

# SNAPSHOT OF THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT 2015

The Covenant is a promise from the nation ensuring that those who serve and have served in the Armed Forces and their families are treated fairly.



## What does the Covenant mean for me?

- Healthcare
- Education
- Accommodation
- Inquests
- Business & Community
- Covenant Funding
- The Wider Covenant



### We set the following goals:

Veterans should receive priority treatment (subject to the clinical needs of others) in respect of NHS secondary healthcare relating to a condition resulting from their Service in the Armed Forces; and Veterans should be able to access mental health professionals who have an understanding of Armed Forces culture. Members of the Armed Forces should enjoy the same standard of, and access to, healthcare as received by any other UK citizen in the area where they live. Personnel injured on Operations should be treated in conditions which recognise the specific needs of Service personnel. Families should retain their relative position on any NHS waiting list, if moved around the UK due to the Service person being posted. ■

### This year's achievements:

- Embedded the Covenant in the new NHS constitution in England.
- £2M refurbishment of medical facilities at RNAS Culdrose.
- £500k initial research programme into hearing loss.
- £2M to set up a NHS Specialist Rehabilitation Unit in Stanmore.
- £5M to research the psychological impact of battlefield injuries and severe battlefield trauma.
- Updated the Armed Forces community health pages on the NHS choices website
- Given £10M to the Royal British Legion to launch the Veterans hearing fund. You can find out more at: [www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/finances/grants/veterans-medical-funds/](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/finances/grants/veterans-medical-funds/)

Healthcare - What does the Covenant do ?



### We set the following goals:

Children of members of the Armed Forces should have the same standard of, and access to education as any other UK citizen in the area in which they live. There should be special arrangements to support access to schools if a place is required part way through an academic year as a consequence of mobility for Service reasons. Service personnel should expect to receive appropriate training and education for both personal and professional development. ■

### This year's achievements:

- Around £21M in Service Pupil Premium payments made by the DfE to support the pastoral needs for almost 70,000 Service pupils at state schools in England.
- Issued advice to Head Teachers in England on Term Time Absence for Service Children.
- Made Service pupils a priority in the schools admissions process.
- Changed the admissions policy so that Service children can be allocated a place before they move into an area.
- Allocated £20M to improve childcare facilities at 40 locations in the UK and Cyprus.
- Used Education Support Funding to mitigate the effects of mobility and deployment for 24,500 pupils.
- Worked with local authorities and schools to ensure a smooth transition for Service pupils returning from Germany.
- The DfE briefed all English local authorities and Regional Schools Commissioners to set out specific measures aimed at supporting Service pupils.

Education - What does the Covenant do ?



### We set the following goals:

Service personnel should have priority status in applying for Government sponsored, affordable housing schemes and Service leavers should retain this status for a period after discharge. Those injured in Service should also have preferential access to appropriate housing schemes, as well as assistance with adaptations to private housing or Service accommodation whilst serving. Members of the Armed Forces community should have the same access to social housing and other housing schemes as any other citizen, and not be disadvantaged in that respect by the requirement for mobility whilst in Service. We continue to provide subsidised Service Accommodation and investment to ensure it meets the needs and expectations of our Service personnel. Under the New Employment Model we have introduced the Forces Help to Buy Scheme to help those serving personnel who wish to get onto the property ladder. ■

### This year's achievements:

- Loaned £85.5M to help over 5,600 Service Personnel purchase their own home through the Forces Help to Buy Scheme.
- Delivered nearly 2,000 new Single Living Accommodation bed spaces.
- Invested £65M in a programme of work to improve Service Family Accommodation. As part of this work, approximately 185 properties have been upgraded to the highest condition standard and fully modernised throughout.
- Tackled mould and damp problems in 2,000 SFA properties.
- Reduced Service Families Accommodation charges overseas by 20%. From April 2016 we will stop charging personnel overseas for contributions in lieu of council tax.

Accommodation - What does the Covenant do ?



### We set the following goals:

Businesses and charitable organisations who wish to demonstrate their support for the Armed Forces community can sign the Covenant. In doing so they make a range of written and publicised promises to set out their support. For Communities, the Armed Forces covenant is a promise of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces community. ■

### This year's achievements:

- Four regional local authorities conferences to explain the needs of the Armed Forces community and to promote best practice.
- Targeted action with local authorities to address key issues e.g. access to social housing.
- We are formally reviewing the support provided by local authorities so that it can be further improved in 2016.
- Vodafone, EE, O2 and 3 have now agreed that both Service personnel and their families can freeze their mobile phone contracts when they are posted overseas.
- Royal Mail is working with their customers to promote the BFPO shadow postcode system to make sure service providers are using the right information. Similar information has also been issued to Service personnel to ensure a standard approach.

Business & Community - What does the Covenant do ?



### We set the following goals:

Service personnel should be sustained and rewarded by Terms and Conditions of Service (TACOS) which recognise the freedoms and choices that they have voluntarily given up. The New Employment Model aims to update the offer to Service personnel and to give Service personnel and their families greater choice. ■

### This year's achievements:

- A simplified set of Engagement Structures were introduced in April 2015, aligned to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 15, to reflect a three stage career.
- Launched an enhanced Career Transition Partnership to support all Service personnel leaving the forces.
- Introduced the Tenancy Deposit Loan Scheme to give personnel an advance of salary to fund the cost of a deposit if they want to rent a property privately.
- First steps towards reforming Armed Forces pay was announced in July 2015 and Accelerated Incremental Progression will cease in December 2015.
- Initiatives to help career and lifestyle choices went live in September and October 2015 to include changes to leave policy and an employment support trial for spouses.
- Reformed the Service complaints system to make it less bureaucratic and more responsive to the user's needs.

Wider Covenant - What does the Covenant do ?

## What else has the Covenant achieved this year ?

- Agreed that military spouses reaching State Pension age from 6 April 2016 will be able to apply for new National Insurance credits to cover periods from 1975 where they have been accompanying their Service partner on postings outside UK.
- Amended the Armed Forces Pension Scheme to ensure Reservists are eligible.

- Launched a 2-year Spouse Employment Support Trial.
- Agreed that spouses and adult children returning from overseas are now exempt from the three month residence requirement for claims for income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Provided access to the Armed Forces Railcard for Reserves and their families.
- Launched a credit union to help Service personnel access safe and affordable finance.

- Allowed Reservists in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance to attend 43 days training in their first year without needing to end their claim to benefit.
- Launched a £10M annual Covenant fund and a five year, £25M aged Veteran Fund.

## More help and advice.

For more about the Covenant and what it means for you, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/armed-forces-covenant>

Have you been disadvantaged because of your Service? Contact your Service Families Federation or email the MOD Covenant Team at [Covenant-mailbox@mod.uk](mailto:Covenant-mailbox@mod.uk)

To find out more about Forces Help to Buy visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forces-help-to-buy>

The Tenancy Deposit Loan Scheme <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/help-to-secure-a-rental-home-the-mod-tenancy-deposit-loan-scheme>

Credit union services visit <https://www.moneyforce.org.uk/>