertaken by individual departments to inform future action plans.

We will develop a mechanism for accountability and reviewing delivery regularly. We will provide annual updates on progress.

