



PROUDLY SUPPORTING THOSE WHO SERVE.

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



THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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



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The Armed Forces Covenant

An Enduring Covenant Between
The People of the United Kingdom
Her Majesty's Government

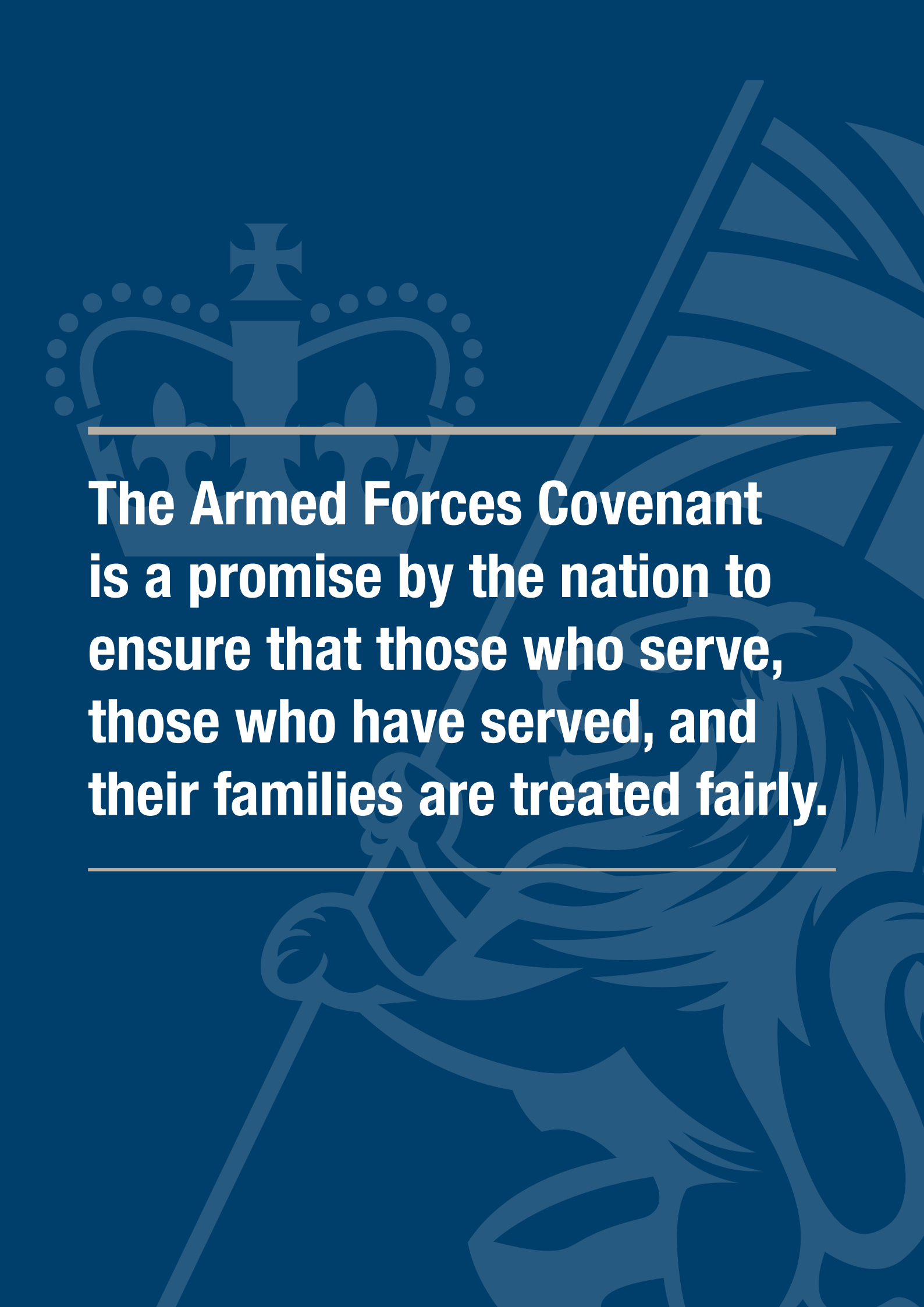
– and –

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

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

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

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.



The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation to ensure that those who serve, those who have served, and their families are treated fairly.



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Foreword

By the Rt Hon Sir Michael Fallon KCB,
Secretary of State for Defence



The need for an Armed Forces Covenant is ever more relevant today. The new Prime Minister has already made it clear that she views delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant as a key priority for the new Government, and has established a new Inter-Ministerial Group on the Covenant, which will have its inaugural meeting in the New Year.

Our Armed Forces continue to be engaged in numerous operations worldwide, and the world remains a dangerous and increasingly unpredictable place. We have a duty across society to recognise this dedication and sacrifice, by ensuring that the policies we make, and the services that we provide, treat our Service personnel, Veterans, and their families fairly, and ensure they suffer no disadvantage by comparison to the rest of society as a result of their service. In particular, we need to be aware of the unique challenges brought by Service life in access to healthcare; education; accommodation; spousal employment; and getting fair access to commercial and private goods and services.

These are the areas where our people continue to tell us they are being affected the most, and the report explains what we have done, and are doing to address them. I am grateful to my colleagues across Government, including the Devolved Administrations, for their continued support in delivering the Covenant and embedding it into society.

I am also encouraged by the increasing support being shown by business, and the firm pledges that contain tangible benefits for the Armed Forces Community. Over 1,300 organisations have signed the Armed Forces Covenant and this support continues to grow, both in terms of the quantity and quality of pledges being made. The review

of delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant in the community found some areas of good practice, which we must share, and it also found areas where we can improve. I look forward to the results of my Department's work, in collaboration with other key stakeholders to deliver an action plan which will address this.

The £10 million annual Covenant fund is now fully operational, funding projects across the UK, which will provide vital support for the Armed Forces Community in the years to come. I am pleased we have committed £2 million for the development of a Veteran's Gateway, to provide a constantly available, single point of contact, to help direct Veterans towards appropriate support when they need it.

Our vision is to ensure that there is a network of practical support, embedded right across central and local Government, businesses, charities, and society as a whole, to meet the unique needs of the Armed Forces community.

I have again arranged for a summary version of this report, capturing its key aspects, to be sent to every serving member of the Armed Forces.

We will continue to strive for fair treatment, and we pledge that through the Armed Forces Covenant we continue to do our utmost for our people.

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



Compass Group becomes the 1000th signatory of the Armed Forces Covenant. From left to right: Secretary of State for Defence, Sir Michael Fallon MP, and Dennis Hogan, Managing Director, Compass Group UK & Ireland

Executive Summary

Delivering The Nation's Promise

This is the fifth annual Armed Forces Covenant Report since the Covenant's underlying principles were embedded in law in 2011. Our Armed Forces, Veterans and their families continue to enjoy deserved support from an ever-growing diverse range of national sources.

This year our main focus has been on: ensuring regional consistency in the level of support that the Armed Forces receive (including through the Local Government Association/Forces in Mind Trust review, featured in chapter 7); ensuring that we prioritise our activities towards issues that are supported by evidence to show that they are causing disadvantage (Annex A); continuing to work with key stakeholders in the private sector to achieve commercial fairness for the Armed Forces (chapter 6); and improving the way we communicate about what the Covenant is, what it does, and who it supports (chapter 8).

In an early indication of the Government's desire to achieve commercial fairness, Ministers met with senior representatives from the financial and commercial services sectors in January 2016 at No10. The group was asked to consider what more they could do to show their support for the Armed Forces through the services they provided. The MOD has continued working with the group, subsequently making several positive announcements through the year. These included changes introduced by major lenders to allow personnel, who rent out their homes when posted abroad to avoid having to switch to more expensive buy-to-let mortgages. In December 2016, this concession was extended to include UK postings as well. 86% of the car insurance market has agreed that personnel and their families will not be charged for suspending their cover when posted overseas, and will be able to preserve their no claims discount

for up to three years. We will continue working with the group over the coming year, in the areas of improving credit ratings and ensuring fairer access to on-line goods and services, and we will provide a progress update in next year's report.

We continue to try and improve the standard of metrics included in the report, to enable us to measure how effectively the Covenant is working both locally and nationally. The data included in this year's report has focused on performance in the key areas of healthcare, education and accommodation. We will continue to work with other Government Departments, the Devolved Administrations and relevant charities to identify and develop appropriate data which can be used to assess the performance of the Covenant. The results will be reflected in the next Armed Forces Covenant annual report.

Improving the way we communicate about the Covenant has been a longstanding challenge, which has been observed by other stakeholders and is readily acknowledged by us. To help improve this, an insight-driven brand strategy and refreshed visual identity for the Armed Forces Covenant was implemented in January 2016, along with a new Armed Forces Covenant campaign website, launched in April 2016. Recent internal survey results have shown a moderate increase in overall awareness about the Covenant. We have trained a new cohort of over 150 Armed Forces Covenant champions. We will also continue to work across Government, with the Devolved Administrations and with the charitable sector to ensure that we collectively provide a consistent and coherent message about what the Covenant stands for and what it has achieved.

This report includes details of the impressive network that supports delivery of the Covenant in the Scottish and Welsh Devolved Administrations and their achievements, for example in Veterans' mental health and well-being, where both Governments have made financial commitments. This will continue and the Covenant Reference Group will consider delivery of the Covenant in Northern Ireland during the coming year. An update on progress will be included in next year's report.

We are also seeing increased engagement with the Covenant from community and religious organisations, including pledges from the Hindu Council UK; the Hindu Forum of Britain and the Karimia mosque in Nottingham.

Last year we announced the launch of the new £10 million per annum Covenant fund. Since then, it has funded nearly 300 large and small projects across the UK, at a cost of nearly £12 million, to provide vital support for the Armed Forces Community.

This year's report details the actions we have taken to address the issues raised by the external members of the Covenant Reference Group – the

Family Federations and Service charities – last year. It highlights where we judge that we have already taken appropriate action to address the issue (for example providing compensation for Veterans diagnosed with diffuse mesothelioma), where there has been progress (achieving commercial fairness), and where there is more for us to do (access to Government data).

The report includes not only the areas that we are obliged to report on by the 2011 Act (Healthcare, Education, Accommodation, and Coroner's Inquests) but all of the key strands of activity that fall within Covenant's scope.

We have continued to make good progress this year in delivering the Nation's promise to the Armed Forces to ensure that they are treated fairly. We maintain our pledge that across Government, and in collaboration with the devolved administrations, local Government, the charitable sector and the rest of society, we will continue striving to deliver an enduring network of support for the Armed Forces community, through the Armed Forces Covenant, that is the best it can possibly be.



The Open University Signs The Armed Forces Covenant - From left to right Mark Lancaster TD MP, Minister for Defence Veterans, Reserves and Personnel and Keith Zimmerman, University Secretary

Summary of 2016 Deliverables

Healthcare

Health Education England launched a new e-learning programme to help increase understanding for GPs and others providing health services for the Armed Forces population.

NHS England launched a national engagement exercise to seek the views and experiences of the people that access Veterans' mental health services.

NHS England embedded a question into normal mental health data collection that will require all providers of NHS funded mental health care to help identify Veterans and Service dependents using their services.

NHS England launched a Veterans' Trauma Network, aimed at providing a safety net for trauma-recovering Veterans and transitioning Service personnel.

The MOD completed all of the recommendations contained in the 2012 Care Quality Commission review of the Defence Medical Services.

The Defence Medical Services (DMS,) launched a potential collaborative project with NHS England, to explore the development of shared health services through the redevelopment and regeneration of existing facilities at Catterick Garrison.

The DMS, in partnership with the Department of Health and the NHS, developed a new Integrated Personal Care for Veterans' System (IPC4V).

The MOD, established a new Veterans' Complex Prosthetic Assessment Clinic (CPAC) at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC), Headley Court.

The MOD announced in December 2015, that Veterans diagnosed with mesothelioma as a result of exposure to asbestos attributable to their military Service would be given the option of a lump sum of £140,000 under the War Pensions Scheme. The first payments were made in April 2016.

NHS Scotland, established a total of 19 Armed Forces Champion across its key areas.

The Scottish Government, allocated a further £200,000 for Veterans' First Point (V1P) Lothian.

The Scottish Government, in partnership with NHS Scotland, provided £1.2 million to fund the provision of specialist mental health services for Veterans across Scotland.

The Welsh Government, invested £650,000 to support improvements in psychological therapies.

The Welsh Government, in collaboration with the MOD developed a fast track referral pathway for injured/ill Service personnel to enable their earlier return to fully deployable status.

Education

The DfE provided £22 million, through the Service Pupil's Premium, to support over 73,000 children from Service families.

The DfE allocated £6 million to fund schools, colleges and organisations in delivering activities to help broaden children's learning experiences and boost character.

The MOD allocated £6 million of funding from the MOD Education Support Fund, to help 471 Schools with over 25,000 children from Service families across the UK.

The MOD identified a total of 40 projects for funding and completed work on 19 projects in the £20 million childcare infrastructure improvement programme.

The MOD has provided £77,000 of funding to the University of Winchester to establish a national research alliance.

The MOD raised the profile of children from Service families by holding a series of events across the UK.

The Scottish Government has encouraged applications to the 2016 Education Support Fund, and assessed bids.

The Scottish Government has supported the Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES) National Transitions Officer (NTO), in their work.

Support for Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru, secured a third year of funding from the MOD Education Support Fund.

The Welsh Government consulted on a draft Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill.

The Welsh Government contributed £17,450 to support students on the Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme.

The Welsh Government contributed £67,000 towards the Further and Higher Education Commitment Scheme.

Accommodation

The MOD introduced a new charging system for Service Family Accommodation (SFA), in April 2016, a key element of the New Employment Model Programme.

The MOD moved to the Government's Decent Homes Standard (DHS) in April 2016; no Service family is now allocated accommodation in the UK which does not meet the DHS.

The MOD has allocated 68 million in 2016-17 on improving and upgrading SFA in the UK. Now meeting Key Performance Indicators.

The MOD introduced the National Housing Prime (NHP) contract across the UK in December 2015.

The MOD announced the extension of the Forces Help to Buy Scheme to 2018.

The DCLG extended the period within which ex-Service personnel and surviving partners are given a priority for Government funded shared ownership schemes from 12 months to 24 months after service.

The Minister for Housing and Planning and the Local Government Association Chairman jointly wrote to all local authorities in December 2015, reminding them of the need to ensure their policies reflect their Covenant pledges.

The Scottish Government, allocated £80 million to its Open Market Shared Equity Scheme to help up to 2,000 first time buyers including Service personnel.

The Scottish Government, awarded £1.3 million of grant funding to the Scottish Veterans' Garden City Association (SVGCA).

The Welsh Government launched its all-Wales Housing Pathway for ex-Service personnel and their families.

The Covenant In Business

The four largest mobile phone providers committed to allow Service personnel and their families to suspend their contracts when they are posted overseas.

47 of the UK's largest banks and building societies committed to allow Service personnel and their families, who rent out their homes when posted overseas, to avoid having to switch to buy-to-let mortgages.

86% of the UK's motor insurance industry committed to waive cancellation fees and preserve no claims discounts for up to three years for Service personnel and their families posted overseas.

Improved access to Junior ISA accounts for dependants of crown servants based overseas.

Issued a new Procurement Policy Note to all Government Departments, which requires them to encourage their suppliers to sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

Extended the credit union service to those in receipt of an Armed Forces pension.

2016 Report Commitments

Healthcare

NHS England, will deliver new contracted Veterans' mental health services from 2017 onwards.

The Welsh Government is working with Veterans' NHS Wales, CAIS and the Royal British Legion to introduce a more seamless approach to ensure that Veterans continue to receive healthcare that meets their needs.

Education

The MOD will improve the transfer of information between schools; expanding the Common Transfer File for England; modify and promote the Pupil Information Profile (PIP) for overseas and devolved administration schools and for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

The MOD will improve online information on the schools admissions process for Service families.

The MOD will work with partners to create a research network for all research relating to children from Service families, to assist in identifying their needs and outcomes.

The MOD will work with devolved administrations and local authorities to ease the transition for Service personnel returning to the UK from Germany.

The MOD will continue to strengthen its partnerships with education departments, local authorities of main Armed Forces areas, professional bodies and networks to promote the needs of children from Service families.

The MOD will complete an additional 50, 000 apprenticeships by 2020.

Education Scotland with the NTO will develop accessible national and local information to support Service families transition into Scotland.

Education Scotland will add an explicit reference to children from Service families and barriers to learning they may face to the Additional Support for Learning Code of Practice.

The Welsh Government, will introduce the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill by December 2016.

Accommodation

DCLG proposes to remove the age restriction for eligibility for starter homes for injured Service personnel and bereaved spouses by spring 2017.

The Welsh Government will publish the findings of research into the impact of the Housing (Wales) act on all homeless groups, including Veterans, in late in 2017.

The Covenant In Business

The MOD will work with broadband providers to ensure the Armed Forces community have fair access to the service, during 2017.

The MOD will run a pilot of the new British Forces Post Office address format for Service personnel and their families when based overseas, by early 2017.

The MOD will work with lenders during 2017, to ensure wider application of the policy change, which allows Reservists to have their previous year's pay taken into account when applying for a mortgage.

The Covenant In The Community

The MOD will work across Government and with key external stakeholders to develop and deliver an action plan based on the recommendations of the Our Community Our Covenant review, in early 2017.

Family Life

The Welsh Government to introduce an enhanced flexible childcare offer for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds by 2020.

Reserves

MOD to publish the findings of research into the Support provided to the Families of Reservists, in August 2017.



Observations

By External Members of the Covenant Reference Group

Naval Families Federation, Army Families Federation, RAF Families Federation

The obligations and sacrifices made by Service personnel make Service life unique. This can present specific challenges for our personnel and their families. 2016 has seen the Armed Forces continue to engage in multiple operations throughout the UK and overseas and the separation often imposed by Service life is as much a reality as ever for our families. During the last year, we have also learnt more about various Defence change programmes including the Future Accommodation Model (FAM) and the Better Defence Estate.

The exact impact of these programmes is still unknown and, consequently, Service personnel and their families are living in a period of increasing uncertainty. The cumulative effect of these initiatives, together with a number of other changes to terms and conditions, is seen by many as an erosion of the military offer. The Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) this year shows that the impact of Service life on family and personal life remains the principle reason given for leaving the Armed Forces. The need to ensure that Service personnel and their families are treated fairly through the application of the Armed Forces Covenant principles has never been more important.

The three Service Families Federations appreciate the opportunity to comment on those elements of the Report relevant to the Armed Forces personnel and families we represent. Once again, we have been consulted extensively on the content of this Annual Report. We are pleased to have seen considerable progress in many areas of Covenant delivery over the last twelve months, which is rightly reflected in the Report. Yet, these are changing times for Defence and the Covenant process cannot stand still.

Communicating the Covenant

The concerted efforts of the MOD to develop the strategy on communicating the Covenant have been evident this year. We welcome the introduction of the new Covenant website and see the additional potential this forum has in sharing best practice. There is a real need to maintain this momentum in order that the Covenant is better understood, not just by those involved in delivering its principles within organisations, but the Armed Forces community itself. To that end, we especially welcome the decision to place a Covenant Champion at every unit.

Healthcare

The proactive approach of the departments involved in healthcare provision, including the Devolved Administrations, is to be commended. The Families Federations were delighted to contribute to the development of the e-Learning for Healthcare programme, which was successfully launched by Health Education England and NHS England. It is hoped that this bespoke programme will raise awareness amongst health care providers across the UK in the coming months. Despite previous commitments to address issues faced by mobile Service families when accessing healthcare, some families still face difficulties transferring their care. The improved ability for the Families Federations to raise individual cases directly with regional teams in NHS England generally results in a successful resolution.

Whilst welcoming the clarification provided in this year's Report on compensation for clinical negligence during overseas assignments, we have considerable concerns whether the situation is

adequately explained to families ahead of a move overseas. We are therefore encouraged that the MOD plans to investigate this further.

Education

The work planned by the DfE and MOD to share good practice in the use of the Service Pupil Premium amongst schools in England is welcomed. The excellent projects that have been implemented by the Devolved Administrations to support Service children also deserve specific recognition. The positive impact that the MOD Education Support Fund has had in delivering bespoke projects to support Service children is evident. We would like to see this important funding source continue beyond 2017-2018 to support children still affected by mobility and deployments.

Partnership working between the MOD and the University of Winchester to build a network for research into Service children's progression into Higher Education is fully supported by the Families Federations.

We are pleased with the commitment to improve the transfer of pupil information between schools, as we are aware of ongoing issues with this process. Whilst there has been excellent work conducted to support the Army Basing moves from Germany to the UK, a commitment is required to reassure families that the provision of education by the MOD in British Forces Germany throughout drawdown remains an absolute priority.

The Report acknowledges that school admissions remain a challenge for mobile Service families and there is a commitment to improve information to families. Based on the number of families that contact us, we have considerable concerns whether this commitment alone will remove the challenges Service families face in securing school places for their children. We would like to see further support provided through the School Admissions Code.

Accommodation

Accommodation remains, by far, the top issue reported to the Families Federations. The National Housing Prime contractor is still not delivering to the standard expected and should be held to account. CarillionAmey's performance this year has been so

inadequate that the Public Accounts Committee concluded that families had been let down and were not getting the service they had a right to expect. Despite statistics showing recent improvement, the 'lived experience' of too many SFA occupants remains poor, causing stress and frustration. If the level of repair services is now at contracted levels, then we must question if the levels set by the MOD are good enough.

Furthermore, whilst we agreed with the broad principles and aims of the Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS), the decision to implement charge increases for the majority of occupants at a time of such poor maintenance performance was inappropriate. The rollout of CAAS in the UK was far from successful from the perspective of many families due to poor communication and a complex appeal process.

Many of these issues apply to personnel in Single Living Accommodation too. Quality remains patchy and the provision of grade 4 and grade 1 accommodation within the same unit is not uncommon, together with the lottery of who is allocated which grade. Similarly, we have heard more in the last 12 months than ever before about issues with the infrastructure on units being in poor condition and not maintained: Leaking roofs, no heating for months, broken toilets left unrepaired and limited access to facilities such as gymnasiums. For those who live in SLA on a full time basis and for the many who are 'weekending', this contributes to a poor quality of life. This situation represents a threat to recruitment and retention, as well as the morale of our Service personnel, and is one for which we urge swift action.

Finally on Service accommodation, there is increasing nervousness about the Future Accommodation Model (FAM), which has the potential to change radically the way that accommodation is provided in the future. The unprecedented response that we had this year to our FAM surveys shows the importance families place on this matter. Whilst a review of entitlement is needed in a society where marriage is no longer the only way to define a family, there is real concern about the potential impact of FAM on many aspects of Service families' lives. These include the ability to rent on the private market, the provision of welfare support and loss of 'patch life'. FAM has been

presented as offering greater freedom of choice and more flexibility about how people choose to live. It's clear to our people that the current offer is unaffordable and unsustainable, and that FAM also represents a significant cost-cutting opportunity for the MOD. This makes people nervous rather than optimistic and many are already worried that SFA availability will be limited, that quality will fall and prices rise, whichever FAM option is selected. We are currently told that no decisions have been finalised regarding FAM. We therefore ask that families' views are heard and taken into consideration during FAM development.

We note that over 9,000 Service personnel have utilised the Forces Help to Buy scheme and we hope that this will endure beyond 2018.

A Covenant goal is that the Armed Forces community should have the same access to social housing as any other citizen and should not be disadvantaged by the mobile Service lifestyle. However, separated and divorced spouses were not included in initial legislation surrounding this commitment. We continue to see cases when the requirement for a local connection criterion is applied and we urge that measures are taken to address this clear disadvantage.

Employment

AFCAS 2016 indicated that the number of Service personnel who cite their spouse's career as increasing their intention to leave the Service has risen to 49%. The ongoing work by the MOD on spousal employment is becoming increasingly focussed on an evidence-based approach to shape future policy, which we welcome. There are clear areas of disadvantage yet to be addressed in relation to spouses who accompany Service personnel on overseas assignments. Whilst one size won't fit all in relation to supporting spouses' careers, the implementation of FAM and the potentially increasing reliance on a second salary increases the urgency of this work stream. It will be important for policy-makers to consider the interim evaluation of the Spouse Employment Support ahead of the conclusion of the trial, in order to shape future delivery that is relevant to all three Services.

The new National Insurance credits to protect the State Pension of spouses who had accompanied

their Armed Forces partner overseas are welcomed. Finally, we are delighted that family members can now access student funding for distance learning courses whilst overseas.

Childcare

The cost and availability of childcare is a huge burden on many families who need to access it – or cannot afford to access it – especially for single parent or dual serving families. Acknowledging that this is an issue that affects many civilian families as well, we are nevertheless concerned about the wildly varying costs around the country and the growing strain it is placing on those that need childcare in order to meet their Service commitments. The MOD should not underestimate the impact this complicated and emotive issue is having and we welcome both the inclusion of childcare as an issue to be addressed as part of the MOD Family Strategy and the intent to produce a childcare policy.

Transition

In the last year, the three Federations have been delighted to receive funding from Forces in Mind Trust to each recruit a Transition Liaison post. The focus will be on gathering evidence to influence policy that supports the transition of the whole family to civilian life. We hope to see additional commitments made through the Covenant where necessary to support findings.

Participation as Citizens

Once again we are disappointed to see the lack of commitment to remove disadvantages faced by our Foreign and Commonwealth families. This is a clear Covenant goal and yet families still tell us that overseas assignments in particular can cause specific issues relating to residency, passports and obtaining National Insurance numbers. We would like to see these matters addressed during 2017.

The Covenant in Business

Considerable progress has been made in the last year to remove the disadvantages faced by Service personnel and their families when accessing commercial products and services. Commitments surrounding mobile phones, mortgages and motor

insurance, and the improved access to Junior ISA accounts whilst overseas, will address many of the concerns raised by families. We continue to hear about issues relating to maintaining a credit history due to the mobile Service lifestyle and look forward to seeing the system changes proposed through work with the financial services sector. The 2017 commitments provide a clear focus and we are reassured that our excellent relationships with Defence Relationship Management will enable us to raise any specific issues that arise in-year.

The Covenant in the Community

We contributed to all stages of the review of how the Covenant is delivered in the community carried out by Forces in Mind Trust and the Local Government Association. The core infrastructure to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant encapsulated the ways of increasing parity across local authorities, which we have been highlighting for some time. The action plan to deliver the recommendations is essential and we look forward to contributing to its development. In particular, we would like to see a focus in the next 12 months on how local authorities adapt their policies to remove disadvantage for the Armed Forces community. We are pleased to see ongoing funding for local authorities to support the delivery of the Covenant in light of the budgetary pressures within local government.

Conclusion

We would like to express our profound gratitude to all those involved in delivering the Covenant to ensure that our personnel and their families are treated fairly. We are gradually seeing the development of a more coherent approach across central government, local government and in business, resulting in positive outcomes. There is an increasing focus on families, as shown by the long awaited UK Armed Forces Families' Strategy. However, families still tell us of their multiple concerns, particularly surrounding current and future accommodation. Our community needs early and effective engagement and information on matters that affect family life, particularly any Defence change programmes. A priority for 2017 must be listening to families and investigating their concerns in order to inform policy direction.

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

We continue to be encouraged by the progress being made in the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant as clearly illustrated in this very positive Report. We are also pleased to note that several of the issues identified by external members of the Covenant Reference Group in last year's report have been addressed during this year. There do, however, remain a number of important issues which we believe need to be addressed if the Armed Forces Covenant is to have the full impact on members of the Armed Forces community that was originally intended.

One particularly positive initiative this year has been the research project, Our Community – Our Covenant, carried out by Forces in Mind Trust and the Local Government Association to identify ways of improving the delivery of the Covenant. The research confirmed that the delivery of the Covenant is very varied across the country with a clear need to ensure, not only that relevant policies are in place, but that appropriate training is given to local authority staff to ensure that the policies are properly implemented. There is also a clear need to enhance the communications effort within the Armed Forces community to ensure that all members of the community understand just what can reasonably be expected of the Covenant. We particularly applaud the decision taken by the Covenant Reference Group to endorse the recommendations contained in this report and to assume responsibility for monitoring their implementation.

The report also highlighted the differences in delivery of the Covenant across the United Kingdom and particularly in Northern Ireland. While the special challenges of operating in the Province are recognised there is, nonetheless, a significant number of members of the Armed Forces community resident in Northern Ireland and they are just as entitled to the support of the Covenant as those on the mainland. We are much encouraged by the recent decision by the NI Government to send a representative to future meetings of the Covenant Reference Group. Cobseo is already committed to helping to develop and support the NI

Veterans Support Committee to enhance the level of cooperation and collaboration across the Service charity sector in the Province.

Mental health remains an area of particular concern. The Report highlights the work that has been carried out during the year to develop the Veterans' Mental Health Service. The engagement exercise identified considerable concern over such issues as long referral/waiting times, difficulties with the transfer of care, and the need for greater awareness of the support available to Veterans. Improvements to the service provided to Veterans is being developed in a climate of significantly reduced funding in these areas right across the NHS. There would seem to be merit in introducing some specific target times for Veterans for referrals and treatment, and ring fencing the appropriate resources, to ensure that the commitments made are deliverable. We have a particular concern over Veterans with psychological injuries and their treatment under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. Such Veterans are not well served by the current AFCS tariff scheme as most are not able to demonstrate permanent functional impairment.

We note that the policy regarding cases of clear clinical negligence for those serving overseas was reviewed during 2016. These cases can represent a clear disadvantage for those serving and can have catastrophic consequences for the families involved. A revised policy covering the conduct of such cases, a communications plan to ensure that those serving overseas are fully aware of the policy, and appropriate arrangements for compensation, including for recent cases, should be implemented forthwith.

The significant measures identified in the report to improve access to, and the quality of, education for children of Serving Service families are warmly welcomed. The potential impact of the Service Pupil Premium and the MOD Education Support Grant are very significant and we welcome the research currently being carried out by the University of Winchester to assess the Outcome of these initiatives to determine just how successful they are being in supporting the children of those in the Armed Forces community. It is also hoped that a commitment will be made to continue with the Education Support Grant beyond 2017.

The eventual signature of the Career Transition Partnership by the MOD and Right Management Ltd was welcomed and helped to reduce some of the uncertainty around its implementation. However, some key sub-contractors are still working on temporary contracts, and the decision to reduce or remove payment to many of the charities delivering front line services in support of the CTP has seriously reduced the support available to those in transition. We now have reports of staff gapping within the CTP which is having a direct impact on the ability of Service leavers to access support. A review of these arrangements would be a positive development. We are also concerned about the challenges facing some working age Veterans, both during and after their transition out of the Armed Forces, as highlighted in SSAFA's recent 'New Frontline' report. We look forward to working together with Government and the Business Community to assist this cohort of vulnerable individuals.

We welcome the process improvements implemented during 2016 regarding the provision of adaptive housing for seriously injured Servicemen and women as they transition into civilian life. However, the current policy is still focused on payment for modifications to a civilian home being made before the Serviceman or woman leaves the Service. This inevitably leads to premature decisions being made at a critical point in the transition process. We recommended last year that the policy needs to provide more flexibility to ensure that housing decisions can be made without disadvantage and in the interests of the Veteran and his or her family. We welcome the on-going review of this policy to ensure more flexibility and we would welcome our expert member charities being consulted on this work.

In last year's report we highlighted the fact that those making appeals to the WP&AFCS Tribunals were the only appellants right across Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service who had to submit their appeals with the respondent organisation, in this case the MOD, rather than directly with the court or tribunal. Not only does this cause inevitable delay in dealing with cases, but it also creates a perception that the Tribunal lacks independence. We were very pleased to be informed that Scotland and Northern Ireland have now gone ahead and decided to implement direct

lodgement of appeals to their WP&AFCS Tribunals. We understand that the MoJ has similarly decided to implement this policy for England and Wales as part of the on-going reform of the HMCTS and we would encourage early dissemination of the implementation schedule to reduce disadvantage on the basis of place of residence.

We also have concerns over the wider possible implications of the on-going consultation on reform within the Courts and Tribunal Service. The proposal to reduce the presence of lay and specialist members on tribunals as a cost saving measure could have a dramatic impact on the effectiveness of the WP&AFCS Tribunals. Such tribunals have had Service members to provide critical information to judicial members of the tribunal on the unique nature of military Service for over 100 years! Removal of this, and medical, expert advice merely to save money would represent a very serious disadvantage and we would welcome assurance that this would not be considered. Similarly, there was an attempt some years ago to merge the WP&AFCS Tribunals with one of the other larger tribunals, again as a cost saving measure. This would represent a very serious disadvantage to the Armed Forces community and we would also welcome assurance that this will not be considered.

Difficulties with child adoption have long been an area of disadvantage for Service families. The situation has become significantly better in recent years and the expectation is that the New Employment Model will further ease any difficulties. The current problem is not one of policy for local authorities but the way that the policy is implemented in certain areas. There are many examples of local authority staff refusing to accommodate the inevitable challenges of Service family life, especially when the serviceman or woman is deployed or working at distance. This issue needs to be recognised and further guidance given.

In recent years we have expressed some concern that the extant Strategy for Veterans has become seriously out of date and does not reflect the more recently agreed Vision for Veterans. However, we received clear assurance at the recent Ministerially chaired MOD Service Charities Partnership Board that the Vision will now be taken forward and that the MODSCP would be the committee that sets

objectives and monitors progress. This is a very positive development.

We have been much encouraged by the recent award of a grant from the Covenant Fund of £2M to establish a pilot Gateway contact centre with a single telephone number and a fully integrated website to provide a single point of contact for those in the Armed Forces Community who do not know where to turn for assistance. This is an extremely positive development which will be of great benefit to those in need. It is hoped that the Gateway will also progressively provide information as to where in the UK Veterans in need reside. This crucial information would be greatly enhanced by the declared intention of the Cabinet Office to request the inclusion of Armed Forces Community questions in the forthcoming National Census which will greatly assist the Devolved Administrations and Local Government in providing appropriate levels of support.

Overall the Report provides a very positive review of the progress made during the year in delivering the Armed Forces Covenant and all those involved including Central Government, Devolved Administrations, Local Government and the NHS should be congratulated, but there is no room for complacency. There remain a number of significant issues which continue to cause concern and need to be resolved and the members of the Confederation of Service Charities, across the UK, stand by to offer whatever assistance they can.

The Royal British Legion

The Royal British Legion (TRBL) warmly welcomes the progress in honouring the Armed Forces Covenant that is demonstrated in the annual report, and in particular that in a number of areas we have previously raised. The resolution of mesothelioma compensation and war pension social care disregards will make a substantial difference to potentially thousands of Veterans over the next 30 years. On the latter we look forward to its implementation across Great Britain from April 2017, and would wish to see this extended across the UK.

We have been greatly encouraged by the positive engagement and support from MOD, DH, NHS England, other Departments and devolved

Governments for TRBL's call for the next census to capture data on the Armed Forces community. We would like to see the Government as a whole take a position in support of this proposal in principle, and look forward to continued engagement on this topic.

TRBL published a series of recommendations in advance of this year's Welsh Assembly elections and we are delighted that the Welsh Government has already moved to implement two of them, on social care disregards and a housing pathway, as highlighted in the Annual Report. We look forward to working with the Welsh Government in pursuing the other recommendations, on a Welsh Service Pupil Premium; mental health treatment waiting times; prosthetics funding; standardised questions for public bodies; and specific measures for service families.

TRBL has engaged with the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Quinquennial Review and we welcome the consideration of our proposed 'triple lock' on the employment-related aspects of compensation. We reiterate this call and look forward to the review's conclusions.

We welcome the progress and support offered to those transitioning out of service and into the civilian job market outlined in the Report. TRBL has made recommendations in our recent report 'Deployment to Employment' to further build on this success including on minimum educational standards, transferable vocational qualifications, CTP uptake, and support for employers.

On NHS priority treatment, we are concerned that 10 years after it was extended to all veterans, there is still a problem with awareness and understanding amongst healthcare professionals. We would wish to see attention paid to improving this policy in partnership with Service charity expertise. We were glad to assist in the development of Health Education England's e-learning for Healthcare programme, and welcome its launch. It is now important that uptake and impact are both effectively measured and reported upon.

We welcome the engagement exercise NHS England conducted with regards to Veterans' mental health services and congratulate the Government on all they have done in this area since the 'Fighting Fit' report in 2010. However, we remain

concerned about the ability of current NHS mental health services to meet the needs of Veterans and Armed Forces families.

Concerns remain on Non-Freezing Cold Injury, and in particular the availability of expertise in treating veterans suffering from this condition and we would welcome further investigation of this. On alcohol, we welcome the action and progress made in addressing alcohol use amongst serving personnel. We would still welcome a strategy to address the problem amongst recent veterans and effective impact evaluations of all programmes.

We do not agree with the conclusion that no further action is required on Gulf War Illnesses. We remain of the view that funding of research into how best to treat ill Gulf War Veterans would be of value to those who are suffering poor health; and that the MOD should establish channels to communicate results of US research to UK Gulf War Veterans. This year's 25th anniversary of the Gulf War has resulted in increased contacts at TRBL from Gulf War Veterans, indicating the continuing salience of the issue.

We are concerned about recent proposals to remove specialist representation from the War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Chamber tribunal panel. If pursued in their current form, they risk contradicting the spirit of the Armed Forces Covenant and we would welcome the retention of the current arrangements.

During this year we have encountered some confusion as a result of the Covenant rebrand and use of the term 'treat fairly' rather than the principles of 'no disadvantage' and 'special treatment'. We would welcome both clear and regular reiteration from government of the enduring principles of the Covenant, and the prominent inclusion of the wording of the Covenant online.

Finally, TRBL is honoured to have been awarded the grant to establish the Veterans' Gateway with our partners at SSAFA, Combat Stress, Connect Assist and Poppyscotland and in the wider consortium. We look forward to working closely with Government on the delivery of this important new service.



Chapter 1 - Healthcare

Achievements This Year

This year NHS England conducted an audit of their current Veteran's mental health services to capture and build on best practice, ensuring Veterans receive the high quality services. NHS England sought the views and experiences of the people that access these services first hand, through a national engagement exercise launched in January 2016. Opinions were gathered from a wide range of stakeholders including Veterans who have or have had a mental health illness, their families and carers, service charities, commissioners and providers who offer treatment and support in this area. The engagement closed at the end of March 2016, with nearly 1,300 people and organisations responding. The feedback highlighted a number of common themes including:

- the need for a greater awareness of the dedicated Veteran mental health services available;
- long referral/waiting times;
- transfer of care, particularly around the discharge process;
- the need to ask 'have you served?'
- the need for greater clarity over where to go for help;
- the need to understand an Armed Forces background.

The findings along with the outcomes of the audit and the results of three pilot schemes that finished in March 2016, which tested enhanced models of care for Veterans with mental health issues, are all helping to shape the new contracted Veterans mental health services from 2017 onwards. The overall aim is to provide services that are sustainable, evidence based, easily accessible, offering high-quality and sensitive care, treatment and support – regardless of when an individual left the Armed Forces.

From April 2016, NHS England have embedded a question into normal mental health data collection, that will require all providers of NHS funded mental health care to help identify Veterans and Service dependents using their services.

Following engagement with Veterans and their families, NHS England launched a new Veterans Trauma Network in November 2016. The new network aims to provide an additional level of support for trauma-recovering Veterans and transitioning Service personnel, so that their specific and life-long healthcare needs are met efficiently, effectively and in an integrated way by the NHS. Once a Veteran is identified and referred to the network team (via their GP or key Service charities – The Limbless Veterans (Blesma), Blind Veterans UK, or Style for Soldiers), the team will be able to offer professional advice, supporting that patient (and their family/carers) via a specialist with access to integrated services with the appropriate NHS Major Trauma Centre specialists, close to where they live, or into other networks/service providers; including mental health. The early use of the pathway is providing better outcomes for patients, families and carers, as well as supporting GPs.

Last year we promised to provide a robust framework for the delivery of improved learning packages.

In June 2016, Health Education England, with support from NHS England, launched 'e-Learning for Healthcare', a new e-learning programme to help increase the understanding and awareness of GPs and others providing health services for the Armed Forces Community, and to facilitate their improved care and treatment.

The e-learning programme highlights both similarities and differences between the Armed Forces Community and wider society, to help those providing care and support for Service personnel, Veterans and their families understand the context of military life and how to appropriately respond to their health needs.

The programme has been developed and tested with a range of patient representatives from the Armed Forces community and Service charities. It can be accessed free of charge via the e-Learning for Healthcare website at <http://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/nhs-healthcare-for-the-armed-forces/> (access is available from the 'Open access sessions' page on the left hand side and also via registering on the website).

Over 1,500 users have registered since the programme's launch, it has received very positive feedback from the NHS, the Armed Forces networks and Service charities around the country, with charities actively encouraging its volunteers to use the platform ensuring its impact reaches far beyond the NHS.

Formal escalation process for Families Federations



Jo Wilkinson, Regional Armed Forces Covenant Manager, RAF Families Federation

"We have had only a few health related issues in the last few months and many have been very successfully resolved using our excellent relationship with NHS England. We are very grateful to them for both their intervention when required and their informal knowledge and support at other times."

Since its formalisation last year, the escalation protocol that was put in place between the Department of Health, NHS England and the Families Federations, to allow direct access to the NHS regional teams has been a huge success. Any concern or issues raised by a member of the Armed Forces community to the Families Federations that relates to NHS services in England can be discussed and resolved at a local level quickly and effectively.

NHS Choices

The updated Armed Forces Community health pages on the NHS Choices website have received over 16,000 visits since its re-launch on Armed Forces Day 2015, and we will continue to promote this informative and useful resource.

Defence Medical Services

In last year's annual report, the Defence Medical Services (DMS) committed to work with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to agree a schedule of inspections on an annual basis, in order to provide the DMS with external scrutiny and third party assurance. The inspection process is expected to commence with effect from April 2017.

The DMS are working on a potential collaborative project with NHS England to explore the development of shared health delivery services through the redevelopment and regeneration of existing facilities at Catterick Garrison. This project has the potential to benefit both the Armed Forces and the wider community around Catterick, an area likely to see increases in both the military and civilian population in the near future.

The DMS, in partnership with the Department of Health and the NHS has developed a new Integrated Personal Care for Veterans system (IPC4V) for a small and defined cohort of the most seriously injured Service personnel and Veterans who remain highly dependent and require additional attention and support as they transition into civilian life.

The IPC4V, which is currently being piloted, will provide a single focus for the clinical, health and social support for individuals, based on a comprehensive assessment of their needs. Currently such support is funded and delivered

by a number of separate agencies. The IPC4V will coordinate these separate elements to produce a joined-up and improved life-long system of care for the individual.

The Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) at Headley Court has long provided world-class rehabilitation and prosthetic support to our Service personnel. In a new collaborative arrangement, NHS disability centres can refer difficult prosthetic problems back to the DMRC for assistance. Eligible Veterans can now be seen as outpatients in a new monthly Complex Prosthetic Assessment Clinic (CPAC) at the DMRC. Early feedback has been good and the DMS is working closely with Blesma and other Service charities to ensure as many Veterans as possible are aware of this initiative and how it might benefit them.

In a parallel project (also in collaboration with the NHS) a small number of those referred to the CPAC are being identified as suitable candidates for inclusion in the on-going Direct Skeletal Fixation (DSF) pilot, which the Government announced £2 million of LIBOR funding for in November 2015. DSF is a surgical option for some amputees who can no longer manage with conventional prosthetics. Since the programme started in April 2016, it has enabled two patients to have this potentially life-changing surgery, with five more planned in the future.

In line with our commitment to examine whether hearing loss is a widespread issue for Service personnel and Veterans, the MOD has funded Phase 1 of the hearWELL programme to the cost of £0.5 million¹. Funding options for further phases, involving both Government and the third sector, are being considered.

Healthcare Observations From Last Year's Report

- Cobseo and The Royal British Legion, asked for more focused attention on the issue of compensation for Veterans suffering with asbestos induced mesothelioma.
- Cobseo also expressed concern over the allocation of appropriate compensation by the War Pension and Armed Forces

Compensation Scheme, where compensation assessment still appeared to be based on industrial rather than high impact induced hearing levels. It also recommended that attention was focused on the impact of Non Freezing Cold Injury (NFCI).

- In addition, Cobseo observed that, compensation for clinical negligence while serving overseas represented a clear case of disadvantage. Personnel and their families based overseas must have the policy clearly explained and must be given the option of returning to the UK for hospital treatment.
- It was announced in December 2015, that those Veterans diagnosed with diffuse mesothelioma as a result of exposure to asbestos attributable to their military Service would be given the option of a lump sum of £140,000 under the War Pensions Scheme. The first payments were made in April 2016. For those who elect to take it, the lump sum option replaces the War Disablement Pension and Supplementary Allowances, and War Widow(er)'s Pension and associated allowances.
- The MOD judges that the position on compensation is clear and appropriate and we do not propose to take any further action. Compensation is paid for Noise-Induced Hearing Loss at any level of acoustic trauma and for chronic noise injury where there is evidence of disablement at or above the UK recognised threshold.
- On NFCI, the MOD's Independent Medical Expert Group (IMEG) issued a report in March 2015, which recommended three new descriptors (descriptions of different types of injury), which were embedded into Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) legislation in May 2016. The report also recommended the revision of existing descriptors, and further research over a longer period of time.

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

- On compensation for clinical negligence. The MOD judges that it already has an adequate process in place. There is a question over how effectively this is communicated across Defence. We will investigate further and make changes where necessary.
- The Royal British Legion, suggested that: further progress was required on commitments on tackling alcohol dependency; and that more discussions with Government were needed and resolution of the issue of investment in research on ‘what works’ in treating Veterans with Gulf War illness.

The MOD Health and Wellbeing strategy has established an Alcohol Working Group. The group has introduced:

- an alcohol screening tool to be used by all military personnel at their periodic dental inspections;
- an alcohol brief intervention to be delivered by trained, trusted peers;
- updated regular alcohol awareness briefs; and partnered Public Health England in their ‘One You’ campaign.
- The MOD is also now partnering with drinkaware and disseminating campaign material to Service personnel aimed at reducing alcohol consumption.

The MOD has funded a research programme into Gulf Veterans illnesses. The findings were published at: <https://www.GOV.UK/gulf-veterans-illnesses> and webarchive.nationalarchives.GOV.UK/20050328231439/mod.uk/issues/gulfwar/

MOD scrutinises emerging research findings published in mainstream scientific literature. We have no plans to fund further research into Gulf War illnesses.

Healthcare Metrics

The metrics focus on the standard of Service-provided healthcare; UK Armed Forces families’ access to healthcare, including continuation of treatment if moved and the success of psychological services in treating ex-Service personnel. Across all areas the metrics demonstrated that the Covenant was working effectively and highlighted no areas where there were potential disadvantages for the Armed Forces Community.

The majority of Regular Service personnel continued to be satisfied with the Service-provided healthcare received (medical treatment 2016: 76%, Table 1) and the majority of their families continued to be satisfied with their ability to access healthcare (GP access 2016: 98%, Table 2). A small number of families moved whilst they were undergoing treatment however, the majority were able to continue their treatment (GP access 2016: 95%, Table 3).

Ex-UK Service personnel (including dependants) who were referred for psychological therapies in England had a higher recovery rate than that reported for all of England (2015-16: 48.6% and 46.3% respectively, Table 4). However, both recovery rates continued to be below the 50% Government Target. NHS England has instigated a number of initiatives to improve the recovery rates and seen an increase since 2014-15. Initiatives include supporting the lowest performing Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGS) and offering workshops to share best practice to all commissioners and providers.

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

2007 - 2016

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Medical treatment	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	77	76
Dental treatment	82	84	84	85	87	86	85	86	87	86

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2016

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

1. Only includes respondents who answered 'yes' to having received Service-provided medical or dental treatment over the past two years

2. Excludes n/a responses

.. represents data unavailable

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

2012 - 2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GP (including nurse/midwife)	97	96	96 ||	98	98
Dentist	88	89	90 ||	91	90
Hospital or specialist services	..	..	.. ||	98	96

Source: Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2014 and 2016

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

1. 2012-2014 – excludes N/A

2. 2015-2016 - Includes 'Yes, without difficulties' and 'Yes, but with some difficulties'; Excludes missing and 'No, I did not need to' responses

3. Responses are filtered for those who required access to dental treatment [GP: 93%, Dentist: 86% and Hospital: 63% for 2016]

|| Break in time series due to change in response options and population reported on

.. represents data unavailable

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

2012 - 2016

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
GP (including nurse/midwife)	93	90	92 ||	96	95
Dentist	79	70	74 ||	75	82
Hospital or specialist services	..	..	.. ||	91	90

Source: Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2014 and 2016

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

1. Refers to whether spouses/dependants were able to continue treatment in new location if moved

2. Includes: if moved for own reasons and; if due to Service

3. 2012-2014 – excludes N/A

4. 2015-2016 - Includes 'Yes, without difficulties' and 'Yes, but with some difficulties'; Excludes missing and 'No, I did not need to' responses

5. Respondents are filtered for those who moved in the last 12 months whilst undergoing treatment [GP: 15% Dental: 10% Hospital: 11% for 2016]

|| Break in time series due to change in population reported on

.. represents data unavailable

Table 4: Ex-UK Armed Forces personnel (including dependants) who completed their IAPT¹ treatment and moved to recovery³, percentage

2014/15 and 2015/16

	2014/15	2015/16
Ex – UK Armed Forces personnel and dependants	47.1	48.6
England	44.8	46.3

Source: Psychological Therapies: Annual Report on the use of IAPT services England, 2014/15 and 2015/16

1. Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)

2. England only

3. A referral has moved to recovery if they are classified as a clinical case when they enter treatment but no longer classified as a clinical case when they have completed a course of treatment. For more information, see Appendix 3 of the 2015/16 Annual Report

Healthcare in the Devolved Administrations

Scotland

NHS Scotland has established 19 Armed Forces Champions across its areas, which include local NHS Boards, NHS 24, NHS NSS (national Services Scotland), National Waiting Times Centre Board, the Scottish Ambulance Service and NHS Education for Scotland.

The Scottish Government continues to fund Veterans First Point (V1P) Lothian, a one-stop-shop drop in centre for Veterans and families no matter

their need. A further £200,000 for 2016-17 has been confirmed. In last year's report the Scottish Government highlighted its commitment to explore the roll-out of the Veterans First Point model in other areas of Scotland. Through £2.5 million Armed Forces Covenant funding, Veterans First Point Scotland has continued to work with local partnerships to lead the development of a network of seven additional local V1P services across Scotland.

In partnership with NHS Scotland, the Scottish Government provided £1.2 million in 2016-17 to fund the provision of specialist mental health services for Veterans across Scotland. Funding will continue to 2018.

Under the Scottish Care Information Gateway initiative, equipment has been installed to ensure that Military Health Centres have access to the same system as any Scottish GP; training to extend access to the gateway is underway.

The State of the art National Specialist Prosthetics Service provides assessment, prescription and fitting of the technologically complex prosthetics and offers long term follow-up and support. The National Specialist Prosthetics Service is now well established and continuing to work well through a single multidisciplinary team approach.

Wales

Veterans NHS Wales aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Veterans in Wales. The Welsh Government provides annual funding of £585,000 to Veterans NHS Wales. This includes £100,000 recurrent funding to provide flexibility to maintain demand for the service, and sustain shorter waiting times for Veterans to access the service. Since the service launched in April 2010 they have received 1,707 referrals.

The Welsh Government has worked in collaboration with the MOD to develop a Referral Pathway for injured/ill Service personnel. The MOD Fast-track process for Wales is an all Wales service which prioritises access to treatments for Service personnel who are actively serving but are currently graded as medically non-deployable. The process aims to facilitate earlier return to a medically fully deployable status. To date, the initiative has seen 138 referrals processed through the service.

Public Health Wales has worked successfully with the MOD on the integration of Service personnel into the adult national population screening programmes in Wales. This programme of work commenced with the integration of Service personnel into the Cervical Screening Wales programme last autumn and concluded with all other adult national population screening programmes (breast, bowel, abdominal aortic aneurysm and diabetic retinopathy) from 1st July 2016

There has been a significant improvement in the availability of NHS dentistry in recent years

– particularly in the areas where the majority of military personnel and their families are based.

Northern Ireland

Following on from the 2010 Psychological Therapies Strategy, recent investment has been focused on the training of existing staff in psychological therapies and the establishment of Primary Care Talking Therapies Hubs, which will help improve access to low intensity psychological care and help deliver more effective intervention at an early stage.

Alongside DMS provided mental health treatment for Service personnel and those in transition to civilian life, outpatient services are primarily provided through 15 military Departments of Community Health. Inpatient care is provided by the health service, contracted by the MOD. For Veterans, the Health and Social Care Board has agreed a care pathway which provides access to the residential treatment service in Scotland provided by Combat Stress.

The mental health needs of returning ex-Service personnel are dealt with either through the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) and Royal Irish (R IRISH) Aftercare Service, through Combat Stress, or directly within the mainstream Primary Care and Mental Health services.

The future development of necessary mental health services will be guided by the outcome of the Department's evaluation of the Bamford Action Plan 2012-15², and work to realise the 'Improving Mental Health' indicator in the draft Executive Programme for Government framework.

The HSC ensures that Defence personnel and families deployed in Northern Ireland have their previous waiting times for NHS services taken into account locally, so they are not disadvantaged by their deployment.

The Department of Health is in discussion with Health Education England regarding promulgating the e-Learning for Healthcare package with GPs across Northern Ireland.

² A cross-cutting action plan, involving all Government Departments, stemming from the 2002 Bamford Review of mental health and learning disability. Developed with service users and their carers, and covers a range of issues that are important to people with a mental illness – health, education, housing, benefits, employment and leisure.



Chapter 2 - Education

Achievements This Year

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

- Continued to help schools improve the educational outcomes of pupils from Service families through the provision of the Service Pupil Premium (SPP). This additional funding provides schools with £300 per annum for each eligible pupil, principally to help schools in England support their pastoral needs. Pupils attract the SPP if they have a parent who is currently in the Forces, or if they have been registered as a child from a Service family in any year since 2011. In the current financial year the SPP is worth over £22 million and will benefit over 73,000 eligible pupils in primary and secondary schools. The DfE and MOD are working together to identify and showcase evidence of good practice by schools in use of the funding.
- Allocated £6 million of funding in 2016, from the MOD Education Support Fund (ESF). 471 Schools with over 25,000 children from Service families across the UK benefitted from this. The money has enabled schools to provide bespoke projects to meet the needs of their children from Service families.
- Raised the profile of children from Service families through new partnerships developed with the National Governors Association and the Association of Directors of Children's Services, along with strengthening our relations with the education Departments in all the devolved administrations.
- Given funding to numerous nurseries and pre-schools providing early years support in the UK and overseas, and work has been

completed for projects such as enhancing indoor and outdoor areas. Of the 40 projects we identified last year, 19 have been completed and a further 19 have been started, including the £2 million project to build new facilities in Cyprus.

Case Study



Le Cateau Community Primary School in Catterick Garrison has the largest number of pupils from Service families in North Yorkshire, and has been supported by the ESF. Over the course of the last four years, the school has successfully bid for funding to ensure continuous provision for its pupils. Bids have covered: additional funding to implement a cross cluster HMS Heroes group (now known as MKC Heroes); funding to maintain the expertise of staff in the light of fluctuating numbers due to the Drawdown from Germany; and to implement a Learning Mentor role to support pupils from Service families with managing transition, emotional well-being and support whilst Service personnel are on active deployment. Receiving the additional funding has enabled the school to ensure targeted provision and with the recent Drawdown attracting 130 new pupils to the school, the additional provision provided by the ESF was welcomed with open arms.

The first bid to the ESF in 2013 provided funding to form HMS Heroes groups across the cluster of schools. The formation of the clubs in each school is now fully implemented and provides an additional support to Service and non-service pupils. The pupils from each school meet on a regular basis to share ideas and to ensure the clubs in each school support the children.

Ian Mottram, Head Teacher

“As a school, we are grateful to the additional funding provided through the ESF. Without this, there is no doubt that the school would have found it extremely difficult to maintain its expertise and to support the many Service pupils that are on roll. ”

Case Study



A bespoke drama, “Wherever home is”, commissioned by North Yorks Council and funded by the MOD’s Education Support Fund, has been delivered in over 35 schools across the UK and in Germany, which explores how children experience change and the challenges that children from Service families encounter, helping to build resilience.

Stephen Burke, Director of The Invisible Man Theatre Company

“In the past 8 years we have had the pleasure of getting to know the children of serving (and ex) Service personnel and their families. Alongside the education and welfare professionals that support the families, but mainly the children, we feel very privileged to have been invited into their lives and asked to create a piece of work for them that hopefully they can be proud of”.

- Provided £45,000 of research funding to the University of Winchester. In July 2016, the university launched the findings of their research on the educational progression of children from Service families and produced resources including films, teachers guides and session plans, all available on line at: http://www.winchester.ac.uk/aboutus/wideningparticipation/Documents/UoW%20research%20paper_Further%20and%20Higher%20Progression%20for%20Service%20Children.pdf

We will continue our partnership with the university to help build a network for further research into children from Service families, which will help focus policy and future resources. The MOD has awarded the university £77, 610 this year to start this project, which will run for 3 years at a total cost of £225,500.

- The DfE and the MOD are putting arrangements in place to improve data sharing on Service pupils held in the National Pupil Database. This will include their attainment at the end of primary and secondary school (and in particular how this varies between children from Service families who move frequently and those who do not); their distribution across schools; the standard of schools that children from Service families attend; and the proportion who are eligible for free school meals. This data will aid the development of policies to ensure that children from Service families are not disadvantaged.
- Following representation from the Army Families Federation, the rules for student funding have been changed so that Armed Forces personnel and their families can access student funding for distance learning course while posted abroad. The change will apply to new and continuing students applying to study from August 2017.

Future Plans

The demand for school places across the UK is increasing. The MOD has worked directly with areas that have received influxes of Forces families to ensure provision is adequate and the MOD

continues to work with education departments to improve admission arrangements, but there remains a challenge for families that move regularly. The MOD will seek to improve the information available to parents and assist them through the admission process if they require it.

Transition between schools is significantly easier if there is reliable data on the children which can highlight their progress. The DfE and MOD are working to expand the Common Transfer File which applies to English and MOD schools. For transfers back into the English system the Pupil Information Profile will continue to be improved and promoted.

The MOD is currently examining the relationship between the issue of posting orders to Service Personnel, the allocation of Service Family Accommodation, and the timing of applications for admissions to schools. The aim is to ensure that the process runs efficiently and does not create disadvantage. The outcomes will be reported in next year's annual report.

The Children's Society 'Include' programme has been awarded funding by NHS England, to examine the needs of children from Service families who may be undertaking caring responsibilities, which impact their own wellbeing and education, and to identify gaps in accessing support services.

The project will run from October 2016 – March 2017 and look at the specific needs of young carers from Service families across Hampshire and Wiltshire, where 29% of Armed Forces are currently located.

Education Metrics (Children from Service Families)

The metrics focus on the standard of education received by children from Service families. The metrics demonstrated that the Covenant is working effectively in relation to the standard of education children from Service families receive; the only potential area of concern related to the higher percentage of children who moved schools and the possible impact on their education.

Since 2012-13 there has continued to be no difference in England in the level of educational attainment achieved by children from Service

families, when compared to non-Service children (Key Stage 4 2014/15: 65% and 63% respectively, Table 5) and no difference in the OFSTED rating of the schools they attend (Outstanding and Good 2014-15: 80% and 81% respectively, Table 8).

All children were disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment if they moved schools (Table 6) however, even though children from Service families performed better than non-Service children, they were more likely to attend more than one school (2014-15: 29% and 18% respectively). The Government recognises the challenges faced by children from Service families who move schools and has put a number of measures in place to help minimise the impact on their education: school admission authorities must allocate a place to school-age children from Service families who have not yet moved to the area but parents have a confirmed posting; children from Service families who apply to primary school outside the normal admissions round can be admitted as exception to the infant class limit and; all schools publish their school curriculum to inform parents of the topics their child will be studying or would have studied if originally attended the school. In addition the MOD and DfE are looking to improve the educational progression information which accompanies a child when they move schools to ease the transition process.

Table 5: Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2} achieving acceptable level at KS2³ and KS4⁴ in England, percentage

2013-2015

% achieved acceptable level		2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
KS23	Service children	78.6	79.9	82.2
	Non- service children ²	78.9	81.7	82.9
KS44	Service children	64.4 ||	62.9	64.9
	Non- service children ²	65.3 ||	62.7	63.0

Source: Department for Education

1. Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record and KS2 or KS4 result

2. Excludes pupils who receive free school meals (FSM)

3. KS2 – Level 4+ for reading, maths and writing

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

|| Break in time series due to a methodology change

Table 6: Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2} KS2³ educational attainment in England by number of school moves, percentage

2014/15

		Number of schools attended ⁴			
		1	2	3	4+
Number of schools attended	Service children	34.2	37.0	21.5	7.3
	Non- service children ²	62.5	31.2	5.4	0.8
% achieved acceptable level	Service children	85.3	81.8	79.7	78.9
	Non- service children ²	84.5	81.4	74.8	67.6

Source: Department for Education

1. Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record and KS2 result.

2. Excludes pupils who receive free school meals (FSM)

3. KS2 attainment achieved – Level 4+ for reading, maths and writing

4. Schools attended by pupils in Y1 to Y6 (2009/10-2014/15). State funded schools only.

Table 7: UK Armed Forces children¹ and non- UK Armed Forces children^{1,2} KS4³ educational attainment in England by number of school moves, percentage

2014/15

		Number of schools attended ⁴			
		1	2	3	4+
Number of schools attended	Service children	70.1	24.2	5.2	0.4
	Non- service children ²	81.5	17.0	1.4	0.1
% achieved acceptable level	Service children	68.4	58.3	49.5	46.7
	Non- service children ²	65.4	53.8	38.4	25.9

Source: Department for Education

1. Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record and KS4 result.

2. Excludes pupils who receive free school meals (FSM)

3. KS4 attainment achieved - 5+ A*-C GCSE including Math and English

4. Schools attended by pupils in Y7 to Y11 (2009/10-2014/15). State funded schools only.

Table 8: OFSTED rating of schools attended by Service children¹ and non-Service children^{1,2}, percentage

2014/15

	OFSTED Rating			
	Outstanding	Adequate	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
Service children	17.6	62.5	17.5	2.5
Non-service children ²	21.5	58.7	16.9	2.8

Source: Department for Education

1. Includes pupils (age 5 to 15) at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record

2. Excludes pupils who receive free school meals (FSM)

Education In The Devolved Administrations

Scotland

The Scottish Government chaired Scottish Service Children Strategy Group (SSCSG) has continued to deliver in the last year focusing on the challenges faced by children from Service families and making support available to them. Since autumn 2015, achievements have included:

- encouraging applications to the 2016 and 2017 Education Support Fund and holding a Scottish Regional Panel to assess bids. The fund has supported some excellent work in schools and communities in Scotland;
- supporting the Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES) National Transitions Officer (NTO), dedicated to the support of children from Service families, in work to:
- develop a 'Getting It Right for Forces Families' film;
- implement the Service children marker on local authority management information systems and explain to parents and schools how identification can help better support these children.
- deliver six education forums for Armed Forces families.

Case Study

The Scottish Government acknowledges that the transition between different school systems remains a concern for Armed Forces families. Sharing information about the Scottish education system and the support available in schools can help to create a positive, smooth transition. In one case, the newly produced ADES film 'Getting it Right for Forces Families', although developed with education practitioners in mind, was shown in a pre-move presentation for families moving to HM Naval Base Clyde (Faslane). One mother of four children, who was not originally planning to relocate the family, saw the film. It gave her such reassurance that the children would be well-supported and have positive learning experiences that she decided the entire family would move to Scotland.

Partnership working in 2017 will include:

- developing with the insight provided by the Education Forums and engagement with key stakeholders, accessible national and local information to support Service families transition into Scotland. We will work to ensure Service personnel have access to this information as early as possible;
- adding an explicit reference to children from Service families and barriers to learning they may face to the Additional Support for Learning Code of Practice (revision planned for 2017);
- exploring opportunities to engage directly with children from Service families.

Wales

Support for Service Children in Education Cymru (SSCE) has secured a third year of funding from the MOD Education Support Fund. The third year will focus on delivering the first all-Wales Supporting Service Children in Education conference and support the continued development of resources, information and advice for schools, teachers and organisations working with Service children and their families.

- In 2015-16, 15 schools successfully bid for funding, benefiting from almost £437,000 for projects in Wales. Projects included support for the teaching of reading; music, arts and sports activities for families; and resources to facilitate smooth transition between schools.
- The Welsh Government consulted on a draft Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Bill between July and December 2015. It is expected that the Bill will be introduced for legislative scrutiny before Christmas 2016. During this process, the Welsh Government engaged with MOD to understand the issues that mobile children from Service families may face.
- SSCE Cymru has been working with the digital storytelling company Storyworks UK to develop a short film for professionals and accompanying digital stories with Service children. The digital stories were launched in November 2016.
- SSCE Cymru has also been working with the Wales Principal Education Psychologists Network to encourage awareness of the emotional challenges an Armed Forces child may face, and with the award winning Military Kids Club (formerly HMS Heroes) to support the launch of groups in Wales. A tri-Service network of after-school clubs bring together members of Service families aged between three and 18 years old from all over the country.
- In Wales, the Further and Higher Education Commitment scheme pays the tuition fees of those Service leavers living in Wales when they study for a first full level 3 qualification, a first undergraduate or foundation degree, or a first HNC or HND. The Welsh Government

contributed a total of £67,000 in academic year 2015-16 towards this scheme enabling Service leavers across Wales to benefit from further/higher education.

Northern Ireland

During the 2015-16 academic year there were 720 pupils of Service personnel enrolled across 81 schools in Northern Ireland. The Department of Education in Northern Ireland provides schools with additional funding to support these pupils on a per capita basis via the Common Funding Scheme. Schools can apply for funding for pupils in primary or post-primary schools whose father or mother is a member of a UK Armed Forces, is not normally resident in Northern Ireland and who has been posted here for a period scheduled to last no less than two years. In 2016-17, £258,000 was allocated to schools in Northern Ireland for this purpose.

As a reflection of the Department of Education's commitment to supporting the education of these pupils, the Department is represented on the 'Northern Ireland Service Children in Education Forum', which meets bi-annually to discuss issues relating to the education of children of Service personnel.

In Service Education

In the financial year 2015-16, over 11,700 personnel accessed the enhanced learning credit scheme to undertake education qualifications from diplomas to Doctorates.

The MOD is the single largest deliverer of apprenticeships in the UK with around 20,000 apprentices on programmes at any one time ranging from engineering and IT, to construction and driving. This year, the MOD delivered its 150,000th apprenticeship and has pledged to complete an additional 50,000 apprenticeships by 2020.

Defence invests significant funding to train and develop its staff, which means that our people are in high demand with employers when they leave the Armed Forces. 85% of Service Leavers (who use the Career Transition Partnership) are in employment within six months of leaving. A further 10% choose not to work and are economically inactive.

In last year's report, we highlighted the challenge we faced in developing specific accredited recognition of Reserves training.

The Army Skills Offer provides funded pathways to civilian qualifications for both Regular and Reserve Service personnel in Employability, and Leadership and Management. Reserve personnel that attend the Regular version of these courses are able to claim the same qualifications as their Regular colleagues, and there are now also funded qualification pathways for the Reserve versions of many of the courses.

Over 1,000 Reserve personnel have now been funded by the Army Skills Offer to gain a civilian qualification in Employability, Leadership and / or Management. As Reserve versions of mandatory career courses are developed for soldiers and officers the Army Skills Offer will continue work with civilian providers to map and fund qualifications that enhance the personal and professional development of Reserve personnel.

In-Service Education Metrics

The metrics demonstrated that the Covenant is working effectively in relation to Service personnel's ability to find employment on leaving the Services which is in part due to the training and education received. However, there continues to be low satisfaction with the training and education available in relation to gaining civilian accreditation and personal development.

The estimated employment rate of Veterans residing in Great Britain was not significantly different to non-Veterans (2015: 76% and 79% respectively) when the differing age and gender structures were taken into account (Table 12). In addition the employment rate six months after leaving the Service for those who used the Career Transition Partnership services has remained consistently high (2014/15: 85%, Table 11). Both indicate that the training and education received whilst in Service benefitted their future employment prospects.

The percentage of Regular Service personnel satisfied with the opportunities to gain civilian accreditation and opportunities for personal development has remained consistently low with only 48% satisfied with civilian accreditation

opportunities and 57% satisfied with personnel development opportunities in 2016 (Tables 9 & 10). The MOD is focused on developing a culture of personal development in which personnel are continually encouraged to develop to optimise their contribution to military capability and prepare them for employment thereafter. All training and education provided is encouraged to be reviewed in relation to accreditation. The MOD is continuing to be the Nation's largest provider of apprenticeships and invest significantly in schemes which support elective education such as learning credits and the Army Skills offer. It is acknowledged that there is a requirement to improve the awareness of personal development opportunities; therefore, a Through Life Development Policy is being developed in early 2017, which will aim to build a culture of personal development in Defence.

Table 9: UK Armed Forces personnel satisfied with opportunities to gain civilian accreditation³, estimated percentage

2007 – 2016

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Satisfied	42	42	45	50	51	46	43	42	47	48

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2016

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

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

Table 10: UK Armed Forces personnel satisfied with opportunities for personal development, estimated percentage

2007 – 2016

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Satisfied	42	44	49	56	57	54	52	52	57	57

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2016

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

1. Minor wording change in 2011

Table 11: UK Armed Forces personnel who use Career Transition Partnership and are employed within 6 months of leaving the Armed Forces, estimated percentage

2010/11 – 2014/15

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Employment rate	85	85	83	83	85

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

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

1. Estimated from a 20% sample of those who used billable Career Transition Partnership services

Table 12: Metric B3.22: UK Armed Forces veterans residing in Great Britain who are in employment, estimated percentage

2014 – 2015

	2014	2015
Employment rate	75	76

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey: UK Armed Forces veterans residing in Great Britain

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-population-survey-uk-armed-forces-veterans-residing-in-great-britain>

³ Gaining a civilian qualification or recognition from a professional body for the successful completion of specific elements of military training





Chapter 3 - Accommodation

Achievements This Year

MOD Accommodation

Service Family Accommodation (SFA)

Since April 2016, MOD is only allocating SFA in the UK that meets the Decent Homes (DH) or Decent Homes+ standard⁴. The old Four Tier Grading (4TG) system did not account for some factors that Service personnel told us were priorities, such as energy efficiency having an efficient boiler and eradicating damp and mould.

For Financial Year (FY) 2016-17, MOD currently plans to spend £68 million on further SFA improvements, including:

- £28 million allocated to elemental and void upgrades to deliver 4,700 improvements including kitchens, bathrooms, roofs, doors & windows;
- £2 million specifically designated to the Mould Action Plan;
- £22 million allocated for major upgrades, with a focus on long term voids in high demand areas; and
- £16 million allocated to the Energy Efficiency Programme focused on external wall insulation to at least 450 'hard to heat' SFA.

The Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS) charging system for SFA was introduced in April 2016. Issues around survey data in Cyprus and the Falkland Islands meant that the full introduction of CAAS was delayed there until April 2017. Interim measures have been in place in the meantime. The recovery of additional receipts from CAAS, resulting from corrections to the undercharging prevalent under the current 4TG system, will support the future improvements to Service accommodation.

Single Living Accommodation (SLA)

MOD also provides 145,500 single living beds spaces worldwide, of which 126,000 are in the UK. This includes some 22,839 bed spaces delivered through Project SLAM (Single Living Accommodation Modernisation programme)⁵.

⁴ The Condition assessment for SFA is based on the Department for Communities and Local Government 'Decent Homes Standard', which has 4 criteria that must be met. These are (1) it meets the statutory minimum standard for housing, (2) it is in a reasonable state of repair, (3) it has reasonably modern facilities and services, (4) it has a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

⁵ Project SLAM was a 12 year - £1.26bn project to improve the living accommodation of single Service personnel and has delivered new and refurbished accommodation across the Defence estate.

Case Study



£36 million Investment in Single Accommodation for Soldiers across the UK

Soldiers will benefit from more than 460 new bed spaces at four sites under the Army Basing Programme (ABP), which is enabling units to return to the UK from Germany.

In total over £36 million has been invested by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) to provide Single Living Accommodation (SLA), comprising new and refurbished bed spaces, kitchen facilities and laundry facilities for Service personnel at Baker Barracks, Thorney Island; Duke of Gloucester Barracks, South Cerney; Dishforth and Keogh Barracks, Aldershot.



Mark Duddy, ABP Programme Director:

"This is a brilliant example of how we are investing in infrastructure across the UK. I am delighted with the provision of modern, fit for purpose SLA delivered by our trusted and valued contractors in support of the Army Basing Programme and of our Service personnel living on the sites."

The infrastructure investment and provision of SLA has seen unit moves from Germany and within the UK and is part of a £63 million ABP investment of a wider package of works. The ABP is providing the facilities the British Army needs to live, work and train in the UK as it returns from Germany, rebasing across the UK and restructures to its future Army 2020 formations.

While Dishforth was announced for release under the MOD's 'A Better Defence Estate' on the 7 November 2016, there remains critical infrastructure requirement at the site, such as SLA, to support Service personnel who are based there until the planned disposal in 2031.

Service Delivery

Accommodation Observation from Last Year's Report

The Families Federations observed that the National Housing Prime contractor needed to deliver in full and be held to account to do so.

The MOD introduced the **National Housing Prime contract** on 1 December 2014. The contract is designed to deliver a 'one stop shop' for all UK-based SFA requirements from allocations to move appointments to repairs and improvements. The Department readily acknowledges the implementation of the contract did not go as planned, and recovery was slower than anticipated. Consequently the level of service provided to Service families has been well below that contracted for. However, following MOD intervention in early 2016, there has been an on-going improvement in the level of repair and allocation services provided by the contractor to Service families, and they are now at contracted levels. MOD will continue to work closely with the contractor to sustain and to further improve performance. MOD and CarillionAmey have undertaken a series of joint Customer Engagement Forums to hear, at first hand, the improvements sought by Service families. The results of these are being analysed, and discussions with stakeholders will take place on the next steps.

Helping Service Personnel onto The Property Ladder

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

We continue to support Service personnel and their families through the **Forces Help to Buy (FHTB) scheme**, which aims to help Service personnel who may struggle to enter the housing market as they move around throughout their military career. The scheme enables them to set down roots and get onto the property ladder by giving them an interest free loan of up to 25% of their salary (to a maximum of £25,000) thus giving their families the domestic stability that many of us take for granted. We announced in October 2016, that the scheme had been extended to 2018. This will allow even more Service personnel and their families to benefit from home ownership. To date over **11,000 applications** have passed detailed eligibility checks, and **over 9,000 Service personnel have already benefitted, to the value of approximately £136 million.**

also creates the stability she needs to allow her to enrol at University to study Nursing.

The meaning of this purchase has been immense; there is no doubt in my mind that we would not have been able to get on to the housing ladder without FHTB."

Supporting Service Personnel in the Future

Accommodation continues to be seen as a core element of the military offer that attracts and retains Service personnel. However, the current offer does not satisfy a proportion of our people nor meet the demands of 21st century living. The Future Accommodation Model (FAM) aims to address these issues by giving more choice and is underpinned by the following key principles:

- FAM will not reduce the total pot of money currently used to subsidise housing;
- today, accommodation is provided to personnel based on their rank and relationship status. The accommodation allowance of tomorrow will be provided based on their need, regardless of age, rank or relationship status;
- FAM will provide Service personnel with greater choice in where they live and who they live with. This could mean living with a partner - whether married or not, with children from a current or previous relationship, or friends inside or outside the Service. More families would be able to live together and balance this with a military career;
- the MOD would also offer support and advice to those Service personnel taking up private market rental accommodation. Some personnel will require a higher level of support, and the MOD is developing a package to address this;
- the rental allowance would be adjusted so that no one loses out if they are required to work and live in more expensive areas.

Case Study



Lance Corporal Baffour Asante, explains how Forces Help to Buy has helped his family:

"A friend of mine acquired his property using FHTB and recommended it to me. I was pleased to find that the process was really straightforward.

I was due a new posting in April. My wife was starting to get fed up of the constant moves, and dealing with the stress that comes with relocating. We decided that it was about time that we had a place of our own to call home and to buy a property.

We are really happy and now have the peace of mind of owning our own home. We have 3 children under 8 and there is no doubt in our mind that this purchase will offer our kids the stability to be educated in one location and still maintain their friends. For my wife, it

FAM is at an early stage and no decisions have been finalised. We recognise that many Service personnel and their families have concerns about what FAM might mean for them and we will continue to consult as our policies are developed.

Accommodation Observations From Last Year's Report

The Families Federations observed that: SLA issues needed to be prioritised, and highlighted that too much SLA was below grade 2 standard. They also expressed concern that the MOD's intention to invest nearly £2 billion on accommodation might be cut under the SDSR.

The Department has delivered over 50,000 SLA bed-spaces across the estate over the last 12 years; in excess of 9,000 of these in the last three financial years. This includes investing over £1.2 billion to improve the standard of our SLA through the Single Living Accommodation Modernisation (SLAM) project, which has been one of the largest new build and refurbishment projects in the UK, successfully delivering nearly 23,000 bed spaces at 52 locations.

Through last year's Strategic Defence and Security Review, the MOD committed to invest significant additional funding in Defence infrastructure over the next 10 years. This will result in additional new-build SLA at a number of sites to be retained long term. We currently plan to build approximately 6,000 new SLA bed spaces across the estate by 2020. The recently announced Better Defence Estate will also see continued long term investment in MOD accommodation with plans for new and refurbished SLA and new SFA out beyond 2030.

Cobseo suggested that MOD policy on the provision of adapted houses for seriously injured Service personnel needed to be amended to avoid causing disadvantage.

The provision of adaptations for injured personnel (to SFA and, where appropriate, private residences), is an important issue for the Department and policy supports this. During the year we made process improvements for SFA adaptations as well as the funding mechanisms for adaptations within private residences for injured personnel transitioning to civilian life. The MOD is currently reviewing its policy, to ensure that the process is flexible, and does not inadvertently cause disadvantage. We will report on progress in next year's report.

Non-MOD Accommodation

Shared Ownership

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has extended the period within which ex-Service personnel and surviving partners are given a priority for Government funded shared ownership schemes from 12 months to 24 months after service.

Sub-Letting of Homes When Posted Away

DCLG has clarified that Service personnel are able to sub-let homes bought under Government funded home ownership schemes when they need to relocate from the area for work purposes. The Home Ownership Buyers' Guide has been updated to make this absolutely clear, and this has also been delivered through the Homes and Communities Agency and Help to Buy agents. This has been matched by the private sector, with 47 banks & building societies now committed to allowing Service personnel who are relocated to rent out their homes, without incurring extra costs by having to switch to a buy-to-let mortgage.

Future Plans

- DCLG has consulted on removing the age restriction for eligibility for starter homes (which allows homes to be sold at a 20% discount to market value for eligible first time buyers) for injured Service personnel and bereaved spouses.

Accommodation Metrics

The metrics focus on the quality and affordability of MOD accommodation and the Armed Forces access to social housing. The metrics show that despite the majority of Service Family Accommodation meeting required standards, Service personnel felt disadvantaged over the quality and affordability of their accommodation. The metrics also demonstrated that the Covenant is working effectively in relation to access to social housing.

As at 31 March 2016 over 99% of UK Service Family Accommodation (SFA) properties were assessed as Standard 1 or 2 (good condition or requiring minor improvements) however, the satisfaction of Service personnel and their families in relation to their Service accommodation fell in 2016:

- standard of their Service accommodation (Armed Forces personnel: 58% satisfied in 2015 to 53% in 2016, Table 13);
- the response to maintenance (Armed Forces personnel: 40% satisfied in 2015 to 34% in 2016, Table 14);
- quality of maintenance (Armed Forces personnel: 40% satisfied in 2015 to 33% in 2016, Table 15) and;
- the affordability (Armed Forces personnel: 67% to 61% satisfied, Table 16)

As a crude comparison fewer Armed Forces personnel were satisfied with the quality of maintenance on SFA (33%) compared to individuals aged 65 and under renting social housing in England (58%, Table 18).

The headline metric for lower satisfaction with Service accommodation, may have resulted from from a combination of dissatisfaction with the performance of the National Housing Prime (NHP) contractor, Carillion Amey; the notification of increased charges arising from the implementation of the new Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS) implemented in April 2016; and uncertainty over the potential impact to SFA from FAM. The MOD will continue to engage with its stakeholders on accommodation policy development, and service delivery issues, and take action where necessary.

In 2014-15 a greater proportion of the Armed Forces Community were estimated to spend less than six months waiting for social housing compared to the non-Service population (Under 65: 63.9 and 49.8% respectively; 65 and over: 65.2% and 55.7% respectively, Table 17). This is likely to be in part due to the package of measures which the Department for Communities and Local Government introduced to ensure the Armed Forces

community had the same access to social housing and were not disadvantaged by the requirement for mobility whilst in Service. The package included: ensuring veterans with urgent housing needs were always given priority for social housing; encouraging councils to take account of the needs of the Armed Forces community in their policy making and; introducing regulations to ensure councils did not disqualify Service personnel who had recently left the Services and did not meet the local connection test.

Table 13: UK Armed Forces personnel and families satisfied with the standard of Service accommodation, estimated percentage

2007 - 2016

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
UK Armed Forces personnel	48	50	49	54	57	56	57	58	58	53
Service families	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	63	53

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2016 and Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) 2016

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

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

1. AFCAS: Minor wording change 2011, 2012, 2013 AND 2015.

2. AFCAS: "N/A / DON'T KNOW" option added 2011

3. AFCAS: Excludes n/a and 'don't know'

4. FAMCAS: Responses are filtered for those respondents who live in Service family accommodation or substitute service family accommodation, and answered the questions, and did not answer 'Don't know'. [58% in 2016]

5. FAMCAS: Comparisons with years prior to 2015 are not possible. This question was introduced in 2015 to bring it in line with AFCAS.

6. FAMCAS: Only relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Service Family Accommodation.

.. represents data unavailable

Table 14: UK Armed Forces personnel and families satisfied with response to maintenance request (Service accommodation), estimated percentage

2011 - 2016

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
UK Armed Forces Personnel	43	42	41	41	40	34
Service families	..	..	..	..	35	32

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2016 and Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) 2016

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

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

1. AFCAS: New questions in 2011

2. AFCAS: Minor wording change in 2012 and 2013

3. AFCAS: Excludes n/a and 'don't know'

4. FAMCAS: Responses are filtered for those respondents who live in Service family accommodation or substitute service family accommodation, and answered the questions, and did not answer 'Don't know'. [57% in 2016]

5. FAMCAS: Comparisons with years prior to 2015 are not possible. This question was introduced in 2015 to bring it in line with AFCAS

6. FAMCAS: Only relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Service Family Accommodation

.. represents data unavailable

Table 15: UK Armed Forces personnel and families satisfied with quality of maintenance service (Service accommodation), estimated percentage

2011 - 2016

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
UK Armed Forces Personnel	42	39	40	39	40	33
Service families	..	..	..	..	42	29

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2016 and Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) 2016

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

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

1. AFCAS: New questions in 2011
 2. AFCAS: Minor wording change in 2012 and 2013
 3. AFCAS: Excludes n/a and 'don't know'
 4. FAMCAS: Responses are filtered for those respondents who live in Service family accommodation or substitute service family accommodation, and answered the questions, and did not answer 'Don't know'. [57% in 2016]
 5. FAMCAS: Comparisons with years prior to 2015 are not possible. This questions was introduced in 2015 to bring it in line with AFCAS
 6. FAMCAS: Only relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Service Family Accommodation
- .. represents data unavailable

Table 16: UK Armed Forces personnel and families satisfied with value for money of Service accommodation, estimated percentage

2011 - 2016

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
UK Armed Forces personnel	58	58	60	63	65	67	68	67	67	61
Service families	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	75	64

Source: Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2016 and Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) 2016

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

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

1. AFCAS: Minor wording change in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015
 2. AFCAS: N/A and Don't know option added in 2011
 3. AFCAS: Excludes n/a and 'don't know'
 4. FAMCAS: Responses are filtered for those respondents who live in Service family accommodation or substitute service family accommodation, and answered the questions, and did not answer 'Don't know'. [58% in 2016]
 5. FAMCAS: Comparisons with years prior to 2015 are not possible. This questions was introduced in 2015 to bring it in line with AFCAS
 6. FAMCAS: Only relates to those living in Service Family Accommodation and Substitute Service Family Accommodation
- .. represents data unavailable

Table 17: UK Service population¹ and non-Service population in England, length of time on waiting list for social housing, estimated percentage

2014/15

Length of time on waiting list before allocation	Service population and families		Non – service population	
	under 65	65 and over	Under 65	65 and over
Less than 6 months	63.9	65.2	49.8	55.7
6 months but less than a year	9.1	11.8	14.7	18.6
1 year but less than 2 years	7.1	6.9	12.9	10.6
2 years but less than 3 years	12.0	U	7.9	5.6
3 years but less than 5 years	3.4	8.1	6.9	4.6
More than 5 years	U	U	7.8	4.8
total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
sample size	154	77	3,987	327

Source: English Housing Survey 2014-15, full household survey

1. Has served or were currently serving in the Armed Forces
2. Sample is presented at individual rather than household level
- u indicates sample size too small for reliable estimate

Table 18: Under 65's in England satisfaction with social housing, estimated percentage

2014/15

Source: English Housing Survey 2014-15, full household survey

1. Has served or were currently serving in the Armed Forces
2. Sample is presented at individual rather than household level
3. Sample size: Under 65 – 6,234; 65 and over – 1,226

Table 18: Under 65's in England satisfaction with social housing, estimated percentage

2014/15

	Whole population	
	Under 65	65 and over
Satisfied with accommodation	73.8	89.2
Service families	58.3	78.5

Source: English Housing Survey 2014-15, full household survey

1. Has served or were currently serving in the Armed Forces
12. Sample is presented at individual rather than household level
- 2.3. Sample size: Under 65 – 6,234; 65 and over – 1,226

Accommodation In The Devolved Administrations

Scotland

The Scottish Government is considering how to further develop its on-line information on housing to help Veterans easily access the most appropriate source of assistance. Funding is also provided to

Housing Options Scotland to enhance its specialist Veterans' advice service project 'Military Matters'.

The Scottish Government continues to provide priority access to its Low Cost Initiative for First Time Buyers (LIFT) schemes (comprising the 'Open Market Shared Equity Scheme' and the 'New Supply Shared Equity Scheme') to serving members of the Armed Forces, Veterans who left the Armed

Forces within the past two years, and widows, widowers and other partners of Service personnel for up to two years after their partner has lost their life whilst serving.

For 2016-17, the Scottish Government has allocated £80 million to its popular Open Market Shared Equity Scheme to help up to 2,000 first time buyers. Agents have actively promoted the scheme to Service personnel, in publications such as: 'Engage', 'Legion Scotland', 'The Informer' and 'The Highland Service Community Official Guide'

Testimonial of a serving member of the Armed Forces who lived in Services accommodation, and purchased a home with the assistance of the Open Market Shared Equity Scheme which provided almost 40% of the purchase price:

"The scheme helped me and my family tremendously and I will recommend it to anyone who is looking to get on the property ladder."

In addition, the Scottish Government has awarded £1.3 million of grant funding to the Scottish Veterans Garden City Association (SVGCA) to build 38 new homes, 25 of which are now complete, across six local authority areas, to support impaired ex-Service personnel.

A partnership arrangement with Link Housing Association and the SVGCA, supported by the City of Edinburgh Council with the aid of Scottish Government grant funding, is providing six homes for social rent at City Park, Edinburgh. Four of these homes were completed in 2015, with the remaining two scheduled for completion during 2017.

Looking ahead, we will continue to work to deliver high quality sustainable homes for all people in Scotland and to take forward the recommendations of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner on housing information.

Wales

In November 2016, in response to a policy recommendation by the Royal British Legion, the Welsh Government launched its all Wales Housing Pathway for ex-Service personnel and their families. Developed in collaboration with officials from

Housing and Armed Forces policy, the pathway outlines the housing support available to ex-Service personnel and their families. This will ensure local authorities can start working with ex-Service personnel earlier than the statutory limit. It will also help support ex-Service personnel amongst the homeless community.

The Welsh Government has supported the development of Ty Dewr (new purpose built accommodation in Wrexham) to ensure that Veterans in Wales have access to high quality and affordable housing. The facility offers housing support specifically for vulnerable Veterans. Including a mix of high and low level support accommodation, the grounds have an outdoor gymnasium for use by residents and the local community to encourage community integration.

Northern Ireland

The Department for Communities is currently undertaking a review of social housing allocation in Northern Ireland. The review proposes that applications for social housing and homelessness assistance from members of the Armed Forces community should be treated in accordance with the Covenant's expectation. Applicants will have the same access to social housing as any other citizen and must not be disadvantaged in respect of the requirement for mobility whilst in service. The review emphasises that, where applicants have served in Northern Ireland with the Armed Forces, this satisfies the local connection requirements and such applicants can therefore apply for housing and homelessness assistance here. The review highlights that, while the Northern Ireland Housing Executive processes applications from members of the Armed Forces community using the rules of the Housing Selection Scheme as it would for any other applicant, the Housing Executive has reminded its staff of the importance of dealing sensitively with such applicants, and that considerations of privacy and confidentiality should be respected in all cases.



Chapter 4 - Inquests

The Defence Inquests Unit (DIU) is the MOD's point of contact for UK Coroners investigating the deaths of Service personnel. The DIU is responsible for ensuring that materials relevant to inquests have been provided as well as providing briefings to both former and current military personnel who are called as witnesses.

DIU recently facilitated a meeting between the Chief Coroner and the Minister For Defence Veterans, Reserves and Personnel. This was another element of the dialogue between the MOD and Coroners about the specific challenges of military inquests. In particular the meeting considered how best to support Coroners conducting military inquests including through training.

Since the beginning of 2016, there have been 27 non-operational and 5 operational inquests completed. In addition to looking after inquests in England and Wales, and Fatal Accident Investigations in Scotland, the DIU has recently taken on responsibility for inquests in Northern Ireland which involve the Armed Forces.



Chapter 5 - Covenant Funding

Achievements This Year

Having launched in June 2015, with a new standalone grants team, the Covenant Fund met its targets of committing the full £10 million in 2015-16 to projects and programmes addressing its initial priorities.

The first year of grants were awarded to support community integration (between military and civilian communities); co-ordination and delivery of local support to Service personnel, their families and Veterans; and to dedicated projects for ex-Service personnel in the criminal justice system. Almost £7.5 million was awarded to 24 organisations in large grants for multi-year projects and just under £3.4 million was distributed in two rounds of small grants (up to £20,000) to 204 not for profit organisations across the UK for one-off events, activities or for provision of services. A further 54 grants were awarded in September 2016 under this priority, totalling more than £930,000.

Projects we are funding include a number to address mental and physical health issues for adults and children through providing sports, arts, gardening and community events; refurbishment of venues and equipment in shared social clubs and halls; welfare, housing and benefit advice services; mentoring and employability programmes.

In 2016, a new priority, for a Veterans' Gateway, was launched. A grant has been made through this £2 million programme to a consortium of charities led by The Royal British Legion and other charities to set up a one-stop service to better support the UK's Armed Forces Veterans community.

The new service will provide a 24/7 phone service, with an empathetic and professional voice at the end of the line, a dedicated website and a mobile app to make it easier for ex-Service personnel to

access support on a range of issues. It will give veterans, regardless of age or location, a simple point of contact to turn to for advice and help in accessing an array of public, private and charitable services. It is due to launch in 2017.

A further new priority was announced for 2016 and 2017 in response to recognition of the needs of the wider Service community. The Families in Stress scheme is open to not for profit organisations who can demonstrate that they can provide localised, targeted and timely support for the families of Service personnel at times of crisis or distress. Applicants will need to demonstrate that they can provide expert help with the effect of life-changing events such as bereavement, injury, domestic abuse and mental health issues, by offering early interventions followed by appropriate follow up help.

During 2016 we also launched a dedicated scheme for local authorities, called Strengthening Local Government Support of the Armed Forces Covenant. Clusters of local authorities will draw on experience to date, observations in a recent review and their own needs assessments to implement training, communications, networks and infrastructure changes appropriate to their population. The first awards under this programme will be announced in spring 2017.

The progress of funded projects is being monitored by the grants team. All organisations in receipt of funding will let us know how their projects are progressing and send us final reports describing whether they met their intended outcomes, if they deemed the work to be successful, and what the wider benefits have been. Recipients of larger grants report more regularly, giving us quarterly updates against their planned milestones. All grant holders are required to publicise their award, use

the Armed Forces Covenant logo on promotional material and report back on press and media coverage. The grants made under the ex-serving personnel in the criminal justice system strand will be required to report in considerable detail on their work with offenders and ex-offenders. We expect that by the end of two years these grant holders, working closely with the Covenant Fund Executive and with the Cobseo's criminal justice cluster will have become close to developing a nationally accepted continuum of robust outcome measures which can be used more widely to demonstrate impact. The staff in the grants team will visit selected projects as part of our monitoring in order to learn more about the work of the organisations involved and the needs of their beneficiaries, and to feed into future planning for the Covenant Fund.

Spotlight on Grants

Applicant: AF&V Launchpad

Project: Minibus for Newcastle Launchpad



Grant awarded: £20,000

Priority: co-ordination and delivery of support to the Armed Forces community

Launchpad is a registered charity, providing affordable supported rental accommodation with on-site support to Veterans of all ages and their partners. Their accommodation, in Newcastle and Liverpool, provides a base from which their residents can successfully make the transition from military to civilian life. Launchpad accepts veterans who have complex issues, which can be resolved over a maximum of two years.

The Grant: Launchpad was awarded a grant to allow them to purchase a minibus to take Veterans to job interviews, training venues, confidence building activities, health and welfare appointments and to work with other organisations on community projects. Being able to transport the veterans will save the charity and the individuals the cost of public and private transport.

Applicant: The Services Sound and

Vision Corporation

Project: Covenant and Military Charities Welfare Multi-Media Team



Grant Awarded: £240,000

Background: The Services Sound and Vision Corporation is a registered charity set up to entertain and inform Britain's Armed Forces around the world. Its mission is to be the preferred provider of entertainment and information to Service personnel and their families worldwide.

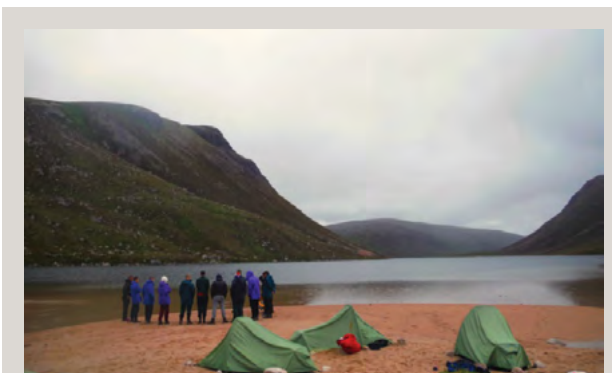
The Grant: The organisation will connect the work of public and private sector covenant teams, military charities and the wider military community including Service personnel and their families and veterans. It will do this by producing digital content for a wide range of organisations to use on a variety of media platforms including TV, radio and web.

Applicant: The Venture Trust

Project: Positive Futures

Grant Awarded: £315,064

Background: Venture Trust supports individuals to overcome the complicated or chaotic life circumstances that they face to make positive changes in their life. It helps them acquire life skills, stability and confidence to move into and sustain education, training, volunteering and work by delivering intensive needs-led personal development in communities and the Scottish wilderness.



The Grant: Venture Trust and its partners will establish a bespoke national community justice support programme, funded for three years, to help military veterans in (or at risk of entering) Scotland's justice system to change their lives for the better. The programme will provide an alternative to custody, a diversion from prosecution, a preventative service and will support both veterans and their families.



Northern Ireland

The Covenant Fund has so far awarded more than £104,000 under its small grants programme to projects and activities in Northern Ireland. Sports and leisure groups have led the way in finding innovative ways of using Covenant Fund grants to bring together young people from military and civilian families who might otherwise not get the chance to meet and learn about one another. The Army Welfare Service Northern Ireland received a grant to involve young people from across Belfast, from Dublin and from Service bases to enjoy team work activities, have a go at ice-hockey and learn life skills together. The Sea Cadets in both Ballymena and Newtownards and the Army Sailing Association all received grants to buy new boats and other equipment so that they can invite young people, service personnel, Veterans

and their families to enjoy the physical exercise and excitement of taking to the water and create opportunities to link the Armed Forces and local communities.

Service Veterans are also getting the chance to experience the benefits of equine therapy for wellbeing and to reduce anxiety. Two day workshops are being offered thanks to a Covenant Fund grant awarded to 38 (Irish) Brigade and their charity and specialist therapy partner on this project. The Ballymacanallen Community Association received a grant to support a First World War commemorative project – researching local military involvement then and in the present day.

Combat Stress received one of the Covenant Fund's largest awards with £467,000 to run a three year programme of work in Northern Ireland. They aim to support the integration of Veterans and Service leavers experiencing mental health problems back into the civilian community through one-to-one work, counselling, and activities to promote wellbeing and life skills.

You can see the full list of grants awarded during 2015-16 at:

https://www.GOV.UK/Government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509120/Covenant_Fund_Awards_2015-16.pdf





Chapter 6 - The Covenant In Business

There are now more than 1,300 signatories to the Armed Forces Covenant, and that number continues to grow. Pledges include tangible measures to support the Armed Forces community

Defence has seen a shift in attitude amongst employers in favour of the Armed Forces community. Increasingly businesses recognise the benefit of employing high calibre people when they leave the Services⁶ or as Reservists, not only through the soft skills that these individuals bring including leadership, planning and team working but also in tangible bottom line effect through reduced recruitment costs and business delivery. A recent study by the Federation of Small Businesses showed that two in three small businesses are keen to hire Service Leavers and half would actively consider employing a Reservist, with attitudes towards the employment of Reservists improving significantly since 2013.

Achievements This Year

The Defence Relationship Management (DRM) organisation continues to publicise the Covenant and work with businesses at the national level, with Regional Employer Engagement Directors fulfilling a similar role at the regional level. By working closely with organisations and building a long term relationship we are seeing a shift in dynamic. Companies are being more proactive in their support of Defence initiatives and coming to us seeking to reinforce their commitment. This is evident from several organisations coming forward to re-sign the Covenant in order to refresh and strengthen their pledges, including British Telecom and Pertemps.

Some of the key initiatives pledged by companies as a result of this work are set out below. The full list of Armed Forces Covenant signatories and their

pledges is on GOV.UK at: <https://www.GOV.UK/Government/collections/armed-force-corporate-covenant-signed-pledges>

with new signatories since last year's report listed at: <https://www.GOV.UK/Government/publications/armed-forces-covenant-annual-report-2016>

In July 2016, Compass Group became the 1,000th signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant, making an exemplary pledge of support which includes:

- offering 10 days additional paid leave for Reservist employees;
- working with the Career Transition Partnership in order to establish a tailored employment pathway for Service Leavers;
- running an Armed Forces Employability Pathway; and
- offering catering regiments training to enhance their culinary skills and personal development to accredit training relevant to civilian roles.

Pertemps are seeking to recruit 100 new Reservists each year as part of the Portfolio Employment Model (PEM). The PEM pilot was launched this year, combining periods of Army Reserve service with part time civilian work. This offers an attractive route out of unemployment into a potentially well paid role by combining service in the Army Reserve and employment with a supportive employer who will allow time off to attend training. Pertemps signed up as partner for the trial, which is aimed at the logistics/driving sector, committing to provide the PEM soldier with the appropriate skills-based training required to drive a civilian large goods vehicle (LGV) and employment within the sector.

6 Veterans Work, Recognising the potential of ex-Service personnel. Deloitte, Nov 16

The Employer Recognition Scheme continues to grow. 22 employers were presented a 2016 Gold Award by HRH The Duke of Cambridge in October for their exemplary support to and advocacy for the Armed Forces community. The strength of the nominations and competition for the awards this year are a testament to the changing attitude and growing support amongst employers towards Defence and our people.

Case Study

Holt's Military Banking, Royal Bank of Scotland and NatWest each have a unique, enduring relationship with the Armed Forces which pre-dates the Battle of Waterloo. In view of this strong heritage, they signed the Armed Forces Covenant on the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

Holt's, Royal Bank of Scotland and NatWest serve over 40,000 military customers. They recognise the challenges that military Service can present and ensure that their customers receive the banking support they need, wherever they serve. This includes provision of Financial Capability training to 50,000 Phase 1 Recruits.

An employee Armed Forces Network has been established and specific policies are in place enabling Reservists to meet their training commitments and undertake operational deployment.

Veterans' work ethic, skill-sets and ability to work under pressure are highly prized in an organisation that is going through significant change.

Jules McElhinney, Audit Manager at Holt's Military Banking and Army Reservist

"I served in the regular Army for ten years, continuing in the Reserves for a further nine whilst supporting Holt's for the past eight. I have just taken over command of 6SCOTS. The Bank's approach to flexible working enables me to balance the demands of my Holt's and 6SCOTS roles."



DJ Rees, one of the winners receiving their award. Crown Copyright

Commercial Products and Services

Achievements This Year

We have continued to work closely with the financial services and telecommunications sectors to ensure that the Armed Forces community have fair access to commercial services, as recommended by the Families Federations in their observations last year.

This collaboration has led to the following commitments from the commercial sector this year:

- **Mobile phones:** The four largest mobile phone providers (Vodafone, EE, O2 and Three) have committed to allowing Service personnel and their families to suspend their phone contracts when they are posted abroad.
- **Mortgages:** 47 of the UK's largest banks and building societies have committed to allow Service personnel and their families, who rent out their homes when posted in the UK or abroad, to avoid incurring extra costs by having to switch to a buy-to-let mortgage. This will benefit almost 265,000 people in the UK and overseas;
- **Motor insurance:** 86% of the UK's motor insurance industry has committed to waive cancellation fees and preserve no claims discounts for up to three years when Service personnel and their families are posted abroad.

Through the Financial Services Steering Group, the Government and the UK's financial services' sector are overseeing system changes to improve Service personnel and their families' access to financial products and services, by improving the way credit history is recorded when they are based at British Forces Post Office (BFPO) addresses. A pilot to test

the effectiveness of the changes is planned to take place in 2017.

We have worked with the banks and building societies to improve access to Junior ISA accounts for dependants of crown servants based overseas. We have communicated with the financial services' industry over the eligibility of dependants of crown servants and updated the relevant GOV.UK pages at: <https://www.GOV.UK/junior-individual-savings-accounts/overview>

We have also added to the list of Identity Documents that banks and building societies will accept, educating the sector on Military ID cards and the Defence Discount Card.

In line with our commitment in last year's report, we have created a survey hosted on the Covenant campaign website so that the Armed Forces community can tell us directly about their experiences accessing commercial products and services. The survey can be found at: <https://surveys.mod.uk/index.php/573698?lang=en>

At the Westminster Hall debate on the Covenant in January, the MOD committed to examine what more we could do to encourage prospective Government suppliers to show their support for the Armed Forces Community. In June, we issued a new Procurement Policy Note to all Government Departments, which requires them to bring the Armed Forces Covenant to the attention of their suppliers, and encourage them to sign it.

Future Plans

We intend to continue collaborating with the commercial sector to deliver further commitments in areas such as:

- **Broadband:** Service personnel and their families pay cancellation fees when posted to new locations, often at short notice. We intend to work with Broadband providers to ensure the Armed Forces community have fair access to the service;
- **Health and Life Insurance:** Service personnel have reported difficulty accessing health and life insurance. We intend to work with insurance providers to ensure the Armed Forces community have fair access.
- **Mortgages:** Lenders have recently begun to implement a policy change which means that Reservists can now have their previous year's pay taken into account when applying for a mortgage. The MOD will work with more lenders to ensure this policy is rolled out more widely.

Defence Discount Service

The Defence Discount Service (DDS) was launched to support the Armed Forces community as a whole and remains the only MOD endorsed scheme. It also acts as a recognition card for Veterans. There are now over 5,800 companies signed up and 348,000 registered members. The Defence Discount App is proving very popular.

The Welsh Government, has provided £50,000 to fund a campaign to promote the Defence Privilege Card in Wales. Members of the Armed Forces Community with a privilege card can access discounts both online and on the high street. Since the start of the campaign membership has increased by 89.14% compared to a target of 25%.

Credit Unions

Last year we reported that access to credit union services had been enabled in October 2015, following HM Treasury provision of £500,000 from LIBOR funds to establish 'a payroll deduction' system which would allow Service personnel to save and pay off loans, with the payment coming directly from an individual's salary at source.

The three selected credit unions, PlaneSaver Credit Union, London Mutual

Credit Union and Police Credit Union signed a Memorandum of Understanding in April 2016 which facilitated the formation of "Joining Forces CU", a jointly owned web page that signposts interested parties to the credit union of their choice. In the first year of providing Credit Union services, around 1,220 new members have signed up. To date, nearly £2 million has been loaned and over £250,000 has been saved.

Case Study

A Credit Union was recently approached by a Serviceman who found himself in a spiral of debt, with a series of high interest Credit Card and Payday loans, with monthly repayments over £555 at an average interest rate of 244% APR.

They were able to lend to the individual responsibly, consolidating his existing debt into one manageable repayment straight from his pay.

The Credit Union paid off all his existing borrowing, leaving the member with a new monthly repayment of £301 at a more favourable interest rate, meaning he could get back on track.

The serviceman said "The Credit Union guided me into making better financial decisions; this has made me more aware of how expensive some loans can be. Seeking help from the credit union helped me nearly halve my outgoings on debt. Thank you. The credit union saved this member £254 per month.

In March 2016 the credit union service was extended to those in receipt of an Armed Forces pension. This extension provided the facility for Veterans in receipt of a pension to make payroll deductions directly to the selected credit unions.





Chapter 7 - The Covenant In The Community

Since the Covenant launched in 2011 local authorities have been signing Covenant pledge documents, which are voluntary and non-binding, to set down their commitment to support members of the Armed Forces community in their area. Every local authority in the mainland Great Britain, and two in Northern Ireland, has signed up to the principles of the Covenant. (A further two in Northern Ireland have agreed to adopt similar pledges and are currently working through the details of implementation.) Through the Community Covenant Grant Scheme and the Covenant Fund, which has taken over and expanded on its work, the MOD has distributed over £34 million to support local authorities in their delivery of the Covenant.

Achievements This Year

In last year's report, Cobseo highlighted the need for some objective analysis of success in the delivery of the Covenant in local communities, urging the introduction of a mechanism to establish exactly what is going on and where, so that best practice may be identified and embraced.

There have been excellent examples of the support on offer and many areas where the Armed Forces community is routinely included in thinking about policy and service delivery, however we need to be better at capturing and sharing this good work.

The MOD, the Local Government Association and Forces in Mind Trust therefore commissioned the "Our Community – Our Covenant" review. This surveyed over 400 representatives from local authorities and some 400 members of the Armed Forces community and other stakeholders. These were followed up by visits to 12 different areas where the team met with the people who are involved in policy-making and delivery of services that impact on Covenant delivery.

Its main conclusions were:

- there is a clear mismatch on some occasions, between what the Armed Forces community and councils expect the Covenant to deliver;
- there is a perception that not enough is being done by MOD around transition – in terms of briefing our personnel and families on the realities of civilian life and in providing information to councils about those coming to reside in their areas; and
- there is a need for a clearer narrative describing what we can expect of the Covenant, with good guidance to back it up.

The MOD will work across Government and with key external stakeholders to develop an action plan based on the recommendations, which will be implemented in early 2017. This stands alongside work across Government to improve communications around the Covenant, detailed in Chapter 8.

We are also making funding available for Local Authorities (including in the Devolved Administrations) through the Covenant Fund to support their delivery of the Covenant.

There is good news to share:

- Helping Heroes is a one-stop-shop which is part-funded by Glasgow City Council and run by SSAFA. It provides advice for the Armed Forces community in the area on how to access services that are particularly relevant to them. Many who work for Helping Heroes are former military themselves which adds trust and credibility to those accessing services;

- in Oxfordshire each Armed Forces base has a Base Champion who is a county councillor from the area in which the base sits, or a neighbouring area. These Champions promote good relations between the base and the local community and may help Armed Forces families with schooling, for example. MOD land and buildings are also being used for community activities such as sport events and fairs;
- in Wiltshire, the local authority's very proactive approach with families who will be moving into the area from Germany when bases there close, has smoothed the transition of Service families and ensured they have a clear picture of what to expect and how to prepare for it.

Case Study

Surrey County Council

There are 11 district and borough councils within Surrey which means that joint working between different councils is essential to ensure the effective implementation and consistent delivery of the Covenant across the county. Following the signing of the Covenant, it became clear that the Covenant needed to be championed locally at Councillor level within authorities supported by lead Covenant officers.



Surrey County Council officers, working with existing Champions in Waverley and Woking developed a role description for an Armed Forces Champion at borough and district level, which has been adopted as an exemplar by the MOD.

The Champion role description was agreed by the Leaders of all Surrey authorities, with the commitment to appoint a Champion for each authority at the first annual meeting of each municipal year. Once appointed, Surrey County Council facilitated regular meetings between all Armed Forces Champions, Covenant

Officers, and local Armed Forces representatives with the aim of developing relationships, sharing best practice, promoting effective ways of working and to ensure that all are aware of key actions being taken countywide. Surrey CC has been promoting this concept to its neighbouring County Council areas through the newly formed South East Regional Cross Border Working Group comprising Kent, Surrey, Hampshire, East Sussex and West Sussex.



"As Chairman of Tandridge District Council and Armed Forces Champion I am really grateful to Surrey County Council for helping me to further develop my role and Tandridge's relationship with Lt-Col Simon Nadin, our local Task Force Commander, who has supported us at a number of events including our Remembrance Service and recent RBL Laying Up on Standard in Whyteleafe. A true example of joined up working as we work in partnership with the Military as one body."

Case Study

Royal British Legion Wales

Many service providers have confessed that they lack an understanding of the Armed Forces Community and the issues they face, especially when transitioning back to civilian life.

With this in mind, the Royal British Legion's Wales team offered local authorities awareness-raising training about the Armed Forces community, and the issues they may be facing. The sessions highlighted the support available via the Legion and partners with the intention of increasing awareness amongst frontline staff and, improving the service they provide.

Since 2013 Legion staff and volunteers have been travelling throughout Wales, delivering this training to over 600 frontline staff and managers who now have a greater understanding of the Covenant, the issues facing the Armed Forces community and the available support. Several local authorities are now receiving their second round of this training which ensures knowledge is kept up to date.

The Welsh Government is committed to supporting vulnerable young adults in its communities and has provided £50,000 to 160 Infantry Brigade and HQ in Wales towards delivery of their Armed Forces Employment Pathway. Aimed at giving young men and women an insight into the Army together with civilian work placed vocational training it is instrumental in providing skills and confidence which helps young people gain qualifications to secure apprenticeships or employment. Since its inception, 157 students have benefitted from the AFEP.

Case Study

A course delegate had been unemployed for a while prior to attending the Armed Forces Employability Pathway (AFEP). Attending the course has helped to increase his confidence and since undertaking coaching and mentoring as part of the AFEP programme he is now in full time employment and continues to work with the AFEP team on achieving his goal of being accepted into the Reserves.

Moray Council re-sign the Armed Forces Covenant at RAF Lossiemouth



Chapter 8 - The Wider Covenant

Terms and Conditions of Service

Achievements This Year

In line with the commitments outlined in last year's report, the MOD has:

- successfully introduced a new pay model in April 2016, through the New Employment Model (NEM) programme. The new pay model is designed to be simpler, more transparent and provide Service personnel with greater pay predictability, removing some of the unpopular and divisive features of the previous pay model;
- implemented key changes to Enhanced Learning Credits and Further and Higher Education schemes, in April, through NEM, to improve educational development for Service personnel and Service leavers;⁷
- successfully introduced the new Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS) for all UK based Service Family accommodation;⁸
- commenced flexible duties concept trials (reduced deployability and less than full time working) between November 2015 and February 2016. The MOD recognised that there are dependencies with other policies under development outside of the NEM programme, so we extended the trials until 2019 and broadened the eligibility criteria for them.

Benefits and Tax

Achievements This Year

As well as the new State Pension, a new Class 3 National Insurance credit designed to help Armed Forces spouses and civil partners who accompanied their Service partner on postings outside the UK to protect their future State Pension was launched in April 2016. Spouses and civil partners can claim this new credit in relation to any posting(s) since 6 April 1975. It's estimated that up to 20,000 individuals may be eligible for the new credit. As at October 2016, around 1,750 applications have been made since its introduction.

Case Study



Ernie Rowe, a former forces wife and now head of BFBS Radio UK, applied for the Class 3 National Insurance credit:

"The link was sent to me by a colleague, also a former military wife. I was delighted to be able to apply for these credits as every contribution I can get will help. If you are the spouse of a member

of the armed forces and accompanied them when they served overseas, just apply. You've got nothing to lose and everything to gain. Just do it – now!"

⁷ See page 34 of this report.

⁸ See page 39 of this report.

In relation to Council Tax, and in line with the commitment in last year's report, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) wrote to every local authority in England, in July 2016, to ask to ensure they were aware that when considering Service personnel's applications for job-related discount they should consider the relevant legislation, and continue to apply the 50% discount in these cases.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has been working collaboratively with the Royal British Legion, the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Assessment Providers (Atos and Capita) and other stakeholders to enhance the service provided to injured service veterans, particularly those with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Specific condition insight reports on PTSD [and the needs of Service Veterans] are now available to all health professionals working for our Assessment Providers and we are co-producing additional, tailored advice for Veterans who may want to claim or are claiming PIP or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Both PIP Assessment Providers have signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Responsibility of Care

Achievements This Year

In last year's report, The Royal British Legion, highlighted the need for continued discussions with Government and the resolution of the issue of full disregard of military compensation when means testing, to determine how much an individual has to pay towards their care costs.

The Chancellor announced in his 2016 budget statement that from 2017, in England, war pensions given to injured Veterans will no longer be counted as income towards care such as nursing and home-help.

From April 2016, in line with the Royal British Legion's recommendation, the Welsh Government, increased the level of the disregard applied to the war disablement pension from £10 per week to £25 per week. This disregard applies in the financial assessment a person will undergo where they are being charged for any form of social care and support. The Welsh Government has further committed to introduce a full disregard from April

2017. From that time, where a person is subject to a charge for social care and support they will be able to retain the full value of any war disablement pension they receive.

Last year, Cobseo recommended a review of the current appeals process for War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Schemes across the UK.

The MOD takes great care with our processes to ensure that those who lodge appeals (appellants) are not disadvantaged or prejudiced by them. The Ministry of Justice is carrying out an assessment of whether to introduce direct lodgement to the War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Chamber, as part of wider HMCTS reform. The assessment will consider the benefits, costs and IT provision over the next twelve months.

In last year's report the Royal British Legion, stressed the need for continued discussions with Government and resolution of the issue of future protection of the lifetime income of injured Veterans by uprating military compensation on the principle of the 'triple lock'.

Regular compensation payments under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pensions Scheme, are uprated annually by applying the same principle that the Department for Work and Pensions uses for uprating social security disability benefits. Increasing awards with reference to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), is in line with other public service schemes. It is consistent with the measure of inflation used by the Bank of England. The triple lock applies only to the State Pension. Members of the Armed Forces will therefore benefit from the triple lock once they reach State Pension age. The MOD is currently undertaking a five year review of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, which will consider this issue and the overall consistency of our approach. The report is scheduled for publication in early 2017.

Future Plans

From April 2017, in line with the Royal British Legion's recommendation, the Scottish Government, will exempt from consideration in assessments of care charges War Pensions for Veterans and Guaranteed Income Payments under

the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme for those injured after April 2005.

Family Life

Achievements This Year

In their observations of last year's report, Cobseo expressed considerable doubt about the availability of the necessary resources to deliver the new Families' Strategy; and the Families Federations observed that spouses and partners should be better supported through the resettlement process as whole families, and not just the serving member, transition from the military into civilian life.

In January 2016 Defence published the first UK Armed Forces Families' Strategy 2016-2020. Designed as guidance for MOD officials, it is Defence's articulation of the relationship between the Service person's family, operational capability and recruitment and retention. To support the Strategy, in September 2016, an Action Plan was developed, in conjunction with the single Services and the Families Federations, and identified a number of priority areas for action.

The Action Plan is being supported by resources from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund which assigned £4 million over two years to projects that support 'Families in Stress', enabling specialist organisations to provide immediate or local support to families experiencing episodes of significant strain. The application review process is underway and successful recipients of awards will be notified in spring 2017. The MOD has also supported a number of bids from the Families Federations totalling £500,000 to the Treasury's LIBOR fund which support the principles of the Families Strategy.

The Welsh Government is supportive of the pan Wales Families of Veterans Support Service, an early intervention service for families and children of Veterans who may need additional support. The service aims to help families develop practical ways to deal with issues they are facing and support them in making the changes they would like to make. The Families Federations have been funded by the Force in Mind Trust (FiMT) to research family transition issues and develop a 'toolkit' of support.

Spousal Employment

The Spouse Employment Support (SES) trial providing tailored employment and employability support started in October 2015 and will conclude in October 2017. The trial is taking place in both Cyprus, with capacity of up to 240 spouses, and across the UK, at RAF stations, for up to 200 spouses. Current take up of the trial continues ahead of schedule. Independent evaluation of the trial is being conducted, with an interim report due by spring next year. The findings will help shape future policy direction in this important area.

In last year's report the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and MOD committed to improving the communication of job opportunities for spouses and partners via contacts with employers, Jobcentres and existing Service community nodes such as the Service Families Federations, HIVEs and Community Centres.

During 2016 the DWP worked with the MOD and the Service Families Federations to improve communication of job opportunities for spouses/partners. DWP and the Families Federations developed, launched and circulated widely an information sheet to promote awareness of the DWP Armed Forces Champions, job matching services and existing DWP support available for Service spouses/partners.

To further support spousal employment, DWP continues to routinely work with a range of employers across the country to encourage them to put in place flexible employment policies to help ensure spouses/partners can easily transfer between locations.

Case Study



Ann Francke and Lieutenant General Richard Nugee sign the Covenant. Photograph courtesy of CMI

The Chartered Management Institute (CMI) has pledged to support Service spouses and partners in gaining the leadership qualifications to help them further their career.

The CMI has sought to uphold this promise by signing the Armed Forces Covenant. The CMI support Service spouses and civil partners through their MOD Family Membership Scheme, which provides access to Leadership, Mentoring and Coaching qualifications, helping Service spouses to gain the key skills and professional recognition which can help in finding employment. The Scheme is also available free to children of Service personnel (aged 16-18) and allows them to become a Campus CMI Affiliate with access to all the benefits of online resources, including study support.

CMI's pledges offer a discount on their qualifications and membership for Service families who are CMI members, and a commitment to support Service spouses or Reservists who they employ with flexible working arrangements, where possible.

Ann Francke, Chief Executive of the Chartered Management Institute:

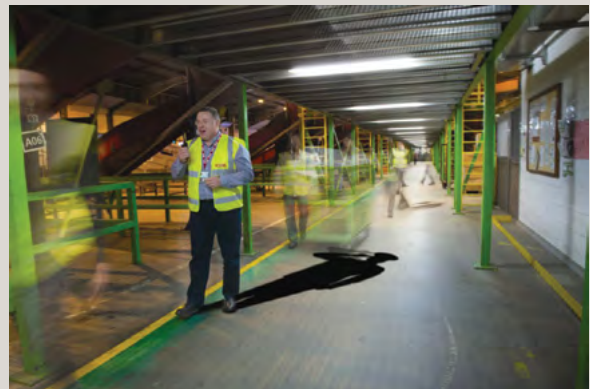
"We're proud to sign the Armed Forces Covenant, and helping families of the heroic men and women who serve our country get the support they need to develop their careers. Thousands of members of the Armed Forces who've gained CMI-accredited qualifications have benefited from improved performance in their roles, as well as from building confidence and gaining qualifications to help them resettle into civilian life at the end of their military career. Now, their families also have the chance to develop their own skills and qualifications."

When companies sign up to the Covenant they are encouraged to consider pledges which support spousal (and Veteran) employment as well as specific policies in support of Service spouses – the vast majority of those that have signed up to the Covenant have agreed to do so.

Employer Engagement

DWP's National Employer and Partnership Team actively promote the Armed Forces Covenant to those employers and partner organisations they work with. This has been adopted into routine business to ensure that those new to DWP's employer portfolio are aware of the opportunity to and benefits of support to the Armed Forces community. DWP has recently begun to engage with Trade Body and other Employer Representative bodies in order to reach out to the small to medium sized employers who represent the largest share of the labour market.

This is Kevin. Father. Husband. Ex-military officer. He's also a Sort Centre Manager at Yodel, one of the UK's largest parcel carriers. Before that, Kevin served for 21 years as a Officer in the Royal Logistics Corps.



I was in the Regular Army for 21 years. In that time, I completed five operational deployments all over the world, and I participated in numerous overseas training exercises too. I retired as a Major, having enjoyed a wide range of roles. I thoroughly enjoyed my Service career and gained a wealth of transferable skills, knowledge and experiences. I'll carry these with me wherever I go.

I first came across Yodel at a Career Transition Partnership (CTP) resettlement careers fair. I wanted to join an organisation that was set to grow and develop. Somewhere that would welcome the skills and experiences I could offer – and, just as importantly, I wanted to work somewhere that would support my transition into the commercial world. Yodel did all of

that. And they've supported me positively and strongly as I've grown into the business. I've faced two main challenges. Firstly, trying to understand the motivations and considerations of a civilian workforce. That's crucial for me, as I need to manage and support the people in my team. Secondly, I've needed to improve my understanding of the financial aspects of a commercial logistics proposition. The bottom line for the military is "mission success at all costs" – I've quickly learned that commercial success needs to be cost effective too. This is a dynamic, fast paced and ever-changing place to work. My success here is measured by my team ensuring that every parcel can be delivered on time, to the right customer and in the correct condition. My military Service and the experiences I gained uniquely prepared me for this challenge. When you think about it, logistics in the military is all about delivering combat supplies, on time, in the correct condition, to the right customer. It's the same challenge. I also need to rapidly prioritise and allocate resources to operations, monitor huge amounts of data, and lead my team from the front."

Kevin remains a passionate advocate of the Armed Forces. In fact, he's transferred to the Army Reserve to continue his service on a voluntary basis.

DWP is also beginning to forge relationships with partner organisations who can help the Armed Forces community, for example, 'X-Forces' who provide business start-up support to Service leavers, families and Reservists.

Case Study

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has been instrumental in enabling X-Forces to better understand the benefits system and how this is enabling individuals to start-up their businesses without being penalised. The Department has also been crucial in raising awareness of support to those that require bespoke services.

Through account manager, David Middleton (DWP National Employer and Partnership Team), information about X-Forces has been circulated to all of DWP Armed Forces Champions. This ensures that members of the armed forces community who approach a Jobcentre about self-employment can be directed to X-Forces, for training and specialist support. The details of DWP have also been passed to other charitable organisations who are working to enable Veterans to access gainful employment.

Ren Kapur, X-Forces CEO, *"Working with your Department has been very refreshing and without hesitation I can say that the confidence we have to deliver what we do in Enterprise knowing that you will support the benefits knowledge has been priceless. For example supporting our work, and beneficiaries, from Blind Veterans UK; Skiing with Heroes and Help for Heroes. The Department has always responded to*

us within 48hrs of a request during the business week. Lastly, the feedback from both the beneficiaries and the support organisations has been so positive – thank you!"

Service leavers have now been included in the 'See Potential' campaign, which was launched over a year ago with the aim of encouraging employers to recruit more people from disadvantaged groups and help to meet the Government's commitment to full employment. So far more than 100 organisations across the UK have offered their support to the campaign.

Childcare

Last year the Families Federations expressed frustration with a perceived lack of progress on the £20 million childcare infrastructure improvement programme. The Federations also highlighted a growing concern over the cost and availability of childcare around the country and at some of our remote bases.

- On the childcare infrastructure programme, up to 40 projects have been identified as possibly receiving some degree of funding, 19 have been completed and 19 are underway, including the large new builds in Cyprus. The MOD has provided regular progress updates through the year.
- On childcare costs, the MOD is currently assessing the accessibility, availability and affordability of childcare experienced by Service personnel, and options for improvement where required; and working closely with all stakeholders including Other Government Departments and the Devolved Administrations. This work has now been incorporated within the MOD Families Strategy and associated Action Plan, and will be briefed to the MOD Children and Young People Board in December 2016, in order to publish a formal policy in early 2017.

The Welsh Government is developing an enhanced flexible childcare offer which will help working parents of three and four year olds by providing 30 hours per week of free early learning and childcare for 48 weeks of the year. Once the offer is

developed, it will be tested in some Local Authority areas from the autumn of 2017 followed by wider roll-out by 2020.

2016 Report Commitment

The Welsh Government to introduce an enhanced flexible childcare offer for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds by 2020.

Transition

Achievements This Year

The Career Transition Partnership (CTP) is a partnering agreement between the MOD and Right Management Ltd to provide resettlement services for those leaving the Armed Forces. Regardless of time served, all members of the Armed Forces can benefit from CTP support when leaving Service, and 85% of those who enrol in the CTP are employed within six months of leaving the Armed Forces, (a further 10% choose not to work).

Following contact renewal in October 2015, CTP has delivered a number of innovative technological learning tools which provide Service Leavers with additional support within the digital space.

In last year's report, Cobseo observed that many CTP delivery partners were still to sign their contracts; and highlighted uncertainty about the access to support for the new beneficiaries of the programme including the Wounded Injured and Sick, early Service leaders and spouses.

In the absence of agreed KPIs Right Management Ltd (the resettlement contractor) has provided MOUs that protect its various sub-contractors in terms of payment. (including those the 'partners' referred to by Cobseo).

The MOD has been reassured by Right Management Limited that all payments are up to date.

We are looking at what more we can do to support the needs of Service Personnel and their families when transitioning from military life to life in the civilian community – we will report progress against this in next year's report.

Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI) resumed in April 2016, with a focus on the job prospects of young people who face the greatest barriers to employment; this includes early Service leavers, Veterans and the partners of Veterans. From July 2015 to August 2016 a total of 1,218 employers have participated in the programme and 1,390 young people have been supported into a sustainable job or Modern Apprenticeship (MA).

Support after Service



Achievements this year

Last year we promised to report back on our work to identify ways on how to inform Veterans how to access the high levels of support available to them.

£2 million has been allocated from the £10 million Covenant Fund, to fund a 24/7 Veterans Gateway in 2017. A grant in principle has been awarded to Royal British Legion in leading a consortium of charities (including SSAFA, Combat Stress and Poppy Scotland) The gateway will provide a single point of contact via one telephone number and a fully transactional website, together providing an information "clearing house" which takes into account the needs of all Veterans wherever they may be located.

Also last year, Cobseo observed that, the Strategy for Veterans document was now significantly out of date. Noting that the MOD had produced a new Vision for Veterans, Cobseo felt that there was little hope of delivering this Vision without a properly thought through and resourced cross-Government Strategy.

The MOD believes that the Shared Vision for Veterans is fit for purpose and can deliver appropriate effect to support Veterans without the need for additional work to develop a new Strategy. We have undertaken to review the shared vision statement as part of the Service Charities Partnership Board. An update will be provided following that review.

In Scotland, the strategy and work plan of Scotland's Veterans' Commissioner, focuses the actions of the Scottish Government, Veterans organisations and partners to meet the needs and aspirations of the Veterans' community in Scotland.

Building on his 2015 reports on Transition in Scotland and on Housing Information for Veterans, the Scottish Veterans Commissioner published a report and recommendations on the Skills, Learning and Employability opportunities available to Service Leavers and their families in Scotland in November 2016. A report on Veterans health and well-being will be published in 2017.

Further information on that report and on the Commissioner's other work in support of Veterans, can be found at: <http://www.gov.scot/About/public-bodies/Veterans-commissioner>.

- In 2016, the Scottish Government provided an additional £120,000 of grant funding, from the Scottish Veterans Fund to support projects specifically designed to help and support Veterans across Scotland. The Scottish Veterans Fund has now provided almost £800,000 to 125 projects since 2008.
- In October 2016, it was announced that Veterans and ex-Service charities are to be supported by £600,000 funding over the next three years. The fund includes a three-year £240,000 contribution from Standard Life for projects to assist Veteran's employment.
- Building on previous Catalyst for Change funding of £200,000, in 2016 the Scottish Government provided Veterans Scotland with a further £70,000 to develop new and improved support for Veterans across Scotland and to facilitate the sharing of good practice between service providers in the private, public and voluntary sectors.

- Police Scotland has established a Veterans Champion in each of the 13 Local Police Divisions in Scotland. Regular Veterans Champions meetings are held, providing an opportunity for knowledge sharing and for external partners to provide inputs.
- Police Scotland engages with members of the Armed Forces community in a variety of circumstances. If it is identified that the individual would benefit from additional support and if consent is granted, a referral is submitted to the Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP). A total of 137 individuals were referred for assistance between January 2016 and May 2016. Approximately 80% of these referrals related to non-criminal matters, demonstrating the high priority Police Scotland places in supporting the most vulnerable members of the Armed Forces Community.

The Welsh Government has worked in collaboration with its key partners during the refresh of its Package of Support for the Armed Forces Community to ensure a number of new and developing commitments both within Welsh Government policy areas, and support organisations such as the Royal British Legion were reflected.

The refreshed Package of Support outlines the wealth of support available in Wales and signposts to organisations that can provide further information to Veterans and their families.

The Welsh Government has produced a separate document entitled Welcome to Wales. Aimed at Service personnel and their families Welcome to Wales outlines the support and services available. For those with families it also includes information about the range of support available, such as early education and free childcare.

- In April 2016, Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Cymru was awarded a large Covenant Fund grant, of £390,200 to further the collective ambitions of the organisations that fall within it, to design and deliver a whole system approach to supporting Veterans who come into contact with the Criminal Justice System in Wales. The Welsh Government is a member of the

IOM Cymru Board. The grant will fund the Supporting Transition of Military Personnel (SToMP) project for a two year period.

- The Welsh Government has supported the joint working of its partners to help make a difference to the lives of those most vulnerable in its communities through the Keep Safe Cymru for Veterans scheme. Veterans, who may need additional support from the emergency services in times of crisis, can register their details with the police whose response will be altered accordingly.
- The Welsh Government committed funding of up to £100,000 to support nationwide delivery of the Armed Forces Free Swimming Scheme from November 2015 – March 2017. The scheme is delivered in partnership with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). All Local Authorities in Wales have signed up to the scheme enabling Veterans and Service personnel on leave across Wales to access free swimming at local participating pools.

Case Study

Supporting Veterans in the Criminal Justice System in Wales

Identified as ex-Service whilst in prison for a driving related offence, Mr C was supervised on release by his Offender Manager, the Cardiff Community Rehabilitation Company. Suffering with PTSD and alcohol related issues he did not wish to engage with specialist voluntary sector services however his Offender Manager worked with him weekly motivating him to reduce his alcohol intake. Mr C responded well, was open and direct and at times challenging during supervision, but did moderate his alcohol consumption.

Mr C was referred to Change Step who were able to secure funding for him to attend an employability skills course that lead to further training. Mr C is now in full-time employment and has settled very well into the community. His alcohol use is under control and he is very positive about his future. Experiencing the benefits of a Change Step mentor himself, he decided to undertake peer mentor training to be able to assist other ex-Service personnel members that are in the position he found himself in at the start of his own journey. His licence period has now successfully been completed and he still keeps in touch with his former Offender Manager.

Reserves



Achievements This Year

This year we are issuing improved guidance on Reserves' welfare and reviewing our existing guidance on post operational stress management. This will ensure even greater parity of treatment between Regulars and Reserves and will better enable Reserves and their families to get support when they need it.

Although the recruiting environment is challenging, the number of people enlisting in the Reserve Forces is still increasing. Official figures published in August this year showed that the trained strength of the Future Reserves 2020 population at October 2016 was 35,540; an increase of 2,260 since October 2015.

Future Plans

The MOD has commissioned research into the Support provided to the Families of Reservists: An investigation of needs, current provision and gaps.

Members of the Reserve Forces should receive the same welfare support as the Regulars. However, recent work indicates that Reservists are not always treated equally to Regulars, due to such factors as single Service policy, interpretation and resource constraints. There is also uncertainty as to what impact this might have on the families of Reservists and indeed, what support the families actually receive. This work will examine the needs of Reservist families, and make recommendations for improvements to the current support mechanisms/ infrastructure. The findings due in August 2017, will help inform Service policy and provision.

Recognition

First World War Commemoration

The First World War commemorative four year programme included significant events to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of Jutland and the Battle of the Somme during 2016, and which the MOD has heavily supported and helped deliver. Further details of these events are provided at: <https://www.GOV.UK/Government/news/nation-marks-100-years-since-the-battle-of-the-somme>

Armed Forces Day

This central Government initiative continues to steadily increase in support year on year. The general public express their support and thanks to the wider Armed Forces community in a variety of events across the country and through a large scale social media campaign. The MOD part-funded 160 Armed Forces Day events, an increase of 22% from 2015. The national event was held in Cleethorpes, supported by HRH The Duke of Kent and the Prime Minister and attracted around 200,000 attendees. The 2017 national event will be hosted by Liverpool City Council.

25th Anniversary of Operation GRANBY

To recognise the 25th anniversary of the end of Operation GRANBY, the first Gulf war, a service, attended by a broad congregation including international representatives, was conducted in the Crypt of St Paul's Cathedral followed by a reception within the Tower of London.

75th Anniversary of the Arctic Convoys

The MOD held an event in Liverpool on the 75th anniversary of the first convoy to leave the city, bound for Russia. A reception in the Town Hall was hosted by the Mayor and First Sea Lord, and attended by Royal Navy and Merchant Navy Veterans and their families. The guests then enjoyed a performance by a Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines and a flypast by the Royal Navy Historic Flight's Swordfish. This was supported by the Type 45 Destroyer, HMS DRAGON, which was moored in the city for the event.

60th Anniversary of the Operations in Suez and the Canal Zone

The MOD invited Veterans and their families to participate in a service of commemoration at the National Memorial Arboretum on the 60th anniversary of the ceasefire following Operation Musketeer. After the service, wreaths were laid at the Suez Memorial in the grounds.

Communications

Achievements This Year

In last year's report a key challenge highlighted was the need for us all to improve the way we communicate about the Covenant, to help increase awareness amongst the Armed Forces community and those delivering the Covenant.

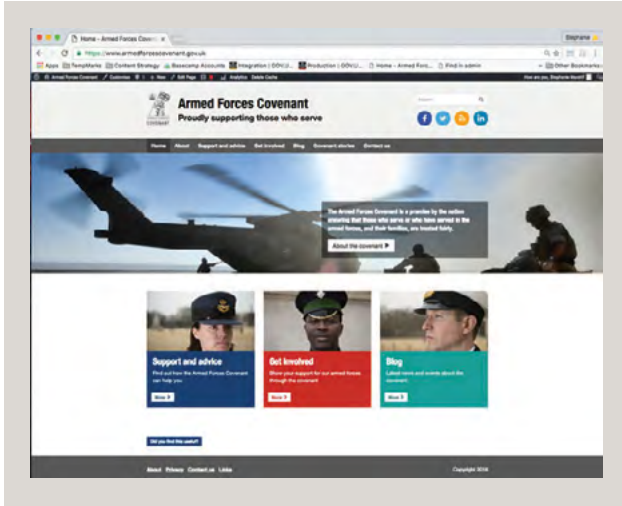
Achievements this year

In January 2016, an insight-driven Armed Forces Covenant brand strategy was developed and implemented; alongside a refreshed visual identity for the Armed Forces Covenant. The brand strategy sought to clarify the role of the Armed Forces Covenant in the context of its wider landscape and make it a more accessible and understandable concept for the target audiences to engage with.

In January 2016, Royal Mail issued a special postmark to commemorate the Armed Forces Covenant. The design, which featured the Armed Forces Covenant logo, was applied to millions of items of UK stamped mail nationwide.

Moya Greene, Royal Mail Chief Executive;

"Royal Mail is proud to be an Armed Forces-friendly company. There has been a close link between Britain's postal service and the military for nearly 200 years. Many current Royal Mail employees are ex-Servicemen and women or Reservists, and have played - and continue to play - a key role in keeping the UK safe. They also play a fundamental part in delivering Royal Mail's high quality service to homes and businesses across the country."



In April 2016, an Armed Forces Covenant campaign website was launched (www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk), which is linked to the GOV.UK policy pages. This acts as a central point of information about the Covenant for the target internal and external audiences. It demonstrates the aim, commitments and benefits of the Covenant by using engaging content and real life examples of how the Covenant provides practical support using images, video, articles, stories and blogs. It enables all those who benefit from the Covenant, including Service personnel, Reservists, Veterans, and their families, to access the information they need in an easy-to-understand online format, in addition to providing advice to those who would like to support the Covenant.

The launch was also supported by a targeted social media campaign which provided excellent results. Since the launch, there have been 55,415 visitors to the site, 42% of which have come from social media content. The site achieves an excellent bounce rate and average pages viewed per session, which indicates users are engaging with the content and that it is appropriate for the target audiences. The site continues to generate new content and is under continuous development, including significant updates to improve its content for local authorities and their Armed Forces community customers, and

for Covenant fund applications which will go live in early 2017, utilising user feedback and input from stakeholders.

In spring 2016, Covenant Champions were introduced in units across the Armed Forces. They act as a focal point to co-ordinate Covenant work and help to deliver the Covenant message direct to our personnel and their families. One of the Champions' key roles will be to feed the concerns of the Armed Forces community back to the MOD to help resolve issues, inform policy-making and target local and Third Sector delivery. Furthermore, the Champions act as a vital conduit between Service personnel and local authorities in Great Britain, the majority of which have also nominated individuals in place to act as Covenant Champions within their organisations.

In collaboration with other Government Departments, MOD has developed communications material, for Covenant Champions to communicate the Covenant locally in their units, based on different principles of the Covenant. For example, posters on Covenant support available on work and pensions and issues of commercial disadvantage have been provided to Champions for distribution in Defence establishments.

MOD has worked with stakeholders to deliver numerous Covenant communications activities throughout the year using social media content, print and online articles, images, videos, GOV.UK, internal and campaign website stories, and Forces TV and British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) bulletins. In November, BFBS promoted an Armed Forces Covenant week special, with radio content and interviews with Ministers and officials to explain why the Covenant exists, its scope, and what it has achieved to its audiences around the world.

Participating as Citizens

Achievements this year

Last year, following representations from the Families Federations, over the late delivery of ballot papers to Service personnel overseas, we promised to review the postal voting process.

During 2016, the MOD ran two campaigns encouraging Service personnel and their families to register to vote, one ahead of the UK local elections

in May, and another ahead of the EU Referendum in June. We worked closely with the Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission to ensure that they understood the challenges faced by our people in casting their votes, particularly those overseas. The procedures for the EU Referendum differed from other elections, with the Chief Counting Officer directing that postal ballot papers be distributed earlier than for other elections. Drawing on experience from the General Election, British Forces Post Office reviewed the arrangements with the Electoral Commission and Royal Mail in preparation for the May elections and the EU Referendum. Further, where a postal ballot paper was received late or was re-directed from an incorrect address, they contacted individuals to inform them. They prioritised ballot papers above private mail and used all commercial levers available to expedite papers.

Changes in Defence

Achievements this year

Last year, we committed to undertake further research on the exclusion of women from ground close combat roles and report to the Defence Secretary by mid-2016.

In July 2016, the MOD announced that the exclusion of women from serving in combat roles had been lifted. The decision followed extensive research, which looked into three key areas of potential risk to women on the front line: musculoskeletal injury, psychological issues and impaired reproductive health. As a result of this 'Interim Health Report' (IHR), combat roles will be opened to women in a phased approach over the next three years. This began by allowing women to serve in all roles within certain units of the Royal Armoured Corps (RAC) from November 2016. This will be reviewed after six months before being expanded to other units of the RAC.



Annex A - Commitments

This table shows the commitments that were made for the first time in the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report that was published in December 2015 and those that were recorded in the table at the back of that report as “to be completed”.

Key to progress status

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

Healthcare

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	Status
The MOD will continue work to implement the recommendations of the Care Quality Commission and the majority of the recommended infrastructure improvements by early 2016.	UK	Complete. The MOD has completed all of the recommendations contained in the 2012 Care Quality Commission review of the Defence Medical Services.	
On hearing loss, the MOD will examine whether this is a widespread issue for Service personnel and Veterans, whether they are being disadvantaged, and if so, what the MOD is doing to address the issue.	UK	On-going. £0.5M phase one of the hearWELL programme funded. MOD continues to pursue further funding for the project.	
The MOD will also work with the Department of Health and the Royal British Legion to help deliver the Government's commitment to support Veterans with Service-related hearing problems.	UK	Complete. £10M given to TRBL in 2015 by HMT. The Veterans hearing fund was launched in November 2015.	
The MOD will through the future Defence Medical Information Programme, develop a system to transfer medical records between Defence Medical Services and the UK Health Services.	UK	Complete. The MOD completed the commitment to speed up the process in 2016. The future Defence Medical Information Service IT programme will deliver improvements incrementally from 2018.	
Defence Statistics will publish the first report on the causes of deaths amongst Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts in 2015-16.	UK	On-going. Unforeseen resource constraints have delayed progress. There is currently a risk in identifying the funding line for the flagging of the cohort and the receiving of notifications	
The DMS will work with the Care Quality Commission to agree an on-going schedule of inspections that will include a cross section of DMS Medical Treatment Facilities on an annual basis in order to provide the DMS with external scrutiny and 3rd part validation.	Eng	Complete. The MOD has an agreed schedule of future inspections with the CQC, which will begin in 2017.	
DH and NHS England will work closely with HEE to provide a robust framework for the delivery of improved learning packages to identify specialist GP and Armed Forces Champions in every Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) by summer 2016.	Eng	Complete. On 24 June 2016, HEE, with support from NHS England, launched 'e-Learning for Healthcare' a new e-learning programme to help increase the understanding and awareness of GPs and others providing health services for the Armed Forces population.	

Education

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	Status
DfE and MOD will continue to review the use of the Service Pupil Premium and publish examples of best practice to ensure that it is addressing disadvantage to Service children's education.	Eng	Complete. A booklet highlighting good practice has been produced and distributed to schools and local authorities. The National Governors Association has published guidance on its website.	

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	Status
Review the Education Support Fund to ensure that it continues to be used to mitigate the effects of exceptional mobility and deployment on schools, academies and free schools within the UK.	UK	Complete. £6M due to be spent in 2016, to deliver a variety of schemes including emotional literacy, nurturing, extra staff, conferences and research.	
The MOD will work with the Department for Education to identify where the current schools admission code, or the interpretation of it, has not resulted in removing disadvantage for children from Service families.	UK	Complete. The MOD and DfE continue to evaluate where the admissions code is not followed. Current evidence suggests no significant admission issues are pertinent to Service children.	
The MOD will engage with a research provider to investigate the relationship between the Service Pupil Premium (SPP) and children from Service families attainment. To produce quantitative and qualitative data on SPP use and improve understanding of its impact.	UK	Complete. MOD has supported the formation of a research network in partnership with the University of Winchester to understand the totality of the research already conducted on Service Children attainment and progression and to identify the gaps and future research requirements.	
The MOD will continue work to promote the SPP to improve awareness amongst Service families.	UK	Complete. 2016 figures show that following a marketing exercise, there was a significant rise in enquiries about the SPP and an increase in the number of children who received funding.	
The MOD will continue to work with colleagues in DfE to seek to resolve the issue of transfer of information for children from Service families particularly those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.	UK	On-going. MOD and DfE continue to work on this issue. Discussions continue around the existing mechanism and process in place for transferring pupil information.	
The MOD will make further announcements, once the costings have been agreed by DfE, on where and when work will commence following the distribution of £20 million of LIBOR money to support childcare provision.	UK-Cyp	On-going. Up to 40 projects have been identified for possible funding. 19 have been completed and 19 are underway, including the large new builds in Cyprus.	
The DfE will provide further opportunity through programmes, such as the Troops to Teachers programme, which provides a worthwhile career path for Service leavers and enables schools to have a better insight into Service life.	Eng	Complete. An additional year of funding for the programme was approved by the DfE in November 2016.	
The MOD will share best practice and resources arising from a University of Winchester project aimed at supporting and improving understanding of the factors that affect children from Service families' progression to higher education at a local and national level, which is due to complete in summer 2016	Eng	Complete. MOD have formed a research network in partnership with the University of Winchester to understand the totality of the research already conducted on Service Children attainment and progression and to identify the gaps and future research requirements.	

<p>The MOD will continue working closely with the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and education authorities over the coming months, to understand the issues surrounding the admission of children and young people from Service families, either starting school for the first time or moving schools between different education systems.</p>	<p>Sco</p>	<p>Complete. Education Scotland has issued a statement on transitions and will continue to build a package of support for parents. New website launched. MOD is improving its online information for Service families.</p>	
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Accommodation

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	Status
<p>Develop an alternative approach to the provision of accommodation for Service personnel and their families.</p>	<p>UK & O'Seas</p>	<p>On-going. The MOD is developing a Future Accommodation Model (FAM) to redesign the way we accommodate our Armed Forces by supporting them to live in the private rental market or enabling them to purchase their own home. A pilot is planned at the end of 2018 for select locations.</p>	
<p>Guidance issued by the Scottish Government when the social housing provisions are introduced for the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 will encourage social landlords to give fair and sympathetic consideration to applicants leaving the Armed Forces.</p>	<p>SCO</p>	<p>Complete. Revised guidance for landlords issued in 2016.</p>	
<p>Establish a Single Living Accommodation (SLA) Management Information System (MIS) to provide critical information on the condition of the estate and inform key investment decisions.</p>	<p>UK</p>	<p>The MOD's SLA MIS has been rolled-out to approximately 60 (of 190) UK sites. However, current user adoption at these sites is not as expected; a Review is underway to understand the underlying reasons for this.</p>	
<p>MOD will continue to look for opportunities to mitigate further the impact of years two and three of the planned pause on improvements to Service Family Accommodation</p>	<p>UK</p>	<p>The three year pause ended in March 2016. In the interim, MOD recognised the importance in investment in SFA. Through careful financial management, the MOD was able to spend £218M to improve 1,027 properties.</p>	
<p>The MOD will spend some £1.85 billion on accommodation by 2020-21 in order to deliver 18, 500 SLA bed spaces and 3,000 homes.</p>	<p>UK & O'Seas</p>	<p>The MOD has delivered over 50,000 SLA bed-spaces across the estate over the last 12 years; more than 9,000 in the last three financial years. This includes investing over £1.2 billion to improve the standard of our SLA through the Single Living Accommodation Modernisation (SLAM) project,</p>	
<p>Introduce the Crown Tenancies bill, so that Service personnel can be afforded the same statutory rights as tenants in the private sector</p>	<p>UK</p>	<p>On-going. The Bill introduced last session ran out of time. This has now been reintroduced as a Presentation Bill and its second reading is due in December 2016.</p>	
<p>The MOD will introduce a new charging system for Service Family Accommodation (SFA), a key element of the New Employment Model Programme.</p>	<p>UK</p>	<p>Complete. In April 16, the MOD introduced a new charging system for Service Family Accommodation called the Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS).</p>	

From April 2016 the MOD will move to the Government's Decent Homes Standard (DHS); no Service family will be allocated accommodation in the UK which does not meet the DHS.	UK	Complete. Since Apr 16, as part of the introduction of CAAS, the MOD no longer allocates accommodation to Service families which does not meet the DHS.	
Continue to ensure that the National Housing Prime (NHP) contract awarded to CarillionAmey meets contracted standards.	UK	On-going. The contractor has improved repair and maintenance delivery, and met, targets set earlier in the year. A further review will be undertaken at the end of 2016.	
Continue to support Service personnel with the Forces Help To Buy Scheme.	UK	On-going. Scheme extended in October 2016 to 2018. Latest figures (as at the end of Oct 16), show over 9,000 Service Personnel have used FHTB to purchase a property, totalling over £136M.	

Terms and Conditions of Service

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	Status
Development of a New Employment Model (NEM)	UK	On-going. The majority of NEM changes have been delivered, with implementation of the remaining changes due to be completed by 2018, though transition will continue through to 2020 and beyond.	
The MOD will trial the concept of adapting unpaid leave policy to reduce an individual's liability for deployment during 2015-17	UK	The MOD undertook Flexible Duties concept trials (reduced deployability and less than full time working) between November 2015 and February 2016. The trial has been extended until 2019.	

Benefits and Tax

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	Status
The MOD and DWP will work on the finer details of a new scheme to allow military spouses and civil partners to apply for National Insurance Credits for the years prior to 2010 that they have spent accompanying their Service partner on postings outside the UK.	UK	Complete. In April 2016, the DWP introduced a new Armed Forces National Insurance credit for spouses and civil partners who joined their partners on overseas postings.	

Family Life

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	Status
Balance demands on Service personnel and their families through a New Employment Model (NEM)	UK	On-going. The majority of NEM changes have been delivered, with implementation of the remaining changes due to be completed by 2018, though transition will continue through to 2020 and beyond.	

Commercial Products and Services

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	Status
The MOD will work with the Financial Services Sector to address any potential disadvantages associated with service overseas.	UK	On-going. Announcements on buy-to-let mortgages and car insurance made during 2016. Other work strands to continue.	
The MOD will work closely with the organisations who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant to ensure the delivery of their pledges.	UK	On-going. The Defence Relationship Management organisation has been set up to continue delivering this enduring task.	
The MOD will continue to work through the Financial Services Steering Group (FSSG) to understand how companies can best support the Armed Forces and communicate these lessons to industry.	UK & O'Seas	The FSSG has met regularly, and will continue to do so. Its work has led to several high profile announcements during 2016.	

Commercial Products and Services

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	Status
In early 2016, the MOD will publish new information about its work to achieve commercial fairness, and provide the opportunity for Service personnel and their families to report particular examples of when they have been treated unfairly.	UK & O'Seas	Complete: MOD published a commercial disadvantage narrative on GOV.UK and it created a commercial disadvantage survey on the Covenant website in June 2016.	

Support after Service

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	Status
The MOD to identify ways to inform Veterans how to access the high levels of support available to them. MOD to report on this further in the 2016 Covenant annual report.	UK	On-Going. In November 2016, the Covenant Fund allocated £2 million for the Veterans Gateway programme to a consortium of charities led by the Royal British Legion to set up a 24/7 one-stop service to better support Veterans. To be launched in the first half of 2017	

Recognition

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	Status
The MOD will continue working with the Families Federations to gather further evidence on the inclusion of divorced spouses in the categories of the Armed Forces community and report on the subject in next year's report.	UK	On-going. Requirement to analyse results and undertake further work before having a good understanding of the issues and proposals for change.	

Participation as Citizens

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	Status
The MOD will work closely with local authorities to ensure the spread of best practice and tackle issues such as access to social housing.	UK	Complete. MOD continues to work closely with local authorities to share best practice in both policies and projects in support of the AF community. Regular meetings across central Government.	
The Department for Communities and Local Government will work jointly with the MOD and Local Government Association to take forward work to review the effectiveness of the Covenant in the community. The result will be published in March 2016.	UK	Complete: The LGA/FIMT report "Our Community Our Covenant", was published on 22 August 2016.	
The MOD will work with the Families Federations to put together a detailed toolkit of information to explain the challenges our Armed Forces communities face and how local authorities can support them. The final toolkit will be published in 2016.	UK	No further action. This has been superseded by the work surrounding the Our Community Covenant Report, and the launch of the new Covenant website.	
Following reports of the late delivery of postal vote forms to personnel serving overseas, for the 2015 General Election, the MOD will review the postal voting process and identify where any changes are necessary next year.	Overseas	Complete. BFPO conducted a review following General Election 15 fed lessons into 2016 Elections and EU Referendum planning. No complaints received following both elections.	

Changes in Defence

Commitment	Applies to	Progress	Status
The MOD will undertake further research on the exclusion of women from ground close combat roles and report to the Defence Secretary by mid-2016.	UK	Complete. Announced on 8 July 2016 that the ban on women serving in ground close combat roles would be lifted from 2016.	

