



THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT ANNUAL REPORT 2024



The Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2024

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



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ARMED FORCES

COVENANT

The Armed Forces Covenant

An Enduring Covenant between
The People of the United Kingdom
His Majesty's Government

– and –

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

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

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

They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

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

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

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Ministerial foreword

Since 5 July 2024, our country has had new leadership. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has new leadership, and we have a strong mandate for change. Defence is at the heart of both the future security of this country and its future success, and it is an honour and a privilege for me to serve in the role of Defence Secretary.

The current global landscape continues to highlight and demonstrate the important work that our Armed Forces carry out. The time has come for change. We are led by a guiding principle of 'One Defence' to make Britain secure at home and strong abroad.

Since 2011, the Armed Forces Covenant has been a promise by the nation that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families along with the bereaved, should be treated fairly. This is a promise we do not take lightly. That is why this government has made a manifesto commitment to placing the Covenant fully into law and I am pleased to report that work is already underway to develop and deliver on this.

I am honoured to introduce the 13th Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report, the first under a Labour government. This report includes contributions from across the MOD, alongside wider government departments, the devolved administrations and third sector organisations, and is the primary tool by which we, the government, are held to account in delivery of the Covenant and its founding principles. The latest reporting period (October 2023 to September 2024).

It is a testament to the hard work of the Armed Forces and the wider teams that support them that the number of signatories for the Armed Forces Covenant continues to grow. July 2024 saw a significant milestone with the 12,000th signing of the Covenant, a number which has since grown to over 12,400, and the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme now having awarded over 1,000 gold awards, demonstrating the importance on attracting members of the Armed Forces community.

Personnel and veterans – and the families that support them – serve our country with dedication and professionalism. Too often they face problems and have been let down. This Government is committed to renewing the nation's contract with those who serve and have served. We are already delivering for Defence. We have given service personnel the largest pay rise in over 20 years, introduced to Parliament the Independent Armed Forces Commissioner Bill to improve service life, and announced action to support veterans into social housing, with exemptions from local connection tests in England. But there is much more to do.

This report is a demonstration of all the work that goes into supporting the Armed Forces both Regular and Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families. It also serves as a spotlight on where more needs to be done, to ensure they do not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services, something that this government is committed to upholding.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Healey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a short horizontal line.

THE RT HON JOHN HEALEY MP
Secretary of State for Defence

Introduction

This is the 13th annual report on the Armed Forces Covenant since its introduction as a statutory requirement in the Armed Forces Act 2011. It covers the reporting period from 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024, and is the government's annual update to Parliament on delivery against the Covenant (as it applies to Service personnel and their families, the bereaved community, and veterans and their families).

The report covers actions that the UK government and the devolved administrations have taken during the reporting period to deliver the Covenant across the UK – in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. (Full details of Scotland's support for the Armed Forces community throughout the past year are included in their own annual report.)

It covers delivery in the following areas:

- Chapter 1: Health and healthcare
- Chapter 2: Education
- Chapter 3: Housing and accommodation
- Chapter 4: Inquests and judicial engagement
- Chapter 5: Business, employment, and the community
- Chapter 6: The Covenant in law

It also includes the following annexes:

- Annex A: provides a range of data and metrics used to measure progress in delivery
- Annex B: provides further sources of reading and information

Throughout this report, the term 'Armed Forces community' is used to mean all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown, and their families, including the bereaved. Veterans are defined as anyone who has served for at least one day in His Majesty's Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined operations. The terms 'Service families', 'Service partners' and 'Service children' mean the families, partners and children of currently serving members of the Armed Forces.

Highlights from the reporting period

Health and healthcare

- HeadFIT version two was launched in July 2024 with a redesigned website. It highlights the unique Defence environment and promotes mental fitness alongside physical fitness as essential in maintaining performance and operational effectiveness.
- In September 2024, the chief executive of the NHS re-signed the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of NHS England.
- 98% of NHS trusts and foundation trusts in England are now part of the Veteran Healthcare Covenant Alliance.
- By the end of September 2024, over 98% of primary care networks in England had at least one Royal College of General Practitioners-accredited veteran friendly practice.
- Op COURAGE saw over 6,800 referrals during the first year of operation as the new integrated mental health and wellbeing service.
- Following a successful pilot, the General Practice Armed Forces and Veterans Recognition Scheme was launched in November 2023, which aims to raise awareness of some of the health challenges that the Armed Forces community face.
- Construction has now started on the flagship NHS and MOD health complex, the Catterick Integrated Care Campus, in Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire and is due to complete by spring 2026.

Education

- This year, it was announced that the Royal Navy, Army and the Royal Air Force were among the top five apprenticeship employers in the UK, ranking 1, 2 and 4 respectively.
- **The Early Years Programme** awarded £1.2 million to 31 projects focused on improving early childhood education and care for Service children aged 0 to 5 years.
- **The Service Pupil Support Programme** awarded over £1.8 million to 48 projects aimed at improving educational outcomes for Service children.
- The Scottish Government has renewed its short-term funding for 2024 to 2025 to continue the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland's National Education and Transitions Officer role.

Housing and accommodation

- In financial year 2023 to 2024, £578 million was spent on maintaining and improving Service Family Accommodation (SFA).
- As of Nov 2024, 44 long term relationships have been housed under the widened accommodation pilots launch in Cyprus and the Falkland Islands in March 2024.
- 99% of SFA now has access to Wi-Fi with speeds of 24Mbps delivering a vast improvement in previous areas of digital isolation for Service families.
- Op FORTITUDE to receive an additional £3.5 million of funding to support veterans at risk of homelessness. Building on the 773 veterans who have been supported since its inception In September 2023.

Business, employment and the community

- Within the 2023 to 2024 financial year, the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust awarded **£31,717,321** through **311 grants** across all programmes.
- Armed Forces Covenant signings reached a significant milestone in July 2024, with the 12,000th signing of the Covenant. At the end of the reporting period the exact total figure stood at 12,401.
- The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme continues to encourage employers to support the Defence and the Armed Forces community. The total number of gold award holders has increased to 1,015 and the total number of silver award holders has increased to 1,467. Bronze has increased and sits at 5,204.
- Of those who left the Armed Forces during 2022 to 2023 and used MOD's Career Transition Partnership (CTP) services and provided their employment outcome at their six-month follow up, 89% were employed.
- On 28 January 2024, the MOD and Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) launched the 'Apply for a HM Armed Forces Veteran Card' service. To date, over 100,000 cards have been issued to veterans.
- The first Scottish Armed Forces Evidence and Research International Conference was held at Craiglockhart campus, Edinburgh Napier University, in August 2024.

Beyond the Covenant

- To date, 225 claims have been paid as part of the War Widows Recognition Payment Scheme, totalling a sum of £19,687,500.
- The Invictus Games Foundation announced in July 2024 that Birmingham will play host to the Invictus Games 2027.

External observations

Observations from the Families Federations

Introduction

The Naval, Army and Royal Air Force Families Federations appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2024. We continue to work closely with MOD policy staff tasked to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant and UK Armed Forces Families Strategy and note that progress has been made in several areas.

Governance

The Families Federations are keen to continue work to deliver future governance improvements to Armed Forces Covenant mechanisms. We would welcome clarification on the following points would be helpful.

- **Clarity:** What is the MOD doing to ensure a clear and distinct role for the Covenant, given other areas of policy/delivery, such as the Haythornthwaite Review, the office of the Armed Forces Commissioner, the UK Armed Forces Families Strategy and the Veterans Strategy?
- **Accountability:** What – if any – measures are in place currently to ensure that the key aspects of the Covenant and ‘due regard’ are delivered, progressed and monitored to ensure consistency across the country?
- **Prioritisation:** Is there going to be a process put in place to allow the Families Federations and military charities to provide input and highlight areas of concern, and who will own the process for tracking progress?
- **Information:** To avoid inconsistency in experience across the UK, we would welcome the provision of information on the GOV.UK website showing points of contact across local government, with links to devolved administrations.

Health and healthcare

The impact of mobility in accessing healthcare provision continues to be a challenge for Service families, especially regarding waiting list transfers, which invariably impact the continuity of healthcare and treatment. There is a variation across the UK in waiting list

management. Some NHS trusts and health boards would benefit from further awareness and training to fully implement the Covenant, especially as the Op Community Pathfinders programmes end in England. There is the additional issue of tracing patient records when moving out of the Defence Primary Healthcare system into NHS provision – as well as in and out of the devolved administrations – and this is a cause for concern for some families.

The number of cases of families returning to the UK from overseas assignments with newly diagnosed health issues is rising. This cohort regularly experience delays in accessing NHS treatment and are subject to a lack of continuity of healthcare. There are some ways families can ensure better support when they return, and the Families Federations are engaged to improve this.

We have seen a rise in the number of families facing challenges securing autism spectrum disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder assessments, as well as the variation in pathways across integrated care boards in England. These issues are all being exacerbated by the long waiting list times and difficulties accessing child and adolescent mental health services.

Challenges accessing dental/orthodontic care have not gone away. We are not seeing as many cases raised to us and believe this is because families have accepted that there is little support for this issue, rather than a resolution to the problem of lack of services. The Families Federations have sought alternative pathways to raise awareness of the challenges that mobile Service families face accessing dental services.

A recent update to the NHS app has allowed patients to book appointments, but we have identified a challenge for dual serving parents who are unable to book appointments for children under 13 years old, as they are registered with Defence Medical Services for primary healthcare, instead of the NHS. We have raised this to the relevant NHS team who are looking at resolutions to the issue.

We noted in the annual report that there is a reference to the wellbeing scores indicated by Service spouses¹ who completed the Tri-Service Families Attitude Survey 2024. These are lower than the national average. The Families Federations strive to engage with Service spouses/partners, sharing information and offering appropriate advocacy and advice. We would welcome further discussions with the MOD and the relevant Service welfare teams, to consider how we can collectively support families more effectively to improve these scores in the future.

¹ The Families Federations recognise that in most settings there is a preference to use the word 'partner' instead of 'spouse', however we have found challenges in substituting partner for spouse in detailed documents. Our families are still in a position where being a spouse/civil partner can unlock entitlements to services (e.g housing and allowances) that are not reliably available to partners who have chosen not to marry/undertake a civil partnership. With that in mind, we have not been able to move completely to using 'partner, to avoid ambiguity in this space.

Education

Accessing school places at a preferred school/specialist settings can be challenging, particularly for mobile Service families relocating at short notice, or after key admission application deadlines. Despite the existence of the school admissions code, there are variations with school admission processes and policies in different local authorities and across the UK. This can be challenging for Service families to navigate.

Families with a child with additional needs regularly encounter further challenges transferring support, and we are aware that some children from an Armed Forces background are spending time out of education following relocation, awaiting access to provision that meets their needs. Having noted the limited responses and lack of awareness from schools to the MOD's Covenant Legal Duty impact survey, we would encourage the MOD and Department for Education to work with local authorities and schools to ensure their practices are supportive of the Armed Forces community, and that they provide accessible information and contact details on their websites to assist Service families with the school admission process. We ask that they collaborate with relevant stakeholders to ensure the effective transfer of additional needs support before arriving in a new location too.

On a positive note, we welcomed changes to the Student Awards Agency Scotland funding criteria. This means that more Service children who are based in Scotland are eligible to apply for funding through Student Awards Agency Scotland for higher education courses. This is an issue that the Families Federations have raised on a number of occasions, and we are delighted that this has been amended.

Childcare

The Families Federations welcome the inclusion of the overseas funding for the early years. However, it has highlighted the disparity across the four UK nations. It appears that those in some overseas locations with early years children are better catered for than those in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland due to the disparity in the respective early years childcare provision and policies in these locations.

There continue to be ongoing challenges accessing appropriate childcare, both early years and wraparound, in areas with mobile military communities. There are particular concerns in areas of Scotland, where the lack of suitable childcare is having a direct impact on retention and options for personnel to serve accompanied. In some instances, this is also affecting families' overall incomes, as they are unable to arrange childcare outside of the home.

Housing and accommodation

We are pleased to note the reduction in cases that we are dealing with regarding the Future Defence Integrated System. However, accommodation continues to be a notable issue for Service families. Insufficient investment in housing and single living accommodation over time has led to a degradation of the standard of some accommodation and an unequal standard of accommodation across the Defence estate. Decisions made between contractors and Defence Infrastructure Organisation, which continue to cause properties to become unavailable at short notice, are leaving families frustrated and feeling let down, and their customer experience is not positive.

We welcomed the long-term relationship established pilot in Cyprus and the Falkland Islands. The delay to the previously announced modernised accommodation offer has adversely impacted those who do not currently meet the accommodation entitlement criteria and consequently are facing increased housing costs because of this delay. We would therefore seek an early announcement about the future of the modernised accommodation offer.

Due to the location of units across the UK, we are aware of inconsistencies between local authorities regarding serving personnel and separating spouses bidding on social housing. Some have specific web pages, but not all. This makes it particularly challenging to provide advice to Service families in these situations – especially when it is not always clear who the Armed Forces champions are across the housing sector of the local authority.

The bereaved community

The Families Federations welcome the work that has taken place to recognise the unique needs of the bereaved community. Although our work in this area represents a small number of beneficiaries, it is significant as we provide consistent information to bereaved families on entitlement and support. We welcome the work being done by the Confederation of Service Charities (Cobseo) to further provide cohesion in this area to better enable the third sector to support this unique set of needs. We look forward to learning more about the changes to current policies to ensure that this community is no longer disadvantaged.

Families Strategy

We were delighted to support the Families Strategy when it was launched in 2022. We understand that there is ongoing work regarding the action plan, but we feel the strategy has lost its momentum. We acknowledge that there are competing priorities due to the Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation (HRAFI), but we have not been given any explanations as to which of the Families' Strategy workstreams are being taken forward through HRAFI and remain concerned that there is risk of potential duplication. We are also concerned that there does not seem to be enough resource within the MOD families team to deliver the day-to-day tasks as well as maximise the potential that the Families Strategy offers. The Strategic Defence Review, and associated outcomes, may also cause further disruption and once again stall much needed progress.

The Supporting Partners programme funding has provided the opportunities to address some of the Armed Forces families and safeguarding team's delivery. But without proper oversight, it risks duplication of effort in some workstreams and trivial work.

We would welcome an update that is accessible to families, as there have been no changes made to the GOV.UK Families Strategy website page since April 2023.

Business, employment and the community

One of the largest challenges for Armed Forces families is spousal employment and, with the ongoing cost of living crisis, the need for many households to have a second income remains imperative.

During this reporting cycle, we have received evidence from many spouses with regards to the potential negative impact that the lack of employment opportunities can have on any decision made to accept overseas postings. An Armed Forces families survey undertaken in 2024² illustrated that 61% of spouses/partners posted overseas are unemployed when compared to 20% of those in the UK. This is supported by the Families Continuous Attitude Survey 2024 data, which stated that 67% of spouses/partners looking for employment experienced difficulties.

- There is still a void of information regarding overseas employment for spouses.
- The impact that this can have on the spouses' ability to continue and progress careers, as well as the families' need for a second income whether they are living and working in the UK or overseas, cannot be understated.

A collaborative approach is needed across MOD and the single Services to ensure that families receive clear guidance and can make informed decisions.

The focus remains on supporting the veteran family. While a valid cause, significant work needs to be done to improve the employment experience of serving partners and spouses, who experience quite different barriers and issues to veteran families. A 'one-size fits all' solution is not the answer. By investing in supporting partner employment, Service personnel retention and attitudes will improve, and transition out of service (and therefore veteran experience) will be smoother.

The Families Federations Forces Families Jobs team look forward to working closely with Defence Relationship Management as the Families Federations Forces Families Jobs employment portal is developed further over the next reporting period. We are currently awaiting the outcome of a review of the portal, which we have commissioned thanks to funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and will share the outcomes and recommendations with key stakeholders in due course.

Non-UK families

There continues to be barriers to accessing employment, healthcare and immigration support which cause disadvantage to non-UK serving families.

The Armed Forces families employment survey report noted that the issues experienced by non-UK partners in accessing employment are unique. More needs to be done to understand the problems and improve them.

- More needs to be done to support families on overseas assignments – improved guidance and recognition should be another pillar of support.
- All serving personnel who discharge with less than four years' service should receive tailored immigration advice and discharge documents which reflect their unique status.

² [AFF-Spouse-and-Partner-Employment-Survey-2024-Full-Report-FINAL.pdf](#)

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- The Home Office immigration rules on discharge should be changed so that serving personnel who medically discharge for a condition that is attributable to service are eligible for indefinite leave to remain qualification of length of service.
 - The Home Office should provide a landing page on the UK Visas and Immigration website for Armed Forces so that all information is easily accessible and in one place.

There has been an increase in the number of visa and immigration enquiries/cases for all the Families Federations. As well as providing individual support, it has allowed the collection of evidence to inform reviews of current policies, such as the minimum income threshold requirements. As a result, there have been a number of policy changes and successful outcomes for Armed Forces families affected by visa and immigration issues, with the potential to have a positive impact on retention and family life for those affected. On top of shaping change, the volume of complex cases and associated research requirements to provide person-centred responses demonstrate how the Families Federations with qualified immigration advisors in both the Naval Families Federation and the Army Families Federation (with an agreement to support the Royal Air Force community) are fundamental to the support for this cohort.

The Covenant in law

The new government are committed to "enshrining the Covenant in law" which is welcomed by the Families Federations. We seek a more joined-up approach between government departments to ensure that no Service person or family suffers disadvantage because of their service. However, it is not clear yet how the extension of the Covenant will be measured to ensure that any new areas in scope will be held accountable for their delivery. These are the same concerns we have about the current enforceability of the 'due regard'.

Conclusion

The intent of the Covenant is to ensure Service personnel and their families are not disadvantaged because of their service. Unfortunately, this has not been standardised across the UK yet. We know there is ongoing research through the Forces in Mind Trust's 'Our Community – Our Covenant' work. However we feel more needs to be done to develop levels of awareness at local authority level and across the devolved administrations to ensure that all staff working with the Armed Forces community are familiar with the Covenant and can ensure it is implemented to prevent disadvantage.

The Families Federations welcome the discussions surrounding the expansion of the Covenant and look forward to understanding how this can better support Service personnel and their families.

Observations from Cobseo – The Confederation of Service Charities

Cobseo, the Confederation of Service Charities, welcomes the 2024 Covenant annual report and is grateful for the chance to comment. These comments should be considered complementary to those provided by the Royal British Legion and by the Families Federations.

Overarching themes

It is worth reflecting at the outset that while the aim of the Covenant is to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families are treated fairly. Cobseo also believes that it should underpin a “thriving Armed Forces community that is valued and supported by society”. As in previous years, the report provides a mass of discrete examples of the continual progress that has been made in delivery of the Covenant since its inception over a decade ago. The report also shines a light on the broader support available to the Armed Forces community, both from the private sector and most notably from the third (charitable) sector.

That said, if we are to achieve a more objective assessment of actual progress made and to assess whether the initiatives, policies and support put in place are working to reduce disadvantage for the Armed Forces community, these initiatives should be subject to evaluation and the findings made available in future annual reports. Similarly, we should consider further how we can use quantitative and qualitative data to benchmark progress.

Findings are emerging from the current Our Community – Our Covenant study, sponsored by the Forces in Mind Trust, which examines the current delivery of the Covenant and the wider ecosystem of support provided to the Armed Forces community at a regional level. A consistent theme from the emerging findings is the extent to which external pressures and constraints faced by statutory and non-statutory services impact on their ability to deliver the Covenant. Sharing best practice and building delivery models that optimise available resources are undeniably important and deserve increased emphasis in future iterations.

Cobseo members have also provided feedback on the impact of the Covenant Duty. Our observations are generally consistent with Covenant annual report analysis. Initial observations are positive, with the Duty generating renewed and greater awareness of the Armed Forces community and Covenant commitments. However, significant challenges remain in communicating the practical implications of the Duty to both service users and providers and in measuring its impact. Again, we believe that there is merit in exploring how we take this forward in future policy development.

As highlighted in Cobseo’s observations in previous iterations of the Covenant annual report; we recognise that the report serves as a hold-to-account function, but Cobseo believes it could be about so much more. It is our perception that the report looks like a transactional process when it should recognise the value that those who have served offer to the nation, and that there is a wider range of stakeholders, including the Service charity sector, who are also working to support Covenant delivery. This includes our smaller charities who are often the first point of contact for veterans seeking assistance.

Health and healthcare

The report highlights the significant progress made in increasing awareness of the Armed Forces community and their needs by civilian healthcare services, with almost all primary care networks and NHS trusts in England part of veteran schemes. However, and as shown in the MOD survey findings, this does not mean all healthcare organisations are veteran-aware, and inconsistencies remain across England and the rest of the UK with some members of the Armed Forces community still experiencing challenges when trying to access healthcare or continue treatment.

The Covenant's promise of special consideration for those who have given the most, such as the injured, is an area not reflected in the report. For those who are medically discharged, some can encounter significant challenges. Our evidence suggests that there is a significant disconnect between policy, which assumes adequate time and support for successful resettlement and medical discharge, and practice, where there is often not enough time to guarantee the delivery of necessary support before discharge. There are inconsistencies in the support and communications provided during the medical discharge, resettlement and wider transition process.

Issues also remain in the transfer of medical records from the MOD to the NHS, with some ex-Service personnel waiting over a year for their records to be transferred. This can delay treatment and healthcare as well as impact on benefit assessments. The delay in Programme Cortisone therefore needs to be urgently addressed.

The government's Darzi Review and the current consultation on the NHS England 10-Year Health Plan provide a good opportunity to bring consistency in building nationwide awareness of the Armed Forces community's experiences and needs, and to ensure no member of the Armed Forces community is disadvantaged. It will therefore be important that the needs of the Armed Forces community are reflected in the planning and consultation processes and drive a refreshed NHS Armed Forces forward view strategy.

There is no update on the progress of the National Rehabilitation Centre. We have repeatedly highlighted that rehabilitation services in the NHS are not as accessible as they should be, and it is hoped that the National Rehabilitation Centre will address this.

We welcome the current MOD study into mortality rates and causes, including suicide, of military personnel who served since 2001, and the development of a Defence Suicide Register to better understand individual circumstances surrounding deaths. We would also like to see a targeted campaign to identify and support those most at risk.

On Op RESTORE, we are pleased that NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care have continued to develop the former Veteran Trauma Network to create an integrated plan for the physical health of veterans, and that the aim is to extend this work to include devolved administrations. The focus must now be around ensuring GPs, healthcare providers and the third sector can effectively signpost and make referrals into this pathway, and that high-quality care is consistently available regardless of where the veteran lives.

The expansion of the veteran friendly GP accreditations is welcomed, but too many GPs are still unaware of the issues associated with Service-related injuries. Accreditation remains voluntary, and there is a further need to improve the identification and coding of veterans in GP computer systems. This would increase awareness and understanding of their health requirements.

Consideration should be given to extending 'veteran friendly' GP initiative to include Scotland and Wales.

The reinstatement of the Veterans' Mobility Fund is making a vital difference to the lives of those injured during their military service. It facilitates the provision of life-changing specialist equipment, which veterans might not otherwise be able to access.

The impact of Op COURAGE in terms of veterans' mental health provision is welcomed. However, many of the challenges start at the point of transition and the slow progress made through the commissioned services. A consistent care pathway needs to be established at the point of discharge to ensure that this process is clearly transparent and adequately resourced.

There are missed opportunities to promote and signpost Op COURAGE. The veteran's perspective is needed when setting up services as many struggle when they suddenly have to navigate these services by themselves.

We welcome the partnership with the MOD to deliver the Combat Stress helpline to serving personnel. The helpline offers a clear and simple first step to accessing confidential mental health support and treatment 24 hours a day across the UK. It also provides a trusted means for serving personnel to keep in touch after they have left the Armed Forces.

Some veterans struggle to access the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, particularly those with mental health conditions, where the onus is on them to prove need. Some veterans are wrongly discharged without diagnosis of a mental or physical health condition, hindering their ability to claim compensation. Many are given an initial holding payment and, after review, are told they can live with the condition without the need for further support. Many veterans are unaware of the appeals process, or find that it exacerbates post-traumatic stress disorder and other conditions. These issues need to be addressed in the forthcoming review of welfare services.

Education

While it is good to see the progress made in supporting children's education and some improvements in families accessing healthcare services, the needs and experiences of Armed Forces families continue to be overlooked. The UK Armed Forces Families Strategy was developed to address the challenges Armed Forces families face. However, progress on taking the strategy forward remains slow, and significant resources and consideration needs to be given to how current and future challenges faced by serving and ex-serving families can be addressed.

There is also a positive slant in the assessment of educational outcomes for Service children that is not consistent with the data. The differences may be small, but Service children still come in lower in all percentages set out in the annexes.

Analysis of Service children data also continues to consider only cohort-level outcomes. This adds to the misleading perception that all is well and hampers targeted action in sub-cohort areas, as well as being a risk to future resource provision.

Housing and accommodation

The focus on delivering improvements in Service accommodation is noted. However, the key here is to see evidence of beneficial outcomes from the perspective of Serving personnel and their families.

We are pleased that the government has recognised, and acted on, the need for veterans to have more flexible access to secure social housing. Homelessness is rarely an issue that occurs in isolation, and we will continue to work with the government to understand, and implement, the changes required to help veterans and their families to thrive in civilian life.

Business, employment and community

The employment chapter makes scant mention of the CTP, which is surprising given it is the main agent to support transition. There is also no reference to the significant contribution by the third sector.

There remains a lack of focus given to the medical discharge process and those leaving service because of injury or illness. A full review should be initiated, addressing the process from the perspective of serving personnel and ensuring consistency across all three Services.

We welcome that a lower minimum income requirement has been agreed for the Armed Forces. We look forward to further progress on the commitment to abolish visa fees for veterans after four years' service and extend the waiver to their dependents.

The Covenant in law

The Service charity sector has consistently maintained that the Covenant should be enshrined fully in law. We look forward to engaging in the consultation process to extend the scope and reach of the Legal Duty.

It is important that the government ensures that the roles of the various national bodies with an interest in the delivery of the Covenant are communicated as clearly and in as integrated a way as possible. This includes the MOD Covenant team, the Office for Veterans' Affairs, Defence Relationship Management, and the Defence Transition Service. Given the pressures facing local authorities and other service providers, it is essential that the national system is as easy to navigate as possible.

The Covenant in Wales

It is noteworthy that the Welsh Government funds Armed Forces liaison officers, who distribute key Covenant-related material and resources across local Armed Forces networks, co-ordinate local activities in support of the Armed Forces community, and promote awareness of issues relevant to the Armed Forces. This has secured a greater consistency of support for veterans across Wales and sets a standard that the rest of the UK should follow.

The Covenant in Scotland

Progress towards the delivery of both the veterans mental health and wellbeing pathway and the veterans homelessness prevention pathway remains slow, which is a concern.

The Covenant in Northern Ireland

While recognising that different ways of working in terms of Covenant delivery are required in Northern Ireland, we are concerned by the recent resignation of the Veterans' Commissioner and the loss of the Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Office. Both have been instrumental in facilitating support to the serving and veteran communities. Northern Ireland does not have a comprehensive database of veterans, and no questions were included in the recent census to identify veterans. There is also a perceived disadvantage arising from veterans being reluctant to disclose their military service.

Women Veterans Strategy

Despite several references to 'women' and 'female' throughout the report, the Women Veterans' Strategy is not mentioned at all. It is understandable that work was paused during the election process, but a lot of good work was done, both by Sarah Atherton MP and the Female Veterans Cluster. We hope that this can be picked up going forward, perhaps when we start engaging on the future evolution of the Veterans Strategy.

Observations from the Royal British Legion

The Royal British Legion (RBL) is grateful for the opportunity to respond to this report. We recognise the steps taken throughout 2024 to further improve the support landscape for the Armed Forces community across a wide range of policy areas.

RBL welcomes the delivery of targeted support for the Armed Forces community through the continuation of the Op COURAGE, Op FORTITUDE and Op NOVA programmes. The roll-out of the General Practice Armed Forces and Veterans Recognition Scheme across Great Britain, as well as the ongoing support delivered by Armed Forces champions across statutory services, are essential in raising awareness and providing tailored support for the Armed Forces community.

The Op COMMUNITY pilot is a welcome initiative for the Armed Forces community. However, serving families continue to face challenges when accessing essential services owing to high mobility during service life. As this report notes, frequent relocation often results in families losing places on waiting lists for dentistry and GP services, which can delay diagnoses and impact health outcomes. A robust evaluation is essential to ensure effective roll-out across the UK, with agreed protocols and consistent standards.

RBL also welcome the steps taken to ensure tailored and accessible support is available to families of serving personnel and veterans. The Service Pupil Support Programme demonstrates progress in ensuring positive outcomes for Service children. Although challenges remain for serving personnel and families, investment made to the facilities and maintenance of SFA has begun to ensure that families of serving personnel are not disadvantaged by their service.

RBL believes it is necessary to increase provision of support for Service families with children who have special educational needs and disabilities or additional needs (SEND/AN). Families continue to struggle to obtain the necessary assessments and educational support owing to the unpredictable nature of moves, as well as varying definitions and criteria for SEND/AN across the UK and abroad. It is essential that the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant are adhered to, to facilitate consistent access to SEND/AN support for Service children and their families who face disadvantage owing to Service life.

RBL welcomes the recognition of the bereaved Armed Forces families as a cohort who require more tailored support to meet distinct needs, and the steps taken throughout 2024 to do so. The Defence Bereaved Families Group provides a vital forum for raising and delivering actions to improve provision of support for this group, such as updates made to the Purple Book. We hope that this forum continues to drive action in support of the bereaved community, including essential steps to ensure they can access tailored support over a long-term basis.

While we are pleased to see investment through the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust into projects supporting families across the entire Armed Forces community, RBL believes that a greater focus is required on families of veterans. This group are often impacted by Service life, as well as during transition, and remain a key source of support for veterans for years after

their time in Service. It is essential that the unique needs of families of veterans are alongside those of serving families and the bereaved.

Despite raising concerns following publication of the 2023 Covenant annual report, social care continues to be omitted almost entirely from this report. As veterans and families often access health and social care through integrated delivery, it is essential that their unique experiences and needs are recognised on an equal footing across these policy areas. Inclusion of social care as a policy area in the Armed Forces Covenant Duty is essential to ensure that the needs of the Armed Forces community are met so that support delivery is consistent and appropriate. Government support for the veteran friendly framework scheme for care homes (an initiative led by RBL, Royal Star and Garter, and the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance), in the form of a grant from OVA for the evaluation of the scheme, is welcome.

Veterans and families in receipt of compensation through the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, or War Pension Scheme, continue to have all or some of their payments considered as income when accessing certain welfare benefits, including Pension Credit. Approximately 150,000 veterans and their families receive compensation awarded by the government for pain and loss they endured during service in the Armed Forces. This compensation is unjustly regarded as income within some welfare benefit means tests, while many civil compensation awards are typically exempt, which we believe breaches the principle of the Armed Forces Covenant. RBL considers it essential that recipients of military compensation retain their full entitlement to their awards, and that steps should be taken to ensure means-testing policies for welfare benefits allow them to do so.

Families of non-UK personnel continue to face significant barriers to family life in the UK owing to indefinite leave to remain (ILR) fees. RBL recognises that the MOD has gone some way in supporting non-UK personnel through the removal of the minimum income requirement earlier this year. However, families of non-UK serving personnel continue to be subject to ILR fees, equating to over £14,000 for a spouse and two children, before additional costs for travel, biometrics and other requirements.

Families are a vital source of support for all serving personnel, however non-UK family members of serving personnel continue to face considerable disadvantage compared to their UK comrades. Removing ILR visa fees for families of serving personnel who have already obtained ILR for themselves would recognise the sacrifices made and unique challenges faced by this group.

To improve support and outcomes for the Armed Forces community, RBL believes that it is fundamental to broaden scope of the Covenant Duty to include all levels of government across the UK, and all policy areas. Anything less would erode the principles and the impact of the Armed Forces Covenant.

RBL welcomes the government's commitment to bring the Covenant fully into law, and the steps taken to fulfil this commitment. At the time of writing, the Covenant website provides an online form³ for nominations for new areas and their consideration and inclusion within the

³ [Nominate an addition to the Legal Duty - Armed Forces Covenant](#)

Covenant Duty, but there remain many unanswered questions about its promotion and implementation.

As such, the Covenant Duty in its current form continues to omit policy areas and public services from its scope, where need is often greatest for the Armed Forces community. Data from Veterans' Gateway indicates that issues raised to the helpline concerning employment and finance feature prominently alongside health and housing queries, and yet are not within the Covenant Duty scope. As highlighted previously, when someone has a long-term health condition and/or disability, which may arise from service, they may require both healthcare and social care. They might move between health and social care, and policy and delivery are often integrated, but social care remains excluded from the Covenant Duty.

RBL believes that it is vital for the UK and devolved governments to be held to the same standards as local governments and agencies. Members of the Armed Forces community are affected by decisions and access services from national, devolved, regional and local organisations. Even where service delivery is local, central and devolved governments are key sources of funding, policy and accountability. A broader Covenant Duty across all levels of government will ensure consistency and clarity for the Armed Forces community in the commitments they can expect from public services at all levels.

Expanding the Covenant Duty to cover all policy matters and public services throughout the UK and devolved governments would enable a more comprehensive and consistent approach to supporting the Armed Forces community, ensuring all layers of government plan and deliver policy and services according to the Covenant principles.

While the service and policy provision outlined throughout this report goes some way in delivering better support to provide more positive outcomes for the Armed Forces community, the robust and independent evaluation of these initiatives is essential. More work must also be done to 'ask the question' consistently across public services to identify veterans and other members of the Armed Forces community. This would not only encourage a better understanding of how the Armed Forces community use these services, but also demonstrate their experiences and the impact of different policies and services.

Other sectors have embedded effective evaluation systematically in their service delivery, through actions such as ensuring all commissioned services include a budget for independent evaluation, establishing evidence standards, and practical, tailored support to improve measurement of impact. We welcome the increasing use of data and evidence to demonstrate areas of improvement and where further work is needed throughout this report. We believe improving data collection and evaluation across the sector, alongside work to embed the voice and views of lived experience, will improve service design and outcomes for our community.

Chapter 1: Health and healthcare

Introduction

Looking after the health needs of the Armed Forces community, especially where military service has caused or exacerbated those needs, is one of the first priorities of the government. The MOD provides some healthcare services to Service personnel, while the NHS in England, Scotland and Wales alongside Health and Social Care (HSC) in Northern Ireland provides services to family members, veterans and the bereaved, depending on their location. The MOD, the Department of Health and Social Care, the relevant bodies of the NHS & HSC, and the devolved administrations all continue to work closely together to ensure needs are met and services are improved.

This chapter sets out the work that has been undertaken to meet these needs by the UK government and the devolved administrations during the reporting period.

The Armed Forces

Healthcare services for the Armed Forces

Building on insights from the 2021 House of Commons Defence Committee's Women in the Armed Forces inquiry, the MOD has implemented several policies aimed at enhancing the health and wellbeing of women in service, including introducing menopause and breastfeeding policies to sustain operational effectiveness.

Since early 2024, the MOD has expanded its initiatives to address health disparities impacting ethnic minorities within the forces. This effort is integral to a broader strategy aimed at ensuring all personnel receive the necessary support. It underscores the MOD's commitment to meeting the diverse healthcare needs throughout the service, thereby improving overall wellbeing, and maintaining operational readiness.

The MOD conducts an [annual survey of Armed Forces personnel](#), which includes the question: "If you have received Service-provided medical treatment (including mental healthcare) in the last two years, how satisfied were you with the medical treatment?" This satisfaction rate remains unchanged in 2024 at 72%.

Further work to improve the healthcare services provided to the Armed Forces is outlined below.

Nutrition

The Chief of Defence People's Catering Strategy, published in May 2024, aims to provide Service personnel with: attractive dining facilities to use as social spaces; improved, high-quality food options to support role requirements and individual preferences, extended opening times and alternate options for ordering food to make healthier options more accessible and health and performance nutrition education to support healthier diet behaviours.

This new catering offer is underpinned by a transparent business model, to provide Service personnel with affordable, healthy options. Ongoing work is assessing special dietary requirements of Service people to inform meal options and menu design, ensuring Defence better meets the needs of its diverse population.

Dietitians and Nutritionists of the Defence Nutrition Advisory Service are supporting both the Catering Strategy roll-out (governing and assuring the quality of provision), as well as the development and sharing of evidence-based, population-specific nutrition education. The Defence Nutrition Advisory Service also leads on the development of best practice health behaviour change interventions to support personnel with unhealthy body weights.

Specific areas of future activity include understanding the health and performance impacts of high-risk food choices (such as caffeinated energy drinks) and dietary supplements, as well as supporting groups with specific health issues related to their food choices or dietary preferences.

Lifestyles

The MOD has introduced policy aimed at reducing the impact of harmful levels of alcohol consumption on health and wellbeing by supporting Service personnel through a range of services. These include: health information and education, training, alcohol advisors, and the specialist Defence Primary Healthcare clinical pathway.

Through initiatives like the Defence Alcohol Harm Reduction Programme, additional educational materials will be made available to help Service personnel make informed and responsible choices. Wider strategic interventions include focusing on promoting the use of no and low alcohol alternatives and encouraging Service personnel to explore and switch to patterns of drinking that are aligned to the Chief Medical Officer's 'healthy drinking guidelines'.

Defence has also introduced a mechanism to monitor alcohol sales across all Defence establishments, from messes to retail outlets. This will enable the MOD to evaluate policy interventions and make improvements to best balance individual choice with organisational duty of care.

Personnel recovery centres

As of April 2024, these centres have been recently transferred from charity ownership to a model where they are fully owned and operated by the MOD. They currently operate for Serving personnel in support of their recovery goals.

The figures of Personnel on Recovery Duty attendance delivered across the four Personnel Recovery Centres between Jan to Dec 2023 were: 1119, with a further 295 delivered at the Battle Back Centre on the Multi Activity Course.

From Jan to Nov 2024 the total number of Personnel on Recovery Duty attendance is 847, with a further 364 delivered at the Multi Activity Course.

In addition to these figures, the Battle Back Centre delivers two recovery adventure training exercises annually across winter and summer, with an overall attendance each year of 30 attendees.⁴

The MOD is scoping extending the use of personnel recovery centres to the veteran community and engagement is ongoing to enable this.

Mental health

Defence is committed to improving the mental health of our Service personnel and veterans by providing access to the best possible mental healthcare services. This involves working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, the NHS, devolved administrations, and voluntary and civil society organisations.

The MOD recognises that reducing stigma associated with mental ill-health remains important. This continues to be achieved through education and briefings to Service personnel, their families and their Chain of Command. Equally, the Services' structure of close-knit units and the MOD's preventative measures may well serve to reduce instances of mental ill-health.

The overall rate of mental health in the UK Armed Forces was broadly comparable to that seen in the UK general population. The latest report demonstrates the rate of Armed Forces personnel seen in any military healthcare setting for a mental health related reason has remained stable. In 2023/24 females had higher rates of mental ill-health than males, which is consistent with rates in the general population... Personnel from all age groups accessed military mental health care in 2023/24.

The majority of patients who seek mental health care are managed by their military GP, however some with more complex needs will receive treatment from specialist mental health care providers. The rate of those needing specialist mental health treatment was lower in the UK Armed Forces than that seen in the UK general population.

The MOD provides a number of initiatives aimed at supporting and improving the mental health of Service personnel.

- The Annual Mental Fitness Brief was updated in June 2024 to include a module on sleep hygiene, providing guidance on healthy habits, behaviours and environmental factors that can be adjusted to improve sleep. Lived experiences from Service

⁴ The numbers provided account for numbers treated, and has not been adjusted to account for individuals attending multiple courses throughout their recovery pathway.

personnel and MOD civil servants, highlight the pathway to recovery they have taken and the additional support received.

- HeadFIT version two was launched in July 2024 with a redesigned website that highlights the unique Defence environment and promotes mental fitness alongside physical fitness as essential in maintaining performance and operational effectiveness.

Waiting times for cancer treatment

Following a consultation on the cancer waiting times standards, NHS England received government approval to implement changes to the reported cancer waiting times standards with effect from 1 October 2023.

The standards went from ten into three - one headline 62-day referral to treatment standard, one headline 31-day decision to treat to treatment standard, and the Faster Diagnosis Standard.

This allows for a clearer focus on priorities and reduces the bureaucracy of reporting against and managing many similar standards, all of which have slightly different performance thresholds or qualifications for the patient cohort included.

During 2023 to 2024, for England as a whole, performance for both the Faster Diagnosis Standard and the 31-day combined standard was below target. For Service personnel, performance for Faster Diagnosis was better than the 75% standard at 78.2% and higher than the general population performance of 72.8%. For 31-day combined standard performance for service personnel was below the 96% standard at 91.1%. Performance for Service personnel in England for these two standards is shown in Annex A, Table 11.

Suicide prevention

Every death by suicide is a tragedy that has wide impact across the Armed Forces community. Suicide is multifactorial and complex, and we may never know the reasons why someone takes their life. There are no easy solutions.

The MOD publishes [annual statistics on suicides among the regular UK Armed Forces](#). The latest statistics were published on 4 April 2024. They show that: “For the 20-year period 2004 to 2023, the UK regular Armed Forces remain at a significantly lower risk of suicide than the UK general population. However, since 2017 the number of Army male suicides has increased, and the risk of suicide among Army males was the same as the UK general population for the first time since the mid-1990s. In the UK regular Armed Forces, suicide rates were highest among males aged 24 and under. This is different to trends seen in the UK general population where the highest risk group for suicide were males aged 40 to 54 years, despite suicide being the leading cause of death among males aged 24 and under.”

Work to reduce suicides among the Armed Forces community, and support bereaved families, has included the following.

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- A refreshed second edition of the [Armed Forces Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan](#) has been published. This strategy is the result of an ongoing commitment to reduce suicide within the Armed Forces and better support those affected by it.
 - The next phase of the Defence Suicide Register project is focused on embedding a sustainable, digital tool that can be internally exploited to inform evidence-based prevention, intervention and postvention activity across Defence.
 - Armed Forces and veteran family specific national suicide bereavement guides informed by the experiences and needs of individuals bereaved by suicide have been published by Suicide Bereavement UK, following work supported by NHS England.

Catterick Integrated Care Campus

Construction has started on the flagship NHS and MOD health complex in Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire, with the build due to complete by spring 2026.

The Catterick Integrated Care Campus is a first-of-its-kind MOD-NHS partnership and will enable shared estate, expertise and learning to optimise the health and care services for people across the area. A range of NHS and MOD services will be delivered in the Catterick Integrated Care Campus. These include GP services, community services, NHS dentistry provision for those with a disability or serious mental illness, diagnostic services such as x-ray and ultrasound, and specific services for Service personnel from the Defence health recovery group teams.

Service families

Healthcare services for Service families

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Service families sometimes find it harder than the general population to access NHS services, due to the requirement to regularly re-locate around the country with the Serving person(s).

The [annual survey of Armed Forces families](#) asks Service families if they have been able to access dental treatment in the last 12 months, to which 62% answered yes in 2024. In NHS England's 2024 [Summary of the Dental Results from the GP Patient Survey](#), 76% of GP patients in England who tried to get a dental appointment in the last two years were successful (page 3). Of those Service families who required dental treatment in the last 12 months, 70% were able to access it.

It is recognised that there are challenges in accessing NHS dental care nationally, which impacts both Service families and the wider civilian population. However, some mobile Service families are impacted more severely due to the need to change dentists more frequently.

Op COMMUNITY

The Pathfinder programme will end in March 2025, however the learning from the sites will be taken forward as part of NHS England plans to deliver the Darzi recommendations and the 10-year plan. NHS England and the University of Northumbria will develop a framework and guidance to assist integrated care systems in their delivery of Armed Forces community support locally, as the programme ends. The framework builds on the existing NHS services to sustainably support Armed Forces families.

The bereaved community

It is recognised that those who experience the death of a loved one when that person was serving in the Armed Forces have specific needs which differ from those of the veteran community.

The bereaved community are their own, distinct cohort within the Armed Forces community. This year, work has continued in raising the profile of Defence's bereaved community and the support available to them.

- *The Defence Bereaved Families Group*

The Defence Bereaved Families Group (DBFG) is a forum led by the bereaved families, supported by the MOD and co-chaired by a senior military officer. Its purpose is to provide the opportunity where issues relating to the support for bereaved families can be raised, considered and, where appropriate, taken forward as actions by those with responsibility for making and delivering policy and providing support.

The first quarter of 2024 saw the most recent bi-annual meeting held at the Royal British Legion London office. It welcomed empowered representatives from the Covenant team, the Confederation of Service Charities (Cobseo) and British Forces Broadcasting Services for the first time. This representation from outside the bereaved community enabled an even broader discussion highlighting the ongoing work, both internal to MOD and external, to raise the status, acknowledgement and recognition of the bereaved.

- *An updated Purple Book*

The Purple Book forms part of the Purple Pack and is owned by Defence. It is delivered through the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre to a deceased's next of kin/nominated person. The book offers practical yet succinct guidance on the immediate requirement of post-death administration such as registration of death, funeral arrangements and financial considerations such as pension and compensation.

Taking on board feedback from members of the bereaved community, the MOD has worked closely with the DBFG to rewrite the Purple Book to ensure accuracy, relevance and the use of correct language throughout.

- *Time to Reflect 2024*

Time to Reflect introduces members of the DBFG charities to the National Memorial Arboretum and its provision of different spaces for everyone within the estate to come together and reflect. Time to Reflect is for the loved ones who die in service, regardless of the cause, and the message is that their sacrifice is acknowledged and that the families have not been forgotten.

In May, the DBFG, funded by the Royal British Legion, ran the third annual Time to Reflect event. Approximately 150 people were registered to attend and positive feedback following the event demonstrates that it is very much welcomed by the community and required.

- *A focus on recognising and referencing the bereaved as a cohort*

The MOD is working to ensure the bereaved community are clearly referenced as a cohort in their own right, both internally and externally in communications and language used. This aims to improve clear signposting of support and resources available, and to ensure recognition of the bereaved as a specific cohort. Recent examples include: updating HeadFIT webpages to directly signpost support available to the bereaved, and ensuring the bereaved are referenced as a separate cohort in the new Defence People Support mission statement.

War Widows Recognition Payment Scheme

This scheme provides resolution to eligible widows or widowers who forfeited their service attributable pensions before 2015. The payment is made on the basis of the Covenant principle that special consideration should be given to those who have given the most (such as the injured or bereaved). To date, 225 claims have been paid, totalling a sum of £19,687,500.

Veterans

Health and wellbeing of veterans

In November 2023 the Office for National Statistics published an analysis of veteran health and levels of the provision of unpaid care. This was based on data from the 2021 Census of England and Wales.

The analysis found that the proportion of disabled veterans was larger than the proportion of disabled non-veterans (32.1% compared with 19.6%), this difference became smaller but remained when we took age, sex and regional differences between the two groups into account (32.1% compared with 30.0%).

In addition, a higher proportion of veterans than non-veterans aged 70 years and over provided unpaid care, and the greatest difference was between veterans and non-veterans aged 85 to 89 years (12.8% compared with 7.2%, or 10.2% after adjustments).

Suicide

In April 2024 the Office for National Statistics published an analysis of the level of suicide in the UK armed forces veteran population for 2021.

The analysis found that of the 253 UK armed forces veteran suicides occurring in 2021, 93.7% (237) were male and 6.3% (16) were female. Overall, after accounting for age, there was no evidence of a difference in the rate of suicide between male UK armed forces veterans and the male general population.

However, male UK armed forces veterans aged 25 to 44 years had a higher rate of suicide compared with males aged 25 to 44 years in the general population.

These findings were similar to those in a separate study conducted by Manchester University and published in 2023⁵. The study found that firearm discharge accounts for more suicide deaths among male veterans compared with the male general population.

This ONS study is the result of 18 months of collaboration between the ONS and the OVA and the publication produced the first ever annual veteran suicide rates. The ONS will continue analysing and publishing England and Wales annual veteran suicide statistics on a yearly basis.

Understanding The Experience of Female and LGBT Veterans

Combat Stress and the Women's Royal Army Corp are currently conducting a qualitative research project, interviewing 10-12 LGBTQ+ female veterans about their experiences during their service careers (serving pre and post the 2000 ban).

The Armed Forces and Veterans Recognition Scheme (for both General Practice and Secondary Care) contains content regarding these cohorts. There is a commitment to ensure that the work delivers equitable services to the whole Armed Forces community, this includes reflecting on the experiences of LGBT+ and female veterans.

Female Veterans Alliance is a national non-profit organisation that aims to empower and support women have served in the UK Armed forces. It works to provide advocacy, resources, and a supportive community for female veterans. It was created by two female veterans from Wales and works with female veterans and organisations across the UK. This year the group held two workshops (October 2023, September 2024) and are hosting a stakeholder day in November 2024.

Healthcare services for veterans in England

In early 2024, government, NHS England and the Royal College of General Practitioners worked on a communications campaign to raise awareness and address barriers in healthcare. It was particularly focused on GP veteran friendly accreditation and encouraging veterans to identify themselves to their GP. The campaign resulted in a 21% increase in veteran accredited GPs and a 25% increase in veteran patient registrations. This supported the aim to

⁵ Suicide after leaving the UK Armed Forces 1996–2018: A cohort study | PLOS Medicine

achieve 100% of primary care networks in England with at least one accredited veteran friendly GP practice.

Further work to improve healthcare services provided to veterans has included the following.

- *Op RESTORE*

Op RESTORE now works across a network of 26 acute hospital providers including the 13 specialist major trauma units. Military and civilian medical professionals, together with Armed Forces charities, support veterans to see a clinician with the right skills and experience. This works to help with their continuing physical health injuries and related medical problems attributed to their time in the Armed Forces.

Since its initial establishment as the Veteran Trauma Network and now as Op RESTORE, the service has received over 1,150 referrals, with over 380 referrals in 2023 to 2024, and a further 260 in the first six months of 2024 to 2025.

- *Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance*

The Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance is an accreditation process for providers of NHS commissioned services. 205 out of 210 trusts (98%) have now been accredited as 'veteran-aware', which includes acute hospitals, ambulance services, mental health and community trusts. The Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance is piloting accreditation schemes with providers outside of the NHS. Due to expansion, this now includes 27 independent providers and hospices.

The Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance, alongside others, has been working in collaboration to ensure that veterans in nursing and residential care settings are able to receive more tailored support. The veteran friendly aware framework will initially apply to residential settings for older people. Since the programme began in May 2023, 79 care homes have gained veteran friendly framework status.

- *Veteran friendly GP accreditation*

In partnership with the Royal College of General Practitioners, NHS England continues to roll out the Armed Forces 'veteran friendly' GP practice accreditation scheme across England. As at the end of September 2024, 98.1% of primary care networks have at least one veteran-aware GP practice in their area.

During 2024, the e-learning package that forms part of the accreditation programme was updated to reflect current best practices and the services that are in place to support veterans.

- *Op NOVA*

Op NOVA is an England wide non-clinical service for veterans who come into contact with the justice system. During 2023, the initial year of operation, the service was focused on

supporting veterans in the pre- and post-custody phase of their interaction with the justice system. From April 2024, the service has been developing and expanding the service to support those within a prison setting.

To the end of June 2024, Op NOVA has received more than 1,565 referrals for support for veterans in contact with the justice system.

- *Veterans' Mobility Fund*

In September 2023, a £2.52 million fund was set up to improve the quality of life of veterans who have suffered physical impairments from their time in service. The Veterans' Mobility Fund provides veterans across the UK with mobility equipment to improve their quality of life and is being delivered by Help for Heroes and Blesma. The fund opened for applications in March 2024. As at August 2024, 40 grants have been awarded for a range of equipment including electric wheelchairs, light-weight wheelchairs, a tricycle and a wheelchair car hoist.

- *Op COURAGE*

The NHS-led Op COURAGE service, launched in April 2023, offers a fully integrated service with increased support for those needing help with alcohol or substance use and better links to mainstream mental health services to increase the range of support available for veterans. In the first full year of operation, the new integrated service received over 6,800 referrals, an increase of over 8% on the comparable services in the previous year.

In addition to the service provided by Op COURAGE, veterans are able to access NHS talking therapies services. In 2023 to 2024 14,970 veterans entered NHS talking therapies treatment.

- *Veterans' places, pathways and people*

The OVA has supported the investment of a further £10 million between 2024 to 2027, enabling a second iteration of this programme designed to increase support to a significant community of vulnerable veterans throughout the UK and enable it to become self-sustaining. Phase 1 is underway, supporting the delivery of key local projects and with targeted and comprehensive local consultations delivered across the UK. This informs the development of regional strategic plans and costed budgets ahead of phases 2 and 3 launching in 2024. A focus for phases 2 and 3 will be on sustainability and long-term legacy for the veteran community.

Healthcare services for veterans in Scotland

Armed Forces personnel and Veterans Health Implementation Group has continued to make progress against the priorities assigned by the Strategic Oversight Group.

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- *Development of the General Practice Armed Forces and Veterans Recognition Scheme*

The scheme was launched in November 2023, and work continues to promote and encourage take-up of the training on offer. Training content for secondary care has also been developed. It has been recommended that this continues as a priority.

- *Identifying veterans – progression of the Fife Coding Project*

A letter outlining some simple steps that practices can introduce to help identify their veteran population has been issued. This letter has been sent to practice leads, and NHS Armed Forces champions have helped to distribute it within their board area. Further consideration will be given to ensure that the work done to identify veterans within a primary care setting follows through to secondary care referrals and continues within a specialist care environment.

- *Establishment of the Scottish Veterans Treatment Pathway*

£50,000 has recently been invested in the Scottish Veterans Treatment Pathway. This will support veterans in receiving reviews of injuries and conditions arising as a result of their service. It will also ensure that veterans in Scotland have access to similar services as their counterparts do in England and Wales, where pathways already exist. This pathway has been conceived and designed over the course of the last two years and NHS Highland has been nominated as the host and co-ordinator. Work is ongoing with NHS Highland to implement this pathway by the end of 2024.

General Practice Recognition Scheme

Following a successful pilot, the General Practice Armed Forces and Veterans Recognition Scheme was launched in November 2023. The scheme aims to raise awareness among GP teams of some of the health challenges that veterans and Armed Forces families face as a result of military service.

The benefits of identifying members of the Armed Forces community to support the provision of safe, effective, person-centred healthcare continue to be promoted. The training, included as part of the scheme, is intended to give staff working in primary care a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of military service on health. Uptake of the scheme continues to be promoted through speaking to individual practices and boards, as well as through promotion by board champions.

The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan

The new Veterans Mental Health Advisory Group has been established to oversee the development of the veterans mental health and wellbeing pathway and the implementation of the principles of the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan. The Veterans Mental Health Advisory Group held its inaugural meeting in March 2024, chaired by Dr Lynne Taylor, Principal Psychology Advisor in the Scottish Government.

An operational working group is also being established to bring together service delivery leads, practitioners and veterans from organisations and networks across Scotland. This group will consider the operational arrangements and local service provision required to implement the veterans mental health pathway.

The work to develop the new mental health pathway will be progressed through 2024 with the intention that tests of change will be actioned at the earliest opportunity.

Drug and Alcohol Information System (DAISy)

A Mental Health and Substance Use Service protocol for all Service personnel and veterans is currently being developed to ensure better working links between services to deliver person-centred, joined-up care for people who use substances. On 27 June 2023, Public Health Scotland published 'Drug and Alcohol Information System: Overview of Initial Assessments for Specialist Drug and Alcohol Treatment 2021/22 and 2022/23'. This is an official statistics release which reported that in 2021 to 2022, 3% of people starting treatment for substance use reported having ever served in the Armed Forces, with a further 3% not wishing to answer. For those who reported serving, 40% of veterans reported a length of service between one and four years, and 48% reported serving five years or more.

Healthcare services for veterans in Wales

The Chief Executive of NHS Wales wrote to all local health boards in May highlighting the requirements of the Covenant duty of due regard and asking for further consideration of awareness and compliance within local health boards in Wales. This included identification and recording of the Armed Forces community and using data to plan services at a local level. It also provided an opportunity to further promote the [Health Education and Improvement Wales programme](#) to enable GP practices to register to become accredited veteran friendly practices.

Further work to improve healthcare services provided to veterans has included the following.

Mental health support in Wales

Veterans' NHS Wales (VNHSW) is a priority service for military veterans with a Service-related mental health difficulty in Wales. From 1 October 2023 to 31 July 2024, VNHSW received 405 new referrals and 214 veterans opted in to receive an assessment. During this period, 88.31% of veterans waiting for assessment were seen within the target timeframe of 28 days or less. This is higher than the 80% target for primary care services. Of those who started treatment, 96.96% were on the waiting list for 26 weeks or less before their first treatment date.

VNHSW are currently piloting brief interventions for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to reduce waiting times, including Military SPRING (a guided self-help programme for PTSD) in collaboration with Cardiff University.

- *Military spring pilot*

VNHSW have begun taking part in a research pilot to develop and evaluate a digital guided self-help programme for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and complex PTSD (CPTSD) in military veterans. There is evidence that digital guided self-help can

be effective for the treatment of PTSD and a digital guided self-help programme called Spring, which VNHSW currently use, is recommended for the treatment of civilian PTSD in the UK.

Recognising differences between PTSD/CPTSD in veterans and people who have not served in the military, Cardiff University and the National Centre for Mental Health have developed a bespoke version of the Spring programme that retains its effective components but focuses on the typical experiences of veterans with PTSD. This is being piloted with eligible Veterans accessing VNHSW.

- *REWIND service evaluation*

VNHSW are carrying out a service evaluation of the REWIND technique, a brief three-session intervention for PTSD to assess if it can be effectively used in day-to-day practice to treat veterans quickly and avoid longer waits for more intensive treatment. This waiting list initiative builds on a research trial in 2021 (Astill-Wright *et al.*, 2021), which proved REWIND was significantly more effective when compared to a waiting list control group in treating PTSD.

GP accreditation

Following the launch of the Wales veteran friendly GP scheme in May 2023, there has been good progress in promoting the scheme across Wales and encouraging GPs to register. Currently, 42 GPs from across Wales are signed up, which represents 11% of the GPs in Wales. Work is continuing by local health board champions, GPs, Health Education and Improvement Wales, the NHS and Welsh Government to raise awareness and support.

Supporting amputee veterans in Wales

The Welsh Government veterans prosthetics forum has been working to support the needs of amputee veterans in Wales, bringing together the NHS limb centres, Blesma, Welsh Government and the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee. The Specialised Services Committee commissions enhanced prosthetic limbs for veterans, working with the local health boards and artificial limb centres. This forum ensures there is clear communication between Blesma (who represent veterans with limb loss in Wales), the limb centres and the key funders of specialist support. This year, the forum has collaborated to promote the Veterans' Mobility Fund and worked to ensure local support is delivering for amputee veterans.

In June 2024, Wales featured in the Blesma members magazine as an example of best practice in the UK, highlighting the partnerships and positive relationships that have been developed in support of amputee veterans in Wales.

During 2023 to 2024 spending on prosthetic support via the veterans' policy in Wales totalled £397,029 with 21 veteran patients registered across the artificial limb centres in Cardiff, Swansea and Wrexham.

New Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy

The Welsh Government has recently undertaken a formal consultation on a draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and a draft Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy (2024 to 2034). Both include a specific focus on under-served groups, including veterans. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is cross-governmental and covers all ages. Its overarching vision is that people in Wales will live in communities which promote, support and empower them to improve their mental health and wellbeing, and will be free from stigma and discrimination. The implementation of the final published strategy will take a rights-based approach to ensuring that everyone has the best mental health possible. There will be a connected system of support across health, social care, third sector and wider, where people can access the right service, at the right time, in the right place. Care and support will be person-centred, compassionate and recovery-focused, with an emphasis on improving quality, safety and access. Care and support will be delivered by a workforce that feels supported and has the capacity, competence and confidence to meet the diverse needs of the people of Wales. The Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy includes a focus on strengthening understanding of the risk factors associated with suicide and self-harm and targeting efforts to support the most vulnerable.

Substance misuse services

Substance misuse services in Wales have supported 219 veterans over this reporting period.

Veteran Trauma Network

The Veteran Trauma Network (VTN) in Wales has been engaging with partners across Wales to raise awareness of the service, to help support the most seriously injured veterans living in Wales. This has included a survey of local health board staff and partners, to gather and share key information to support referrals between services. Work is continuing to promote awareness of the service among veterans and support providers.

VTN Wales continues to provide an advice service to ensure that veterans with complex physical health problems can receive the most appropriate care, regardless of where they live, with proper attention to their mental and social health needs. VTN Wales has worked closely with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to establish a new approach to the care of veterans who are inpatients through the appointment of two new charitably funded posts. The VTN and Cardiff and Vale are now looking to spread this model and make the appointments viable in the long term, while also ensuring that the VTN can develop to keep pace with developments in veterans' healthcare elsewhere in the UK.

Healthcare services for veterans in Northern Ireland

In October 2023, an 18-month pilot was launched to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for veterans living in Northern Ireland. The pilot is led by The St. John and Red Cross Defence Medical Welfare Service, supported by £500,000 funding from the OVA. The pilot aims to support veterans through linking them with local services to ensure they are receiving the support available. It provides advice on physical health issues such as musculoskeletal problems, pain management and lifestyle, and mental health support including help with

anxiety, depression, PTSD and bereavement. So far, the pilot has supported over 175 veterans and 240 family members of veterans.

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme pays compensation for injury, illness or death which was caused by service on or after 6 April 2005.

Conducted every five years, the Quinquennial Review ensures the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme remains fit for purpose. It provides appropriate recognition and financial support to those members of the Armed Forces who are injured, become ill or die because of service, and identifies opportunity for policy improvement. The accepted recommendations from the most recent Quinquennial Review in 2022 to 2023 will considerably improve the way the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme works, with a focus on enhancing the claimant's journey through improved communication and information.

Chapter 2: Education

Introduction

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

This chapter also addresses the education of Service personnel themselves, providing a bedrock for developing future careers after Service which can be key to making a successful transition out of the Armed Forces.

In compiling this report, it is evident that currently, only England has the ability to assess any educational disadvantage faced by Service children in comparison to their non-Service peers. The equivalent metrics either do not exist or have not been provided for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This will need to be addressed as we strengthen support for our Armed Forces communities through the enshrinement of the Armed Forces Covenant into law.

Educational outcomes for Service children

The Department for Education (DfE) has provided updated statistics on how Service children perform when compared to non-Service, non-free school meals (FSM) children in state schools in England across key measures of academic attainment.⁶ The statistics show that:

- the proportions of Service children gaining grades 9 to 4, and grades 9 to 5, in GCSE English and maths are similar to the proportions of non-Service, non-FSM children gaining these grades (Annex A, Table 3a)
- a small disparity persists in relation to the English Baccalaureate measure – a slightly smaller proportion of Service children were entered for the GCSEs that contribute to this

⁶ Service children are compared with non-Service, non FSM children to ensure that the comparison is fair, in terms of level of family income.

measure, and a slightly lower percentage achieved a grade 4 or higher in all pillars (Annex A, Table 3b)⁷

- the average attainment 8 scores for Service children and non-Service, non-FSM children are also very similar (Annex A, Table 3c)⁸
- as in the previous year, the GCSE attainment of Service children in England is about the same as non-Service, non-FSM children in England

The statistics also show that the proportion of Service children in state-funded schools in England attending a school rated as outstanding or good by Ofsted (87.5%) is about the same as non-Service, non-FSM children (88.9%) (Annex A, Table 5). In recent years, there has been a substantial change in the proportion of Service children in England in years 7 to 11 that move school at times outside of the normal admissions round, reducing from 30.5% in 2018 to 2019 to 4.5% in 2022 to 2023. This remains slightly ahead of the proportion of non-Service children (3.0% in 2022 to 2023) (Annex A, Table 4b). Similarly, the proportion of Service children at the end of primary school who moved schools two or more times during years 1 to 6 has fallen from 25.2% in 2018 to 2019 to 2.9% in 2022 to 2023 (with the proportion of non-Service children reducing from 6.4% to 0.5% over the same period).

Service Pupil Premium in England

DfE continues to allocate additional funding in the form of the Service Pupil Premium to state-funded schools in England with Service children among their pupils. Service Pupil Premium funding helps schools to provide pastoral and academic support to current and former Service children. Schools are allocated Service Pupil Premium funding for each pupil aged 5 to 16 who is currently recorded as a Service child in the autumn school census or who has held this status in the last six years, or who receives a child pension from the MOD. The Service Pupil Premium is now worth £340 per eligible pupil annually. More than £26 million have been paid to schools in the financial year 2023 to 2024, benefitting more than 78,000 pupils. To help strengthen school accountability for their use of Service Pupil Premium funding, DfE requires schools to complete and publish a template setting out their overall Service Pupil Premium strategy. The template includes an optional field on how the Service Pupil Premium was spent in the previous academic year, and what impact this had on eligible pupils.

Destinations of Service children after key stages 4 and 5

DfE has provided updated statistics on the destinations of Service children and non-Service, non-FSM children in state-funded schools in England after key stages 4 and 5. The statistics show that:

⁷ The English Baccalaureate is a set of subjects at GCSE that keep young people's options open for further study and future careers. It comprises English language and literature, maths, the sciences, geography or history and a language.

⁸ 'Attainment 8' measures pupils' performance in eight GCSE level qualifications

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- the proportion of Service children in England going on to any sustained education or employment after key stage 4 is the same as the proportion of non-Service, non-FSM children in England (95%) (Annex A, Table 6a)
 - the proportion of Service children in England going on to any sustained education or employment after key stage 5 (91%) is similar to the proportion of non-Service, non-FSM children in England (89%) (Annex A, Table 6b)

We therefore currently assess that Service children in England are at least as likely to continue in sustained education or employment after key stages 4 and 5 as non-Service, non-FSM children in England.

Higher and further education

Under-representation of young people from Armed Forces families in higher education

The MOD has been engaging with the Office for Students and the Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance to provide additional evidence for the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register. Following this, on 18 January 2024, the Office for Students announced the addition of Service children as a 'student characteristic' which may put an individual student at risk of not experiencing equality of opportunity when accessing higher education.

As a result of this, the Chief of Defence People wrote to all the vice-chancellors of universities in England asking them to give due regard to this change as their establishments develop their access and participation plans. This development complements the relatively recent addition to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) application process, where Service children (and veterans) are now able to self-declare their status on UCAS applications. This allows universities and colleges to offer bespoke advice and support to Service children and veterans applying to enter higher education.

Higher and further education in Scotland

Following work over a number of years with the Scottish Government and its agencies, the MOD's Armed Forces families and safeguarding team have agreed revisions to funding eligibility wording with the Student Awards Agency Scotland. These changes will result in a greater proportion of students from Armed Forces families (based in Scotland) receiving higher education funding from Scotland for their studies.

Previous Student Awards Agency Scotland practice meant that the outcomes of higher education funding applications from Armed Forces students were primarily determined by where the Serving parent lived before joining the Armed Forces. This resulted in instances where young people were redirected to other funding agencies such as Student Finance England, despite completing the entirety of their education in Scotland.

The new wording focuses instead on Armed Forces students meeting normal residency conditions, as any other application would be treated. Importantly, it also takes into account

‘significant connections to Scotland’ – for example, students completing their secondary education in Scotland. Clearly, there will be instances where it is not possible for residency to be determined for highly mobile students. In such scenarios, the revisions retain a fallback position that guarantees higher education funding is accessible from the UK funding agency where the student’s serving parent originally joined the Armed Forces.

The above change also follows a recent agreement that 16-to-18-year-olds from Service families are guaranteed further education funding, based only on their residence in Scotland.

ADVANCE Network

The ADVANCE Network continues to deliver briefing sessions promoting higher education and further education as a viable option to the Armed Forces community. ADVANCE has also delivered sessions through the Association of Directors of Education Scotland to secondary and primary schools. The Director for the Centre of Military Research, Education and Public Engagement (based at Edinburgh Napier University) is the Co-Chair of the SCiP Alliance Scottish Hub and works in partnership with Forces Children Scotland on this work. ADVANCE sits on the working group to ensure support for Service children is represented in higher education institutions.

The Scottish Government has renewed its short-term funding for 2024 to 2025 to continue the Association of Directors of Education Scotland’s National Education and Transitions Officer role. This role works with Scottish local authorities, their schools, third sector partners and the Armed Forces to enhance policy and practice by taking into account the unique features affecting the education of Service children such as mobility and deployment.

Wellbeing of Service children

Work to improve Service child wellbeing has included the following.

- *Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru*

A project of the Welsh Local Government Association funded by the Welsh Government (£270,000 in 2024 to 2025) continues to enhance awareness and understanding among teachers of the unique needs experienced by Service children. The SSCE project team maintains close collaboration with Welsh Government officials, local authorities, schools, children and young people, education professionals, Armed Forces charities supporting children, and the MOD.

SSCE helps guide local authorities and schools in meeting any potential disadvantage using a range of mechanisms, from information and advice to a new grant funding stream for small scale projects, introduced for the academic year 2023 to 2024. Successful applications have been awarded up to £1,000 or £5,000 to support an individual child or group of Service children. This scheme continues in academic year 2024 to 2025.

The SSCE website acts as a resource hub for schools, local authorities and others with an interest in identifying and supporting Service children. In early 2024, SSCE launched online training modules to help a wide range of education practitioners and others understand how they can support Service children in the Welsh education system and through the curriculum for Wales. The successful Armed Forces Friendly Schools Cymru award continues and at the start of 2024, 30 schools had achieved accreditation – 9 achieving bronze, 7 reaching silver and 4 awarded gold status.

- *The Scottish Armed Forces Education Support Group (SAFESG)*

SAFESG recently revisited its terms of reference to ensure that its purpose, objectives and membership were reflected accurately, providing new members with an opportunity to contribute. The group continues to meet quarterly and has had two additional ad-hoc meetings this year.

The Scottish Government committed within the Additional Support for Learning Review Action Plan to seek to expand and consolidate opportunities for participation and engagement with children and young people. We continue to work with SAFESG to ensure Armed Forces families are reflected in the plan, and to regularly review progress and support available.

Apprenticeships

This year, Defence was delighted to announced that the Royal Navy, Army and the Royal Air Force were among the top five apprenticeship employers in the UK (ranking 1, 2 and 4 respectively). These rankings are produced annually by DfE from a wide range of industries and business sectors, who are ranked according to: commitment to creating new apprenticeships, diversity of apprentices and number of apprentices who successfully achieve their apprenticeships.

The Armed Forces is committed to offering high-quality learning and development opportunities to people from all backgrounds to enhance their skills and careers, enabling Defence to build and maximise talent.

The Armed Forces Apprenticeship Programme offers apprenticeships to over 95% of all non-commissioned Service personnel, from level 2 to degree-level (level 6). There are over 60 different apprenticeship standards delivered across the three Services, with most being completed within the first two years of service. Many apprenticeships underpin professional trade training, providing apprentices with an accredited industry-recognised qualification. The Armed Forces enrolls over 7,000 personnel on an apprenticeship annually, with over 23,000 Service personnel working towards an apprenticeship at any one time. Put simply, apprenticeships provide the bedrock for developing future careers.

Maintenance of Education, Health and Care Plans overseas

When Service children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) accompanied their parents on overseas assignments, many English local authorities legally ended their EHCP. This meant Service parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities were required to restart the process of securing an EHCP on return to England (a process that could last 20 weeks). In worst case scenarios, this meant some children were out of school for many months.

Engagement by the MOD education policy team with DfE has resulted in guidance being released to local authorities. This clarifies that local authorities have discretion on whether or not to end an EHCP when a Service child temporarily leaves the local authority area. As an aligned outcome, a recent Upper Tier Tribunal judgement found in favour of a Naval family's case, which prevents their local authority from ending their child's EHCP while on overseas assignment. In this case, both the First Tier Tribunal and the Upper Tier Tribunal judges confirmed that the relevant legislation allows for temporary absence of a child as a result of "parent's overseas deployment as a part of the Armed Forces of the Crown". Further, the judgement recognised circumstances where "an EHCP might be maintained, but temporarily not implemented". In essence, the EHCP is paused or frozen while a Service child is overseas. The judgement referred to existing provisions that allowed parents to arrange suitable alternative provision for their child, which would mean the local authority was not obliged to "secure the specified special educational provision" in the EHCP. Going forward, it seems a mechanism may be necessary which enables local authorities to satisfy themselves that alternative provision overseas is suitable.

The Service Children's Progression Alliance

The MOD continues to fund the SCiP Alliance's vital role improving the scale and quality of research and support for the children of serving and ex-Armed Forces personnel. Through targeted, rigorous research and cross-sector collaboration, the SCiP Alliance helps schools, colleges, universities, local authorities, charities and government departments to identify and mitigate disadvantage.

As an example, research funded by the University of Winchester highlighted the potential impact of mobility and separation on access to higher education in England. This allowed the Office for Students to identify Service children as an at-risk group and universities to include them in plans for targeted support. Also, the use of the SCiP Alliance's Thriving Lives Toolkit continues to grow in schools across the UK, with schools that cater for over 20,000 Service children now engaged. This expanding engagement is helping to provide evidence-based support for the schools, in that they can better understand and support the often unique circumstances of Service children. In addition, funding from the Naval Children's Charity has led to the development of 50 new case studies of effective practice, which are aligned to the toolkit's seven principles of effective support.

These case studies help demonstrate how schools may mitigate challenges such as school transition, student well-being and Service child voice. In terms of extending this support,

Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust funding is supporting novel research into the impact of Armed Forces life on children from birth to age 5 and in higher education. The findings will underpin the creation of support toolkits for early years providers and universities and, with the existing toolkit, establish a single evidence-based support suite for Service children from birth to 25.

Chapter 3: Housing and accommodation

Introduction

Access to decent accommodation underpins the wellbeing of the Armed Forces community and is key to the operational effectiveness of serving personnel. This chapter sets out the work undertaken during the reporting period to improve the accommodation offer to Service personnel and their families.

This chapter also looks at the experience of the Armed Forces community in the private accommodation sector, whether in the private or social rented sectors or through home ownership.

The Armed Forces and Service families

Standard of Service family accommodation (SFA)

The MOD is committed to providing quality and modern homes for Service personnel and their families, and is responsible for maintaining around 47,000 SFA properties across the UK. The MOD currently uses the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) social housing benchmark, the Decent Homes (DH) standard, for UK SFA.⁹ Around 96% met this standard in August 2024.

To further raise standards across the SFA estate, the MOD introduced Decent Homes Plus (DH+) as its own baseline standard for SFA. This standard is defined by the MOD and exceeds DH standard, considering factors such as modernity, thermal comfort, and condition. The proportion of SFA meeting the DH+ standard in August 2024 is 85%.

It is our assessment that UK SFA is more likely to meet the DH standard than rented homes across the general population in England. However, there is more to be done to ensure service accommodation that meets the expectations of service personnel.

Investment to further improve the standard of SFA

In financial year 2023 to 2024, £578 million was spent on maintaining and improving SFA. This includes an uplift of £220 million following the Defence Command Paper Refresh with an additional £180 million planned for financial year 2024 to 2025. The additional funding has

⁹ Formerly the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

been spent on remediating damp and mould, refurbishing long-term empty homes, replacing doors and windows, providing homes with external wall insulation, replacing kitchens and bathrooms, and upgrading heaters and boilers.

In addition, the MOD continues to purchase new SFA as part of its capital purchase scheme where the demand for housing exceeds supply and is required to replace existing poor-quality stock.

Maintenance of Service accommodation

According to the [MOD's 2024 Armed Forces continuous attitude survey](#), the Armed Forces' satisfaction with the quality of maintenance and repair work to their current SFA fell markedly to 19% in 2023, before rising to 27% in 2024. Satisfaction reported for the response of maintenance and repair work stands at 28% in 2024 following a similar fall in 2023.

Since the new contracts came into service, there has been a range of performance issues, which have resulted in a lower-than-expected level of service delivery. This has had an adverse impact on the lived experience of some Service personnel and their families, attracting media and parliamentary interest with consequent negative effects on the reputation of both the MOD and its contractors.

The MOD's 2024 Armed Forces continuous attitude survey measures satisfaction with several aspects of SFA, as well as other factors influencing the intentions of Service personnel whether to leave or stay in the military. According to the latest survey, satisfaction with the overall standard of SFA was 47%, unchanged since 2022, but lower than all levels prior to. Following large decreases in 2023, satisfaction with the response to requests for and the quality of maintenance and repair work for SFA have improved with both at 26%. This remains however, lower than all levels reported prior to 2022 – so is a longer term decrease.

Broadband

99% of SFA now has access to a high-quality internet, with speeds of 24Mbps, meaning a vast improvement in previous areas of digital isolation for Service families. Work is ongoing to improve internet connections to Service accommodation with 50% of SFA now having access to Gbps speeds. It is anticipated that over the next two years this could reach 87%. In comparison, the [English Housing Survey 2022 to 2023](#) found that, in 2021 to 2022, 93% of households had internet access at home. Within this, 95% of private renters had internet access, higher than social renters who at 85% were the least likely tenure to have access to internet in their place of residence. Ofcom, as of 2023, now reports that 99.7% of households in the UK have an internet speed of at least 10Mbps while noting that there are gaps in rural locations.

Standard of single living accommodation

Assessments against the Defence Minimum Standard have been completed for 100% of the UK single living accommodation (SLA) estate. The most recent data suggests that around 91% of the Defence estate has reached this minimum standard. While there is no direct comparison in civilian sectors that Armed Forces SLA can be directly compared against, industry standards

for university accommodation and boarding schools have been used to identify essential requirements.

Where accommodation has failed to reach this standard, Service personnel should, in the first instance, be relocated. Where this is not possible, charges will be stopped until the standard meets the minimum requirements.

The MOD's [Single Living Accommodation Lived Experience Survey](#), published September 2024 shows that satisfaction with the response to requests for maintenance/repair has increased by two percentage points up to 23%. Satisfaction with the quality of maintenance/repair work has increased by five percentage points amongst Royal Navy personnel (26%). However, amongst Army personnel, it has fallen from 31% to 25%. Satisfaction with communal space provision and parking facilities has fallen slightly (from 30% to 27% and 58% to 56% respectively). There has been a slight increase in satisfaction with the overall quality of SLA amongst Royal Navy and Royal Air Force personnel (RN/RM 46%; RAF 35%) in 2024 however amongst Army personnel, this has fallen by four percentage points to 39%.

Overseas accommodation

Overseas accommodation follows the same process as the UK with SLA and SFA provided to personnel who are eligible or entitled. Pilots launched in March 2024 in the Falkland Islands and Cyprus, extending SFA to those in long-term relationships. This has allowed personnel who are not married to form a family household in an overseas location for the first time, potentially creating recruitment and retention benefits.

The Pilot has been a success with 44 families in situ as of Nov 2024, including 13 dual serving families. The pilot has allowed these families to live together where previously they would have to live apart, often with the partner and children remaining in the UK. This has had a positive benefit on the morale, career and lived experience of these families. Data is being captured throughout the pilot, and further analysis will be conducted once the pilot has concluded.

Home ownership

The MOD's 2024 Armed Forces continuous attitude survey found that considerably more officers are likely to own their own home. Ownership statistics show that 73% of officers and 40% of other ranks own their own home. For other ranks, this is down from the peak level of ownership at 46% in 2020. Army personnel are less likely than the other Services to own their own home, currently at 39% compared to 54% to 59% for the other Services.

It also indicates Service families are slightly less likely to own their own home than households in the whole population in England. It should also be noted that there are differences in the home ownership rates for Royal Navy, Army, and Royal Air Force personnel, and between officers and other ranks. Work to assist members of the Armed Forces community own their own home has included the following:

- *Forces Help to Buy Scheme*

The MOD publishes [Forces Help to Buy Scheme quarterly statistics](#). They reveal that, as of 15 August 2024, loans have been made to around 31,055 Service personnel, totalling over £482 million, an average of approximately £15,526 per claim.

Awareness of the Forces Help to Buy Scheme stands at the majority (84%) of personnel knowing at least a little about it or more and 35% stating they know a lot about it. 16% of personnel stated that they know nothing about it or had not heard about it. Consideration of using the scheme stands at roughly a third (36%); with non-homeowners making up 61% of those considering FHTB.

Experience of the private rental sector

There is mixed evidence from the English Housing Survey as to whether members of the Armed Forces community who live in privately rented accommodation in England have higher or lower satisfaction with the accommodation, tenure, area, and repairs/maintenance, than the general population. For example, in 2022 to 2023 the proportion satisfied across all categories were similar between the Armed Forces community and the general population however, in 2021 to 2022 the proportion satisfied with tenure and area differed between the two populations (Annex A, Table 10). It is therefore currently assessed that there is no evidence that satisfaction levels of the Armed Forces community who live in private rental accommodation in England are any different to the general population.

Experience of social housing

All full-time Service personnel are offered accommodation by the Armed Forces, so do not normally require social housing. However, if families of Service personnel do not accompany them on their posting, they might remain living in social housing away from the Service person. Reservists might also live with their family in social housing, as might veterans or bereaved families.

Support moving on from subsidised Service accommodation

Online briefings to inform and support serving personnel with their civilian housing options throughout their career are regularly offered online. These are delivered by the Defence Transition Services as part of the MOD's Defence Business Services. In addition, all three single Services are delivering a programme to support Service personnel and their families to transition smoothly, tailored to the individual requirements of each Service. All three focus on supporting through-career life skills, which include understanding the civilian experience of housing, finance, education and mental wellbeing. This brings efficiency to the co-ordination and delivery of the through-career transition information and support services, meeting the needs of the Service community now and in the future.

Veterans

The Veterans' Survey 2022 (published December 2023) asked veterans to describe where they were living. The majority (78.9%) said they lived in an owner-occupied or shared

ownership house or flat. A further 8.9% lived in privately rented accommodation and 6.0% lived in a socially rented house or flat. This is similar to the findings in the Census 2021 analysis of living arrangements of UK Armed Forces veterans in England and Wales, which were reported on in the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2023.

The following initiatives have been setup to ensure housing support is available for Service veterans.

Veterans Capital Housing Fund

This fund consists of three separate grant programmes with multiple open application rounds:

- **Development Grants Programme:** provides funding for early-stage development costs of housing projects for veterans – in 2023 2024, six projects received £147,356 for professional support costs, such as those for architects and surveyors
- **Refurbishment Grants Programme:** focused on upgrading existing veteran housing facilities, with seven projects receiving a total of £408,464 in 2023 to 2024
- **Major Capital Grants Programme:** offers grants for significant refurbishment, extensions and new builds of rental accommodation for veterans

Social and affordable housing

The current government has committed to the biggest increase of social and affordable housing in a generation. The three-year £20 million Veterans Capital Housing Fund is in the process of awarding grants to assist in the development of new build projects or support refurbishment, including extensions, of rental accommodation that will offer high-quality housing to veterans in need. As of 30 September 2024, the project has awarded 21 grants totalling £3,817,486 in funding. To date, the funding has increased the energy efficiency and quality of homes through refurbishments such as the replacement of boilers, windows and roofs and also funding adaptations to make homes more accessible for veterans with disabilities.

Further programmes to improve access to housing for veterans include:

- **Affordable Housing Supply Programme Scotland:** funding continues to be made available to deliver homes specifically for veterans where local authorities identify this as a strategic priority. The government, building on their 'homes for heroes' commitment have now exempt veterans from rules which require a connection to a local area to access social housing in England.
- **Open Market Shared Equity Scheme Scotland:** this continues to classify veterans as a priority access applicant group who do not need to be first-time buyers to qualify for support – the scheme reopened for applications in June 2024 with a budget of £27 million

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- **Housing Options Scotland:** The Scottish Government continue to provide grant funding to Housing Options Scotland, which includes the Military Matters Project – since it began in 2012, Military Matters has helped almost 1,600 households and in 2023 2024 the project received 263 new referrals, with client stories available on their website

Homelessness

Homelessness in England

This Government will take the action needed to tackle homelessness, working across government and with local leaders to develop a long-term strategy to put us back on track to ending homelessness.

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

Homelessness statistics for England during the period January to March 2024 show that 10 (0.1%) of the 7,420 households referred were referred by the Secretary of State for Defence. During the same time-period, 650 (0.8%) of the 86,520 households owed a homelessness duty had a support need due to service in the Armed Forces.¹⁰

HM Treasury provided the OVA with £8.55 million for the Reducing Veteran Homelessness Programme awarded to projects that contribute to the government's ambition to reduce veteran homelessness and end rough sleeping. This has involved the provision of specialist help to more than 1,300 veterans across over 900 supported housing units, including wraparound support for employment, education and healthcare services and the new dedicated referral scheme, Op FORTITUDE. Op FORTITUDE is a UK-wide referral pathway to support homeless veterans or veterans at risk of homelessness into housing. As of 29 September 2024, it has taken 2,594 referrals and supported a total of 773 veterans into housing. Building on the PM's pledge that "homes will be there for heroes", the government has announced £3.5 million of additional funding to support veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness in Scotland

The Scottish Government continues to review local housing strategies submitted by local authorities to ensure that consideration has been given to the needs of Armed Forces communities and that engagement has taken place with relevant veterans' organisations.

Furthermore, on 26 March 2024, the Housing (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament. This important piece of legislation includes the provisions which constitute the homelessness prevention duties.

¹⁰ [Live tables on homelessness](#), Table A3 – Number of households owed a homelessness duty by support needs of household.

Homelessness in Wales

The Welsh Government will bring forward new legislation on homelessness which will set out key reforms to the homelessness system in Wales and widen responsibility for the identification and prevention of homelessness. The legislation is based on the recommendations of an expert review panel and wide-ranging stakeholder engagement, including with Armed Forces support organisations in Wales, the All Wales Armed Forces Charity Group and the Armed Forces Families Federations.

As a further update to Op FORTITUDE, Alabaré – a national homeless charity – has conducted a scoping exercise to better understand the challenges and needs of veterans in Wales.

Further highlights include:

- funding to provide housing and associated support for veterans in Wales, supporting over 160 beneficiaries
- strengthened connections with key organisations including Woody’s Lodge, Riverside Retreat Veterans Camp, and Defence Medical Welfare Services
- continued work with the Armed Forces liaison officers and Armed Forces champions across Wales

Chapter 4: Inquests and judicial engagement

Introduction

This chapter provides an update on the activity of the Defence Inquests Unit during the reporting period, and related matters. It also updates on the support provided by the government for the bereaved community, whether those families have lost loved ones during their service or after it.

The Defence Inquests Unit

The Defence Inquests Unit (DIU) is the MOD's single point of contact for coroners in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit when investigating the causes of the deaths of Service personnel, veterans and MOD civilians. The DIU is responsible for managing MOD's participation in an inquest, which includes:

- ensuring that any relevant material has been provided to coroners or the Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit
- providing support and consultation to Service personnel, veterans and MOD civilians who are called to appear as witnesses at inquest
- ensuring that the MOD meets its obligations to provide the appropriate level of support to coroners, the Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit, bereaved families, and MOD Service and civilian personnel involved in investigations
- giving practical guidance and advice alongside an established support network of experts who deliver legal, medical and pastoral support – this network includes lawyers, medical and mental health experts, Service chaplaincy, welfare support practitioners and Service charities

The DIU has recorded 41 inquests (15 of which concern the death of a veteran) being concluded between 1 October 2023 and 30 September 2024.

Inquests are yet to be held into 55 military, veteran and MOD or contractor civilian deaths that occurred between 1 October 2023 and 30 September 2024.

During the reporting period, the Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit confirmed to the DIU that they had concluded investigations into four Service personnel deaths. In all four deaths, the investigations were sufficient to understand the causes of death, therefore precluding a need to take them forward to a fatal accident inquiry (Scotland's equivalent of an inquest).

One fatal accident investigation is yet to conclude.

Safety-related fatalities among the Armed Forces

The MOD publishes an independent Safety [Annual Assurance Report](#) to assess that Defence policy for Health, Safety and Environmental Protection is being adequately promoted and implemented.

Further health and safety statistics, covering both military and civilian personnel, can be found in the MOD's [annual health and safety statistics report](#).

Chapter 5: Business, employment and the community

Introduction

The Armed Forces Covenant is one of Defence's key tools for supporting engagement between the Armed Forces community and wider civilian society, and for encouraging organisations to support the Armed Forces community. The Covenant itself refers to the mutual understanding between the Armed Forces community and society as a whole. It is through the Covenant lens that wider UK society is encouraged to demonstrate its support and gratitude to the Armed Forces community for the sacrifices they make on behalf of us all.

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

Covenant action

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (the Trust) supports the nation's Covenant promise to support Armed Forces personnel, their families and veterans. The Trust manages the £10 million annual Armed Forces Covenant Fund on behalf of the MOD and collaborates with the UK government to deliver strategic and targeted programmes that benefit Armed Forces communities.

Within the 2023 to 2024 financial year, the Trust awarded **£31,717,321** through **311 grants** across all programmes.

The Covenant Fund

The Covenant Fund awarded grants under three key programmes.

- **Force For Change (2023 to 2024):** the Trust awarded **over £1 million to 76 grants** to support impactful local initiatives benefiting the Armed Forces community, including Serving personnel, reservists, veterans and their families.

- **Reaching and supporting Armed Forces communities (2023 to 2024):** the Trust awarded **63 grants totalling £5.7 million** to address hidden or complex needs identified as gaps in support and provision. Beneficiaries included serving personnel, reservists, Armed Forces bereaved families, veterans and their families.
- **Transformational grants (2023 to 2024):** the Trust awarded nearly **£3 million to nine innovative projects** aimed at systemic change and long-term transformation. Beneficiaries included serving personnel and their families, as well as veterans and their families.

In April 2024, the Trust introduced the Armed Forces Covenant Fund's Funding Framework Consultation and Development 2024 to 2027. This three-year funding framework was developed based on insights from previous Covenant programmes, consultation findings and extensive research. It aims to uphold the nation's Covenant commitment to the Armed Forces, veterans and their families.

Focused on the Covenant's principles of ensuring no disadvantage due to service and providing additional support for those who have sacrificed the most, the initial outcome-based programmes under the new framework were launched in July and August 2024.

Key programmes in 2024 to 2025

- **Serving Families on the Move:** aims to enhance the quality of life for Service families affected by relocation. Beneficiaries include current serving Armed Forces personnel, Reservists, including the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, and their families.
- **Apart Not Alone: Support for Serving Families:** aims to reduce the impact of long or frequent involuntary separation on families, partners and serving personnel, including reservists. Beneficiaries include the families of current serving Armed Forces personnel, including the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.
- **Embedding Prevention of Veterans' Suicide:** seeks to create systemic change and long-term sustainable impact, building on key findings from the Trust's earlier 'One is Too Many' programme. Beneficiaries include veterans, their families and caregivers.
- **Hidden Voices:** aims to provide accessible mental health and wellbeing support for individuals with seldom-heard needs within Armed Forces communities. Beneficiaries include serving Armed Forces personnel, reservists (including the Royal Fleet Auxiliary), veterans and their families.
- **Free from Fear:** focuses on addressing domestic abuse through preventative measures and providing support pathways for survivors. Beneficiaries include the serving Armed Forces community.
- **Service Women: Seen and Heard:** targets the unique challenges faced by serving women, enhancing access to support for their mental and physical health and wellbeing. Beneficiaries include women currently serving in the regular Armed Forces or Reserve Forces.

Covenant Fund: 2024-27



Armed Forces Covenant signatories

Defence Relationship Management (DRM) continues to harness employers’ support for Defence across the UK, emphasising to organisations of all sizes across all sectors the strategic importance and tangible benefits of signing the Armed Forces Covenant. These mutually beneficial partnerships demonstrate the high levels of commitment from employers to supporting the Armed Forces community. A significant milestone was reached in July 2024, with the 12,000th signing of the Covenant.

The relationship also affords them the unique opportunity to earn nationally recognised awards through the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS). This hugely successful scheme, launched in 2014, provides bronze, silver and gold awards for employers that advocate, pledge and demonstrate support for Defence People priorities, particularly for reservists, Cadet Force adult volunteers and the Armed Forces community. Support is built on first aligning their values and practices with the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant. Gold ERS awards are given to employers that are considered as exemplars within their sector, advocating on Covenant issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers which results in:

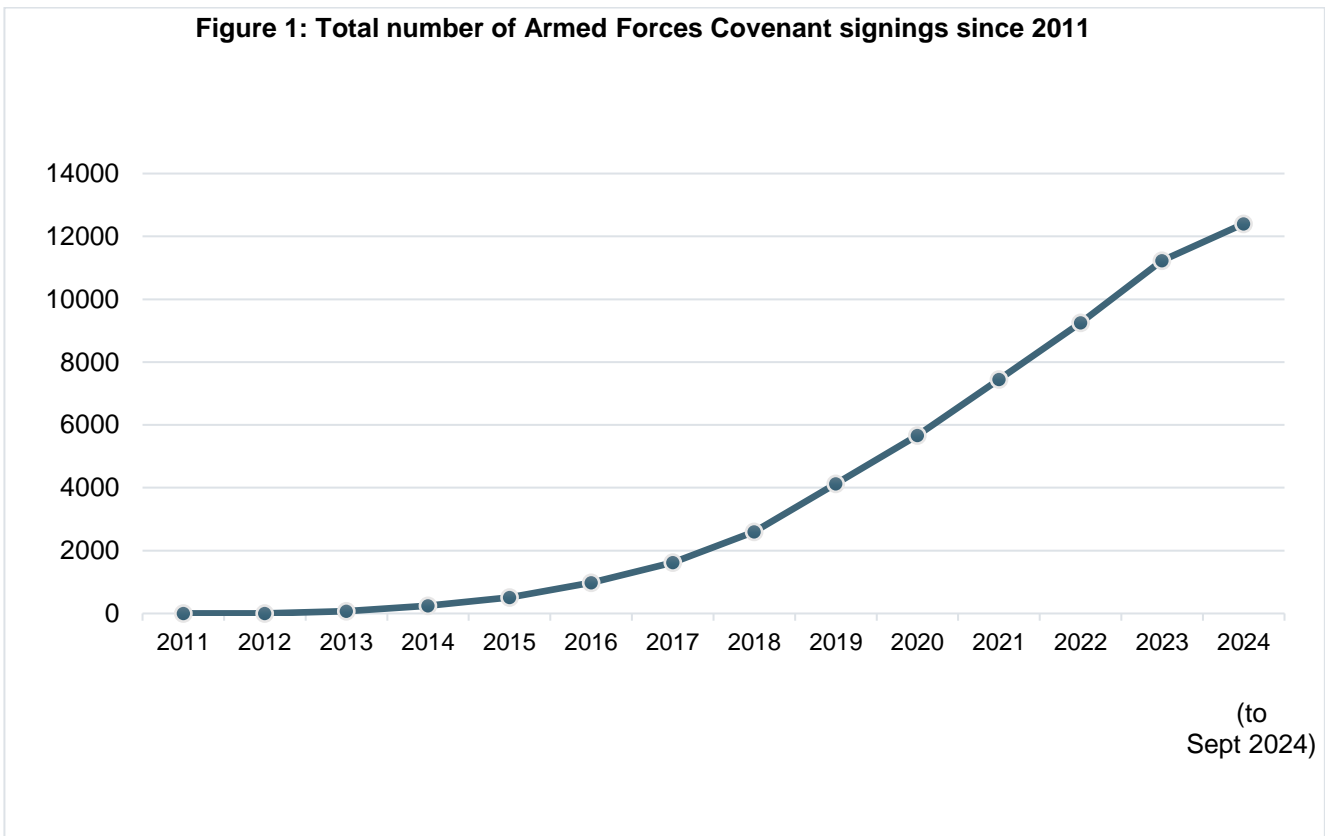
- greater support to members of the Armed Forces community in their workforces
- increased numbers of organisations wishing to sign the Armed Forces Covenant

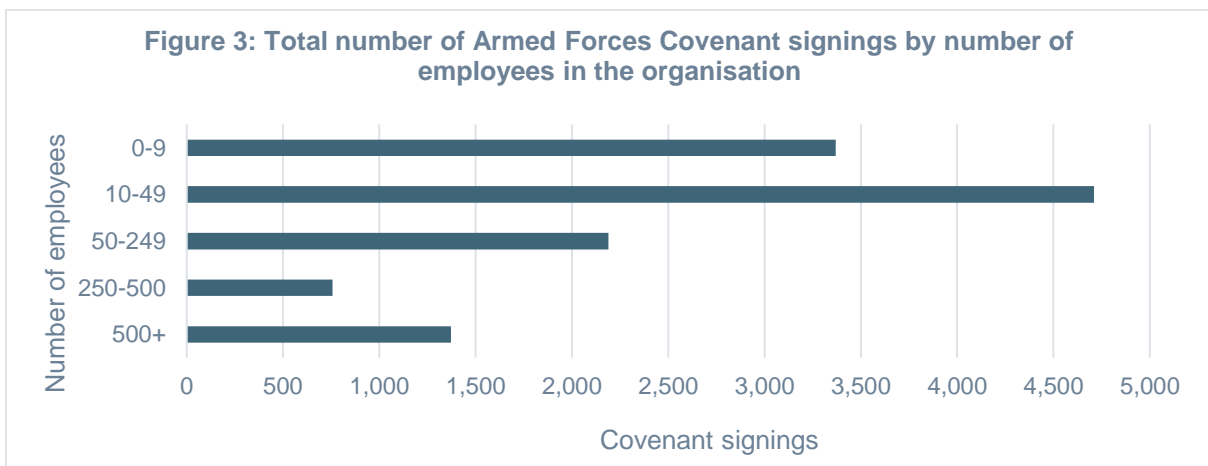
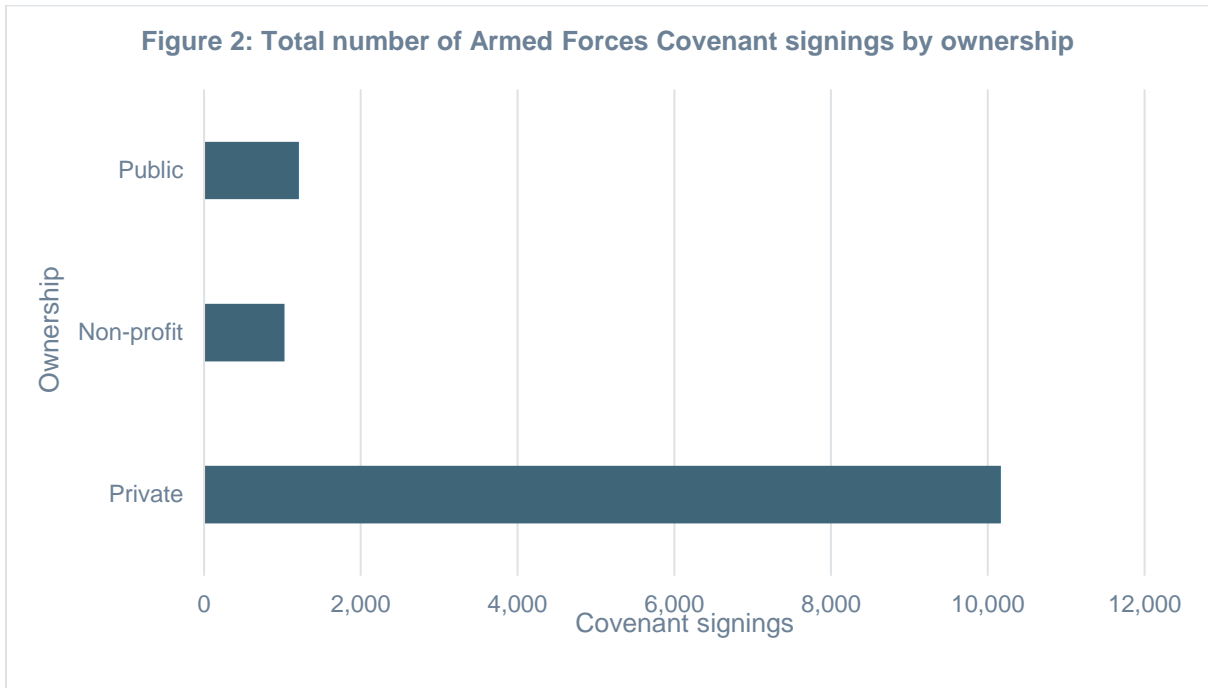
- increased numbers of organisations moving between the levels of the ERS, from bronze to silver or gold

The sustained growth in the numbers of Armed Forces Covenant signatories and ERS award holders is a testament to the value that society places on our Armed Forces. DRM is working continuously to drive greater awareness and support for these essential initiatives.

The number of Armed Forces Covenant signatories has seen substantial growth, with 12,401 signatories as of 30 September 2024. Signatories still stem from the length and breadth of the UK in public, private and third sectors, encompassing all sizes of employers, across key UK industries.

The current numbers of ERS award holders as of October 2024 are: 1,015 gold, 1,467 silver and 5,204 bronze.





Employer Awareness and Attitudes Monitor results

The Employer Awareness and Attitudes Monitor is an independent research series that has been conducted annually since 2014. It functions as a source of evidence to inform policy on reserves and other Defence People policy areas. The monitor is based on interviews with 1,000 employers, split evenly between reservist and non-reservist employers. Participants are selected to provide a meaningful spread across organisational sectors, sizes and UK regions.

Overall, the results are very positive, demonstrating continuing progress and development in the relationship that the MOD has with employers. Results for 2024 are largely consistent with, and in some areas show improvement over, 2023. The following are the top findings in 2024.

Employer Awareness & Attitudes Monitor Results 2024

Awareness, knowledge of and perceived benefits of belonging to the AFC and ERS are slightly lower than in 2023 but still remain high.



Awareness by employers of all Defence organisations remains consistent with 2023.



Attitudes towards Reservists remain positive, with an increase in those believing they are both a necessary element of UK Forces, and an asset to the UK civilian workforce.



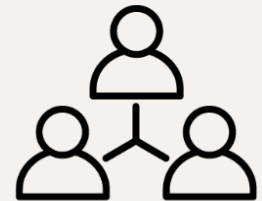
Employers continue to offer a good range of employment opportunities to members of the wider Defence family and these have increased across the board in the past year.



Veterans continue to enjoy high levels of support - 88% of businesses see them as an asset to the workforce and 93% state that they benefit from their skills and experience.



Support towards Reservists being called up for active duty remains stable and positive.



The proportion of employers agreeing that Reservists learn transferable skills remains stable.



Employer awareness of their rights and financial support options during periods of mobilisation for their employees has increased this year.



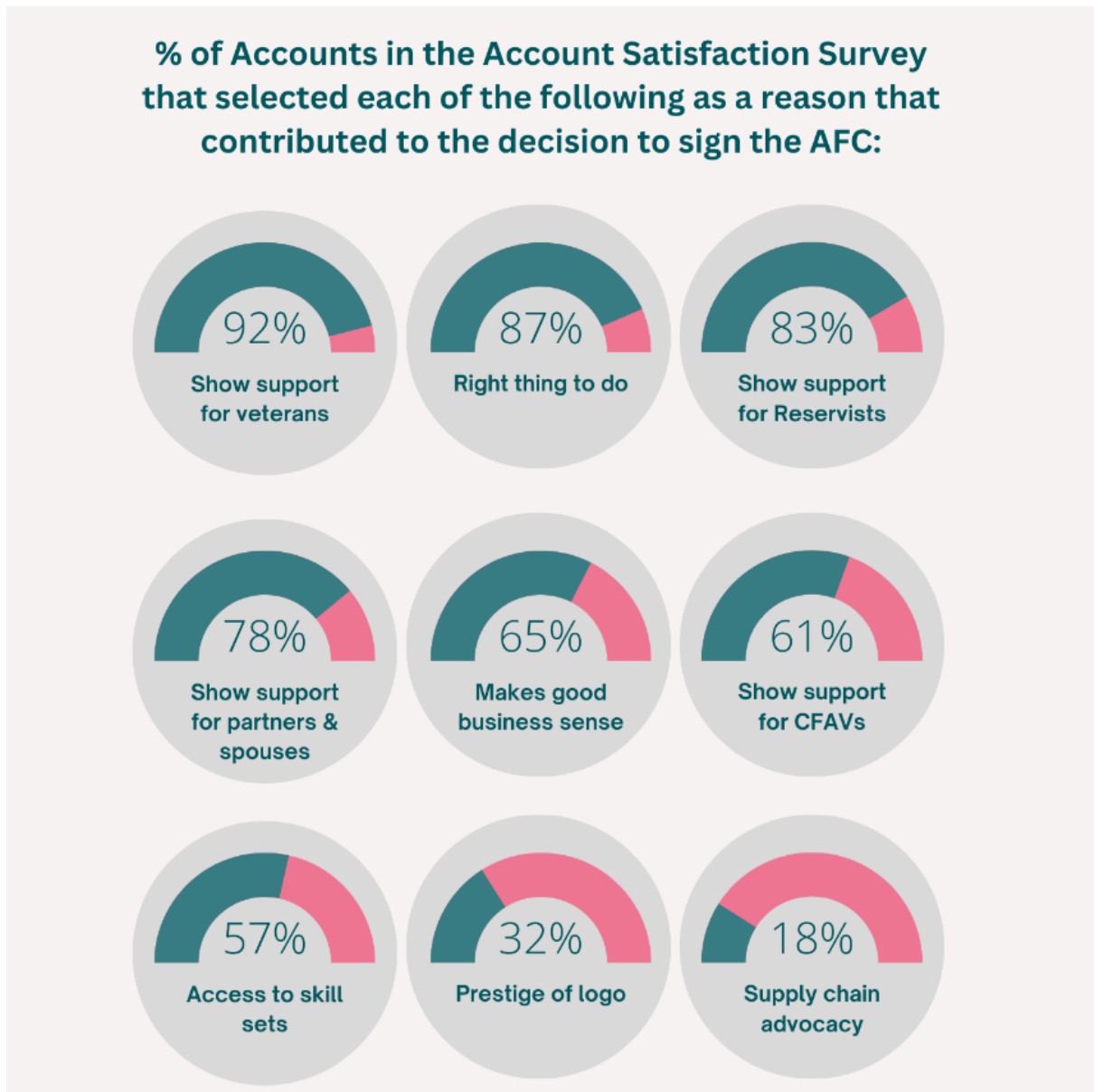
Eight in ten Reservist employers are aware of the AFC, and 85% of Employers that have signed the AFC think that they should tell other employers about the benefits.



DRM's surveys and monitoring efforts show that the primary motivations for signing the Covenant continue to revolve around the principle of support. Specifically, the highest-ranked reasons include:

- showing support for veterans (92%)
- reservist support (83%)
- showing support for partners and spouses (78%)

Furthermore, 65% of signatories believe that aligning their business with the Covenant is a smart commercial decision. The infographic below outlines this data.



However, some obstacles still need to be overcome. Many organisations choose not to sign the Covenant due to a lack of awareness or knowledge (28%, though this is significantly down

from 42% in 2023). a perceived absence of business benefit (32%), and insufficient time or resources (13.5%).

Employment

Veterans in employment

In June 2024 the Office for National Statistics published an analysis of veteran labour market status. This was based on data from the 2021 Census of England and Wales.

The analysis showed that similar proportions of veterans and non-veterans were economically active (42.4% compared with 41.6%) and economically inactive (57.6% compared with 58.4%) following adjustments to account for differences in age, sex and region; veterans and non-veterans in each economically inactive sub-category were very similar.

Overall, veterans were less likely than non-veterans to have no qualifications or Level 4 qualifications (degree or equivalent and above); although female veterans (34.9%) were more likely than female non-veterans (30.1%) to have Level 4 qualifications, following adjustments.

The MOD publishes [annual statistics on ex-Service personnel employment outcomes](#). The most recent report (for 2022 to 2023) found that, of those who left the Armed Forces during 2022 to 2023 and used the MOD's CTP services and provided their employment outcome at their six-month follow up, 89% were employed, 4% were unemployed, and the rest were economically inactive six months after leaving service. It also found that this employment rate was higher than the employment rate for the UK general population during the same period (76%). It remains higher than the general population employment rate after adjusting for gender differences between the veteran population and the general population.

The MOD's 2024 [annual survey of Armed Forces families](#) found that 81% of Service spouses/civil partners are in employment (either full-time, part-time, or self-employed), compared to a UK employment rate for all those aged 16 to 64 of 74.3%.

It is therefore currently assessed that ex-Service personnel and Service partners are more likely to be in employment than the UK's working-age general population. However, anecdotal evidence provided to the government by veterans, reservists, their families and leading employers, including leading Covenant signatories, is that some veterans, reservists and Service partners continue to experience economic 'underutilisation' at some point in their careers. This is defined as being in employment, but in a specific position or type of employment that does not make full use of the skills, strengths, behaviours, capability, productivity and experience that the individual has to offer.

The MOD CTP team is working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions, other government departments, leading UK employers and third sector organisations to make improvement in this area and encourage employers to make fuller use of the value that members of the Armed Forces community have to offer in civilian careers.

Work to further support the employment of members of the Armed Forces community has included the following.

- *Armed Forces champions in the JobCentre Plus Network*

The Department for Work and Pensions will continue to deploy dedicated, full time Armed Forces champions across the 37 Jobcentre Plus districts. This team will continue to have around 11 Armed Forces champion leads, supported by a network of around 50 Armed Forces champions, who will provide help and support to veterans, supporting Service personnel (Regular and Reserve) and their families across the country.

- *Armed Forces Covenant promotion among national employers*

The strategic relationship team (formerly known as the national employer and partnership team) promotes signing the Armed Forces Covenant to employers and partner organisations who engage with the Department for Work and Pensions' national portfolio. In co-ordination with the MOD's DRM, the strategic relationship team have worked with Covenant-committed employers to help them deliver against and extend their promise to the Armed Forces community. The strategic relationship team have co-ordinated Armed Forces involvement in support of national large-scale redundancies, which offers the transition from redundancy to a career in the military, including to those who have served previously.

- *Supporting veterans into specific employment sectors*

The strategic relationship team actively encourage employers operating in the logistics industry to target Service leavers as part of a campaign to attract this cohort into the workplace. Across government, the team have engaged with the Ministry of Justice, in particular the New Futures Network, on employment opportunities for veterans who have served custodial sentences. In addition, the strategic relationship team continue to work in partnership with X-Forces Enterprise to promote self-employment among Service leavers, veterans, reservists and family members. They are building on their working relationship with the CTP to assist the redeployment of Service leavers and veterans (especially those medically discharged), reservists and family members.

- *Universal Credit Identifier*

The Department for Work and Pensions has continued its work to identify Universal Credit claimants who are members of the Armed Forces community. This helps to ensure relevant claimants are signposted to the appropriate support. The department started collecting data on the Armed Forces status of Universal Credit claimants in Great Britain in April 2021. Coverage continues to improve over time and by August 2024 data was held on the Armed Forces status¹¹ of approximately 76% of the Universal Credit caseload in Great Britain. Of

¹¹ Armed Forces status is self-reported by claimants and is not verified by the Ministry of Defence or Office for Veterans' Affairs. A claimant's status can be recorded as "currently serving", "served in the past", "not served"

those, 4,500 claimants had a status recorded as ‘currently serving’ and 66,000 had a status of ‘served in the past’¹². Compared to the 2023 Covenant and Veterans Annual Report, the number of claimants with a recorded status of ‘currently serving’ or ‘served in the past’ has increased. This does not necessarily mean the overall numbers of claimants who are currently serving or have served in the past have increased. Rather it may reflect increases in the number of claimants for whom data is held as data coverage improves over time. The way the data is collected¹³ means the claimants for whom data is held are not representative of the Universal Credit caseload as a whole. This means it is not yet possible to produce reliable estimates of the overall number and proportion of Universal Credit claimants who are members of the Armed Forces community.

Sector-based employment pathway

In April 2024, a sector-based employment pathway initiative was launched with the aim of ensuring equal access to employment opportunities for veterans and their families. The pathway's goal is to support veterans and their families into sustainable, valuable careers within key sectors at the forefront of innovation and growth such as manufacturing, energy and renewables, cyber and digital (including AI), and finance and professional services. Underpinned by £2.1 million of funding, the pathway is:

- establishing new – and building on existing – clear and accessible routes into employment, by connecting veterans and their families with employers in key economic sectors, helping them to secure new jobs and progress in their careers
- working with employers and industry bodies to drive practical, cultural and behavioural change within and across sectors, as well as improving awareness of the skills and talents of veterans among industry bodies, to encourage sectors to hire and retain veteran talent
- supporting projects in local communities across the UK which provide qualifications, training and skills development to veterans and their families who may face additional barriers or inequalities

Great Place to Work for Veterans Scheme

The Great Place to Work for Veterans Scheme offers veterans a tailored recruitment pipeline into a range of roles and careers across the Civil Service. It enables veterans to overcome the barriers they may encounter when applying to civilian roles by progressing those who meet the

or “prefer not to say”. Data is not collected on the specific branch of the Armed Forces that claimants are serving in or have served in in the past.

¹² The “currently serving” figure is rounded to the nearest hundred. The “served in the past” figure is rounded to the nearest thousand. Percentages are rounded to the nearest 1 percent. Figures may be subject to retrospective changes as more up-to-date data becomes available or if methodological improvements are made.

¹³ At first, only new claimants were asked about their Armed Forces status but, from June 2021, other Universal Credit claimants reporting changes in their work and earnings have also been able to report their status. From July 2021, Universal Credit agents have also been able to record claimants’ Armed Forces status if they are told about this via other means such as journal messages, face-to-face meetings or by telephone.

minimum essential criteria to the next stage of the application process, while ensuring that appointments continue to be made based on merit. As of August 2024, more than 3,235 veterans have secured job offers through the initiative.

Going Forward into Employment

Going Forward into Employment is a 'life chances' initiative offering people from a wide range of backgrounds, including veterans and their partners, the opportunity to secure and enter into a range of Civil Service roles. This initiative makes provision for direct appointment to identified roles, usually up to the first level of line management, for up to two years, with extensions possible in some cases. Post holders can apply for other permanent roles at any time during their appointment. This can be a beneficial alternative for those veterans who have experienced difficulty in applying to Civil Service roles through other methods. Since launch, more than 3,500 veterans (August 2024) have been recruited into the Civil Service through the initiative.

Step into Health

This NHS scheme, which this year celebrated its tenth anniversary at the House of Lords, has recruited over 2,760 veterans. The scheme offers opportunities for the Armed Forces community to connect with employers in the NHS and provides support and guidance for NHS organisations to review and enhance recruitment practices, so they are able to attract members of the Armed Forces community. 161 healthcare organisations have currently pledged to Step into Health.

Transition through life support

Resettlement support for Service leavers

The resettlement service offered to Regular and full-time Service leavers is delivered through the CTP. The CTP is the official provider of Armed Forces resettlement support regardless of time served.

The CTP contract has recently been retendered. Reed in Partnership Ltd, which is a public services provider that is part of the Reed Group, the UK's largest family-owned recruitment company, began the new contract in partnership with the MOD with effect from 1 October 2024. This new partnership will build on the excellence of the previous contract to provide a number of improvements to the service, including improved digital solutions to ensure Service leavers can access the service from their choice of digital device.

The majority of veterans find employment after leaving service, with recent statistics from the MOD's CTP indicating that 89% of Service leavers were in employment within six months of leaving service.

Scotland

Veterans and their families are eligible for devolved employability support through Fair Start Scotland and No One Left Behind. Details are included in this year's Welcome to Scotland

guide.¹⁴ From April 2024, all Scottish Government-funded employability support is being delivered through No One Left Behind, which has supported almost 400 veterans since April 2019.

Scottish Government employment

The Scottish Government remains committed to increasing the number of veterans they employ and continues to explore a number of ways to achieve this, including through the Civil Service's Going Forward into Employment and Guaranteed Interview schemes. Both schemes are open to veterans and their families and as of August 2024, there are at least 139 veterans working for the Scottish Government.

- *NHS employment*

The NHS Scotland Armed Forces Talent Programme has been developed to inspire the Armed Forces community to consider NHS Scotland as a potential career destination. This includes veterans and their families. It will enable access to information on the range of employment opportunities and the pathways to joining the health and social care workforce.

- *Police Scotland employment*

Police Scotland continues to recognise the skills and experience that military service offers policing. Police Scotland's positive action team are committed to actively supporting all veterans and Service leavers coming through the police officer recruitment process. Each veteran who registers their interest for the role of police officer is offered support with the recruitment process.

During a probationer recruitment phase in early 2024, 30 of the 200 probationary police officers were military veterans.

Skills and qualification mapping

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) is currently in the process of mapping Army rank (and, through this, NATO) to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, so that both Service personnel and potential employers will better understand the skills and qualifications of individuals from their rank. SCQFP continues to promote the 'military to civilian qualifications tool' through social media and are discussing joint promotion plans with Skills Development Scotland.

In addition, the My World of Work (MyWoW) website is being developed to create a more effective customer journey between tools and resources and the Skills Development Scotland. The My World of Work team are building a standalone military tool which will provide a more targeted offer and better experience for users.

¹⁴ [Welcome to Scotland: A guide for Service personnel and their families in Scotland – Updated 2024](#)

Scottish Veterans Fund

£460,000 has been provided through the Scottish Veterans Fund to projects supporting veterans and their families across Scotland. The priorities for the fund are projects which provide help to veterans and their families in the face of the cost of living crisis, early Service leavers and projects encouraging collaborative working across the veteran community.

The Unforgotten Forces Consortium

The Scottish Government has provided £315,000 of funding to the Unforgotten Forces Consortium in this financial year. The consortium is a partnership of 16 military and civilian charitable organisations with the purpose of delivering a wide array of services to veterans in Scotland aged 60 and over, as well as sharing best practice and supporting cross referrals between organisations.

Across 2023 to 2024, the consortium recorded over 30,000 incidents of support provided to 8,500 veterans, including 3,000 referrals (over 1,200 of which were between Unforgotten Forces Consortium partners).

Resettlement in Scotland

The CTP ensures all regions are covered to ensure the provision of face-to-face support, namely delivered from the key locations of Rosyth, Faslane, Leuchars, Kinloss and Lossiemouth. Virtual transition workshops are also routinely delivered, along with virtual vocational training and employment events, which improve accessibility for Service leavers who are in remote regions, based overseas or unable to travel.

Under the CTP's initiatives, the highly successful Scottish Employment Fair returned to Murrayfield Stadium on 18 April 2024, attracting over 90 exhibitors and nearly 400 Service leavers, which is a significant increase from the previous year.

Wales

Employment fairs

- *Cardiff – November 2023*

49 employers and support organisations attended with 156 Service leavers and 5 partners came through the doors to engage directly. Offers of employment were secured on the day for some Service leavers, with many other links made between personnel and employers with active jobs.

- *Wrexham – June 2024*

A first jobs fair and employment conference was held in Wrexham University, delivered by Welsh Government, the Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations, CTP and partners. Alongside the conference, a jobs fair was arranged in partnership with CTP which saw 26 employers and 54 Service leavers attending.

The events support broader transition work in Wales. Since January 2024, over 50 new companies have registered with the CTP and 128 Service leavers have been placed with companies registered in Wales and the borders.

Resettlement in Wales

The CTP provided two new locations this year for career transition workshops in Brecon and Caerphilly, in addition to the Chepstow venue. This saw a higher fill rate of workshops than previously due to CTP's collaboration with 160th Brigade.

The employment rate for Service leavers who discharged in 2023 and settled in Wales is 96.3%. The table below shows what percentage of employed Service leavers settled into each area.

Area settled	Employed
Cardiff	28.0%
Llandrindod	2.2%
Llandudno	14.5%
Newport	17.7%
Swansea	24.4%

Northern Ireland

Resettlement in Northern Ireland

The CTP in Northern Ireland stands out due to its distinctive combination of factors: employment law considerations, historical context and security conditions. This uniqueness is rooted in its comprehensive approach, as it consolidates all three core components of CTP services – transition, training and employment – and delivers against the various Service leaver pathways. This integrated approach is facilitated within a single resettlement centre that is home to transition, course bookings, employment and veterans.

Working closely with the Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations and DRM, the new provision primarily aims to provide information to those currently serving, as well as those in the process of leaving (including their families) who are thinking of settling in Northern Ireland. Specifically, it also provides regionally aligned information on a wide range of topics, including resettlement, housing, employment, health, pensions, benefits, education and skills. It also provides contact details of charities and other organisations operating in Northern Ireland who exist to provide advice and support to all Service leavers.

In May 2024, the CTP was pleased to host a highly successful CTP employment fair at Titanic Museum in Belfast. This platform was an excellent opportunity for 40 regionally based employers to meet with nearly 200 Service leavers who are presently resettling in Northern

Ireland after their varied careers. The event was a clear success and we look forward to growing it in the near future.

Support for Non-UK personnel and overseas Service personnel

Immigration rule changes

The rules relating to Armed Forces and their dependent family members have been simplified in line with Law Commission recommendations and came into force on 11 April 2024. The provisions in Appendix Armed Forces and part 7 of the Immigration Rules were replaced with a new Appendix HM Armed Forces and an Appendix International Armed Forces and Civilian Employees to make who the provisions apply to more transparent.

This new Appendix allows dependents of Armed Forces members to count any leave they have on other routes towards their five-year route to settlement under Appendix HM Armed Forces.

Minimum income requirement

On 11 April 2024, under the family Immigration Rules (Appendix FM), the previous government introduced an increased minimum income requirement (MIR) of £29,000. At the same time, following work between the MOD and the Home Office, the MIR was tethered to the salary threshold, currently £23,496 on completion of basic training for members, Service leavers and veterans of the Armed Forces, including the Brigade of Gurkhas seeking to sponsor dependent family members under Appendix HM Armed Forces to the Immigration Rules. The new MIR equates to the 2023 to 2024 salary for Privates and their Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Air Force equivalents (OR2-01) on completion of training. Unlike the previous MIR (£18,600 for a partner, £22,400 for a partner and one child, and a further £2,400 for each additional child sponsored), there is no longer a separate income requirement to sponsor visas for children. The MIR will be reviewed in line with the Armed Forces annual pay award for the salary threshold on completion of training.

Other aspects of the MIR remain unchanged, such as the various ways in which it can be met, exemptions for single parents with sole responsibility and those in receipt of certain specified funds or benefits (including an Armed Forces independence payment or guaranteed income payment under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, or War Disablement Pension under the War Pensions Scheme), and the consideration of exceptional circumstances where it may not be met in certain cases.

Transitional arrangements were put in place for those who, before 11 April 2024, have already been granted entry clearance or permission to enter or stay, or those who have applied for it (and are being granted) and have already met the MIR. This will ensure that they are not disadvantaged by having to meet a new MIR.

Beyond the Covenant

This section outlines matters/initiatives that are 'beyond the Covenant'. These are not considered 'Covenant action' as they confer advantage on Service populations, rather than remedying or preventing disadvantage due to Service, or making special provision for those who have given most. However, they are important for delivering against the government's commitment to ensuring that all Service personnel and families feel supported by the Armed Forces.

The HM Armed Forces Veteran Card

On 28 January 2024, the MOD and OVA launched the 'Apply for a HM Armed Forces Veteran Card' service. To date, over 100,000 cards have been issued to veterans through this digital service, and hundreds of applications continue to be received daily. Veterans who have left service since 2019 now receive a card as part of their standard discharge procedure, and over 85,000 cards have been issued in this way.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government laid secondary legislation on 14 October 2024 to include the Veteran Card as an acceptable form of ID for voting in elections that require ID.

Veterans Digital Services

The OVA has refreshed and improved all veteran-related guidance on GOV.UK. In August 2024, it launched a suite of guides supporting veterans and their families, built around specific user needs and designed to help veterans find the support they need more quickly and effectively. On the same day, it launched an accompanying new directory finder tool which allows veterans to find local and national support organisations filtered by location and need. These services replaced the Veterans' Gateway website, which closed on 30 September 2024.

Veterans Data Dashboard

The OVA launched the first-of-its-kind Veterans' Data Dashboard in February 2023 as a new data digital platform for sharing key veteran statistics with the public. A fully refreshed version with interactive functions and richer data was published in July 2024.

Invictus Games

The MOD is proud to work in collaboration with the Royal British Legion as the delivery partner, the MoD has selected the UK team for the 2025 Invictus Games in Canada. This will be the first winter Invictus Games and the UK will be sending a team of serving personnel and veterans, with the largest number of serving personnel as competitors we have seen since its start.

The UK is thrilled to be hosting the Invictus Games in Birmingham 2027 and looks to build on the success of its current team composition for the Birmingham games in 2027, as a way to continue to showcase the support and benefit that adaptive sport can bring to both serving personnel and veterans to their recovery journey.

The Games provide a global platform to showcase the spirit and resilience of our Armed Forces, veterans and families while shining a light on adaptive sport, arts and employment opportunities. Birmingham will host 550 participants, their friends and families from over 20 countries around the world.

Veterans railcard

The veterans railcard offers up to one third (30%~) reduced price on most rail fares across England, Scotland and Wales. Including Standard, First Class Anytime, Off-Peak and Advance fares. The railcard is designed to encourage and enable veterans to access regional employment opportunities, prevent social isolation by remaining connected to friends and family, and improve health and wellbeing by accessing leisure pursuits and activities. The latest data shows that the uptake of railcards in circulation over the last year was 81,000 (August 2024).

Chapter 6: The Covenant in law

The Covenant Legal Duty

The statutory Armed Forces Covenant Legal Duty in the Armed Forces Act 2006¹⁵ places a legal obligation on specific public bodies to have due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when exercising certain functions, in healthcare, education and housing, that could impact the Armed Forces community.

The MOD conducted a survey to assess the impact of the Duty. A report is provided in the next chapter. It found that the introduction of the Duty has led to increased understanding of the Covenant and the impacts of Service life, increased action to mitigate the negative impacts of Service life, and the establishment of various elements of a supporting infrastructure. However, there is clearly still further to go in Covenant implementation.

Our election manifesto committed to “strengthen support for our Armed Forces communities by putting the Armed Forces Covenant fully into law”. We are now developing options to take this forward. As part of this, we are engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including UK Government departments, devolved administrations, and charities, to seek their views, and to help us understand the costs and benefits of the different options.

- *The Covenant duty in Wales*

The Veterans’ Commissioner for Wales, James Phillips, continues to engage with veterans, families and both statutory and non-statutory support organisations across Wales. The Commissioner has maintained a focus on the priorities presented to the Secretary of State for Wales and the then Minister for Veterans’ Affairs during 2023. The Commissioner has highlighted health and housing as key areas for improvement, with his views also shared with the Welsh Government given the devolved nature of many of the services veterans access. The OVA and the Welsh Government have continued to work closely with the Veterans’ Commissioner for Wales during the year.

The Armed Forces Liaison Officers (AFLO) have worked with local authorities to embed the Covenant duty and further promote awareness of the Armed Forces community, ensuring policies and procedures reflect the principles of the Covenant at a local level.

¹⁵ The Legal Duty was inserted into the Armed Forces Act 2006 by the Armed Forces Act 2021.

-
- in North Wales, the AFLO has worked with Flintshire county council to capture specific data on the Armed Forces community and housing need by improving identification of the Armed Forces community when presenting to services. This work identified that 4.75% of all applications to the Common Housing Register have an Armed Forces connection and 4.59% of homelessness caseload are Ex-Forces. As a result, tailored training has been delivered across housing services.
 - in West Wales, the AFLO has worked to support staff to access the bilingual training modules on the Covenant.
 - in Powys, local housing policies have been amended to take into account length of time served in the Armed Forces as contributing towards establishing a local connection with a Powys community. 'Asking the question' recording and retrieval of data by frontline staff in departments within Powys County Council and Powys teaching health board has been introduced.
 - in Cwm Taf, the AFLO has worked with Maerdy GP surgery, which has secured veteran-friendly accreditation and maintains a record of all Veterans. The surgery also provides monthly updates on Armed Forces events and groups.
 - in Cardiff and Vale, the AFLO has worked with Race Council Cymru to support Black Asian and Minority Ethnic veterans and RBL to mark 'Windrush 75' which included a celebratory event with the Windrush Elders and Councillors, Mayor and Armed Forces Champion of the Vale of Glamorgan. Support for the LGBTQ+ Veterans Hub has also developed, securing funding for promotional material/pop ups and working with Fighting with Pride to hold a monthly meal.
 - in South West Wales, the AFLO worked to deliver the Neath Port Talbot Forces Festival, raising awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and support services available in the area, as well as the Remembrance Parades in both Neath & Port Talbot. A successful D-Day exhibition was also held.

- *The Covenant duty in Scotland*

The Scottish Veterans' Commissioner, Susie Hamilton, continues to engage with veterans and the wider veterans' sector to understand their challenges and champion the community. In September 2024, the Commissioner published their latest assessment of Scottish Government progress against previous Commissioner recommendations. In January 2024, the Commissioner published the report, 'Community and relationships: anything but uniform', which explored how well served veterans and their families are by existing services. It made outcome-focused recommendations to the Scottish Government to support continuous improvement for all veterans and their families. The Commissioner has also supported the UK government by providing advice and guidance to the minister and officials.

Covenant Legal Duty impact survey

Purpose

Between May and August 2024, the MOD conducted a survey to assess the impact of the Covenant Legal Duty ('the Duty') in the 18 months since it came into force in November 2022.

This was to establish, firstly, whether the Duty has led to increased understanding of the Covenant and the potential impacts of Service life, among those bodies subject to the Duty. Increasing understanding is likely to lead to greater consideration of the needs of the Armed Forces community, increased action to mitigate the impacts of Service life, and therefore improved outcomes for the whole Armed Forces community.

The survey was also used to assess if these bodies are establishing the various elements of a supporting infrastructure, such as providing staff training and employing a Covenant champion.

The organisations targeted for this survey are the organisations that are subject to the Duty. These are local authorities, NHS bodies, and state-funded schools and colleges across the whole UK. Responses were received from 201 organisations: 111 local authorities, 55 NHS bodies, and 35 schools and colleges. Clearly, many organisations subject to the Duty did not respond. Those that did respond are likely the ones already most engaged with the Covenant. It should not be assumed that the results from this survey are representative of all bodies subject to the Duty.

Main findings

Overall, many of the results from the survey are positive. The Duty has led to:

- increased understanding of the Covenant (144 responders agreed).
- increased understanding of the impacts of Service life (126 responders agreed).
- organisations doing something differently (115 responders agreed).
- increased action to mitigate the negative impacts of Service life (51 responders agreed).

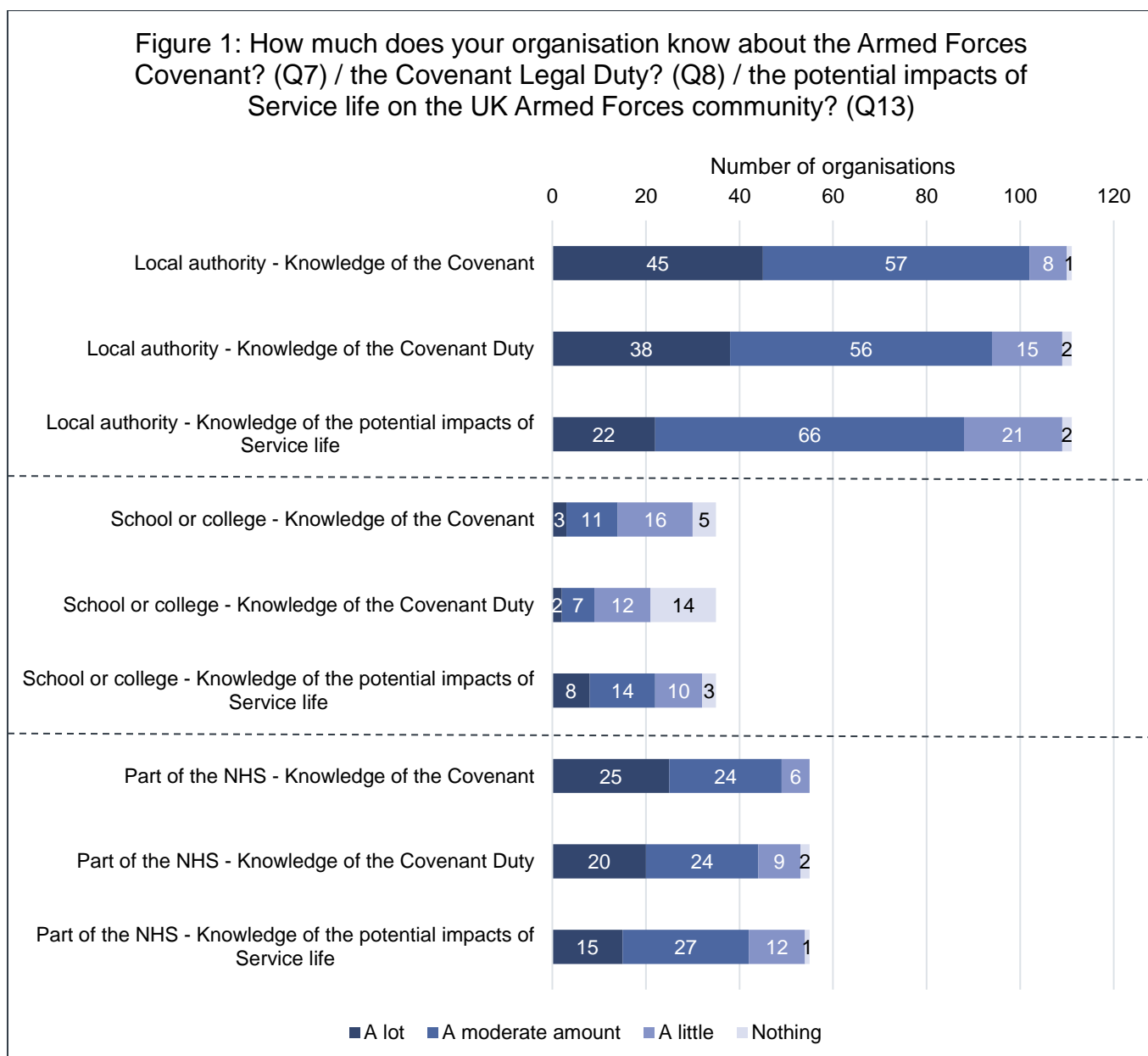
The organisations responding to this survey are establishing various elements of a supporting infrastructure. These include a mechanism for collaborating and information sharing (169 responders), a Covenant champion (166 responders), and a route for members of the Armed Forces community to raise concerns (154 responders).

These key improvements have generally occurred in a majority of the local authorities and NHS bodies who responded, but in a minority of the schools and colleges who responded. While the Duty has successfully increased Covenant engagement and implementation among these organisations, there is clearly still further to go, particularly among schools and colleges.

Appendix A – Knowledge of the Covenant, the Duty and the potential impacts of Service life

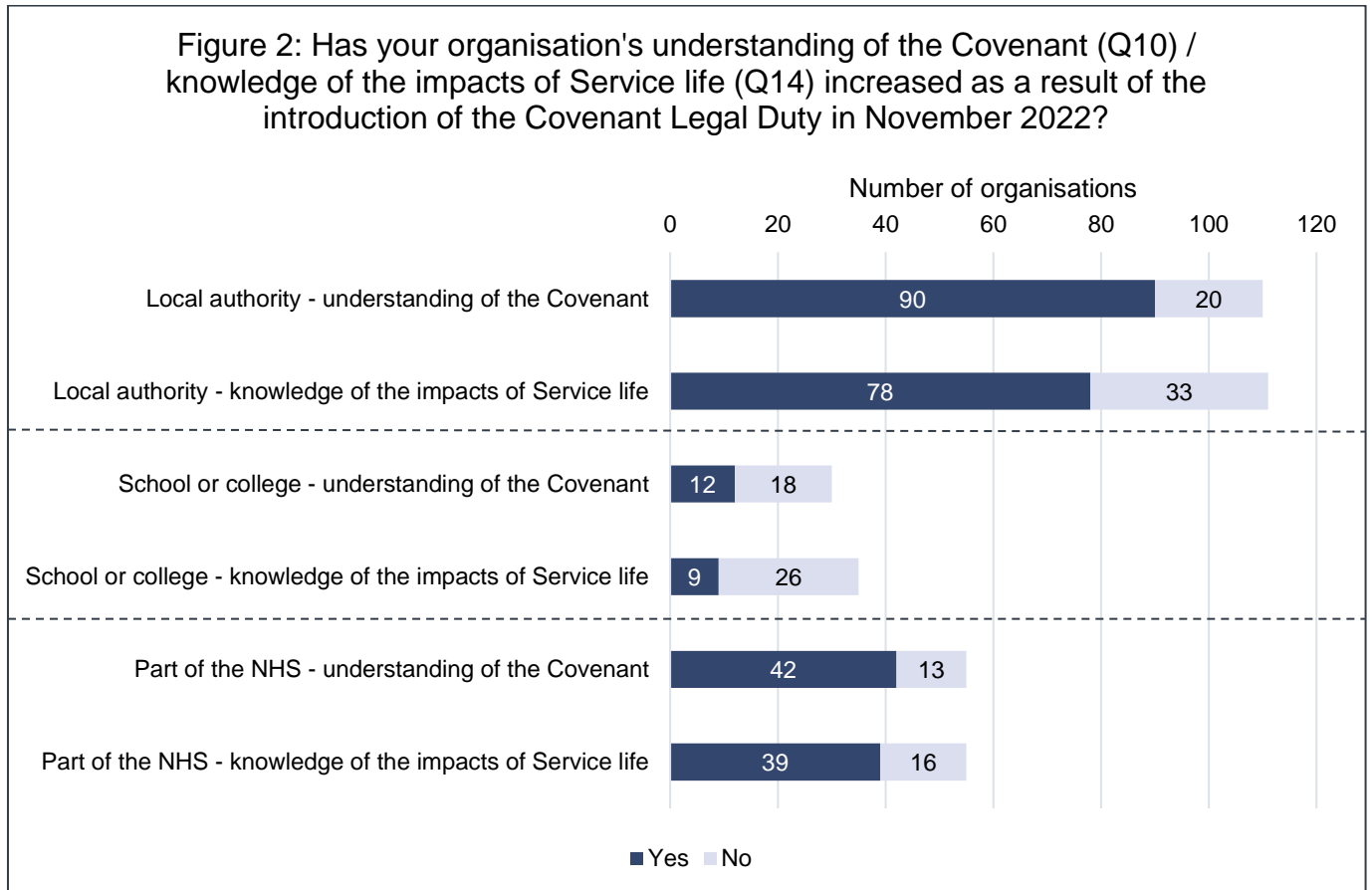
Current levels of knowledge

Most of the local authorities and NHS bodies responding rated themselves as knowing ‘a lot’ or ‘a moderate amount’ about the Covenant, the Legal Duty, and the potential impacts of Service life (Figure 1). However, most of the schools and colleges responding rated themselves as knowing ‘a little’ or ‘nothing’ about the Covenant and the Duty, but their knowledge of the potential impacts of Service life was higher.



Change in levels of knowledge resulting from introduction of the Duty

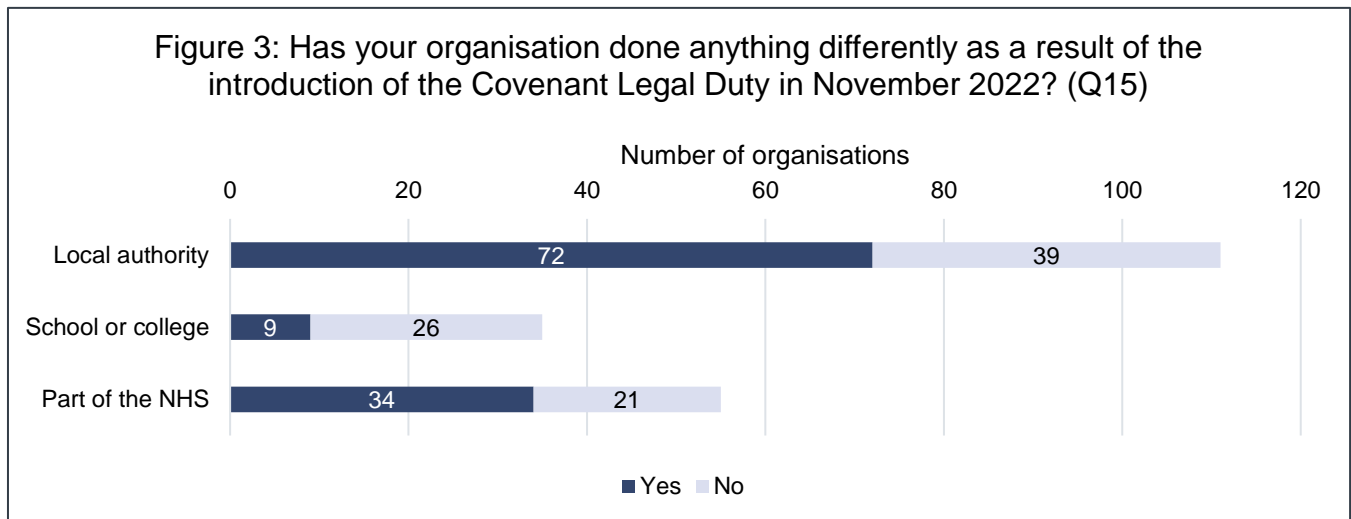
Over two thirds of both the local authorities and NHS bodies who responded said their understanding of both the Covenant and the impacts of Service life had increased because of the introduction of the Duty (Figure 2). In comparison, less than half of the schools and colleges who responded said their understanding had improved.



Appendix B – Mitigating the impacts of Service life

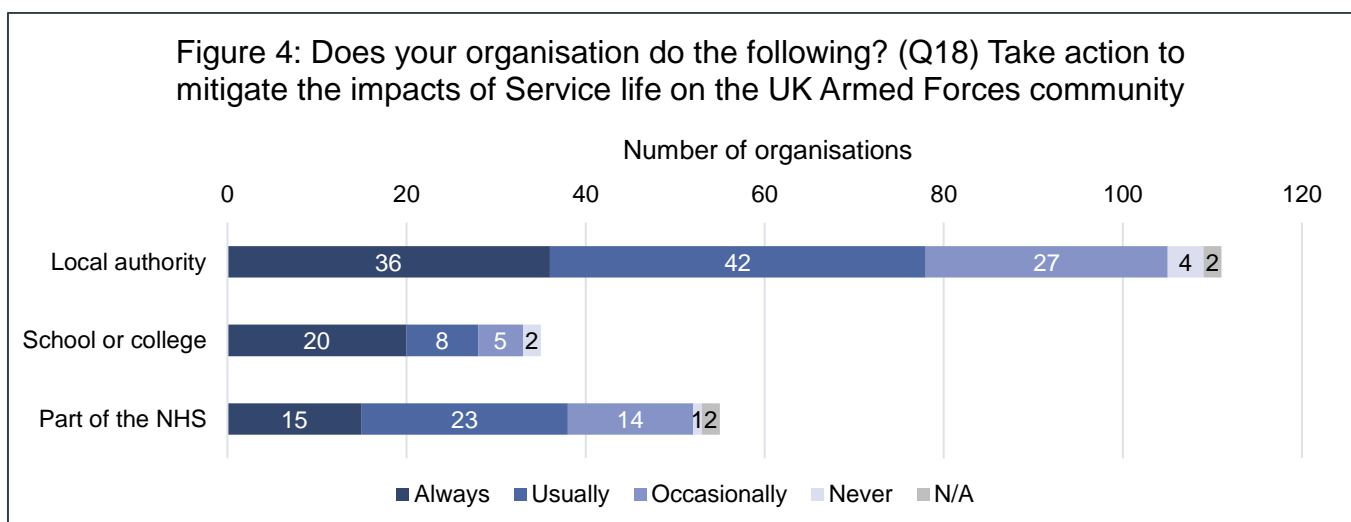
Organisational change resulting from introduction of the Duty

Over half of both the local authorities and NHS bodies who responded had done something differently because of the introduction of the Duty, but only a minority of schools and colleges had (Figure 3). The changes mentioned included: introducing a guaranteed interview scheme for veterans, signing or re-signing the Covenant, and working towards their gold, silver or bronze Employer Recognition Scheme award or veteran aware accreditation.



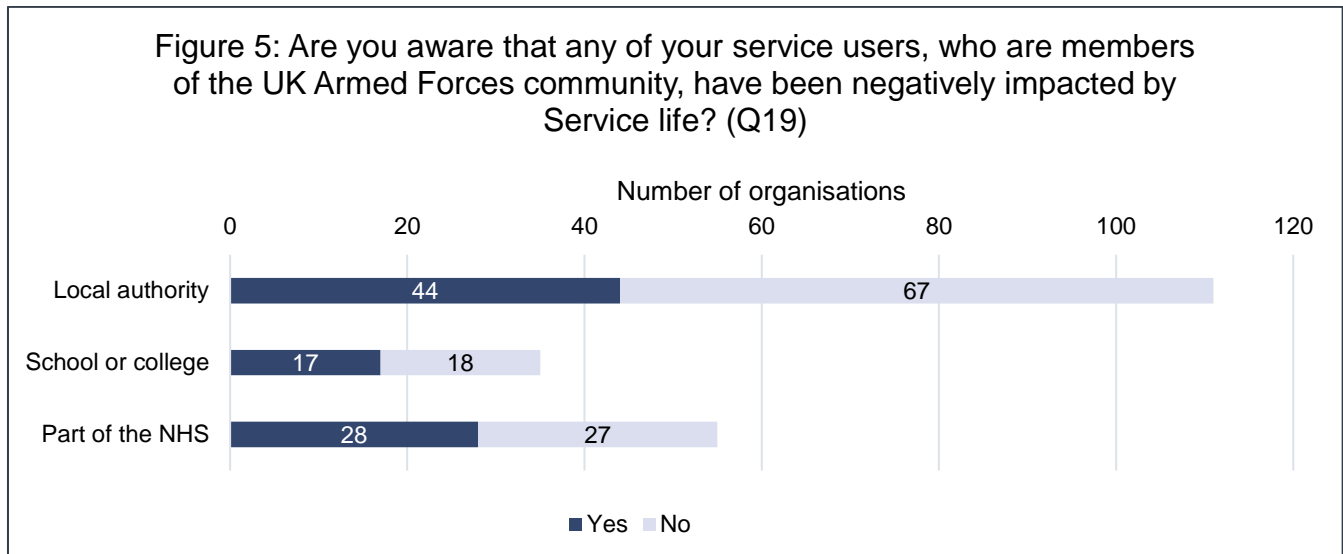
Taking action to mitigate the impacts of Service life

The majority of responders said they 'always' or 'usually' take action to mitigate the impacts of Service life on the UK Armed Forces community (Figure 4). The proportions were fairly similar for the three types of organisation.



Organisations' awareness of the impacts of Service life on their service users

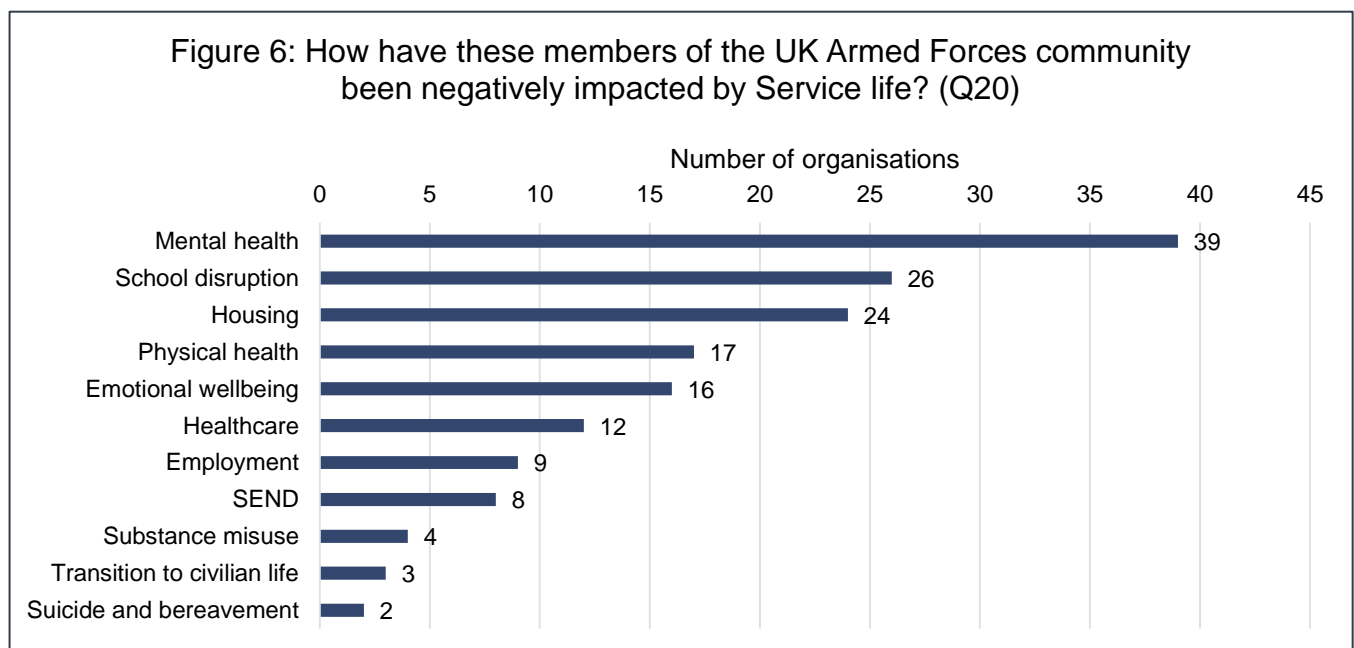
Fewer than half of responders (89 of the 201) were aware that any of their service users have been negatively impacted by Service life (Figure 5).



Comparing Q18 and Q19, about half the responders (105 of the 201) said they take action to mitigate the impacts of Service life at least occasionally (Q18), and also said they are not aware that any of their own service users have been negatively impacted by Service life (Q19).

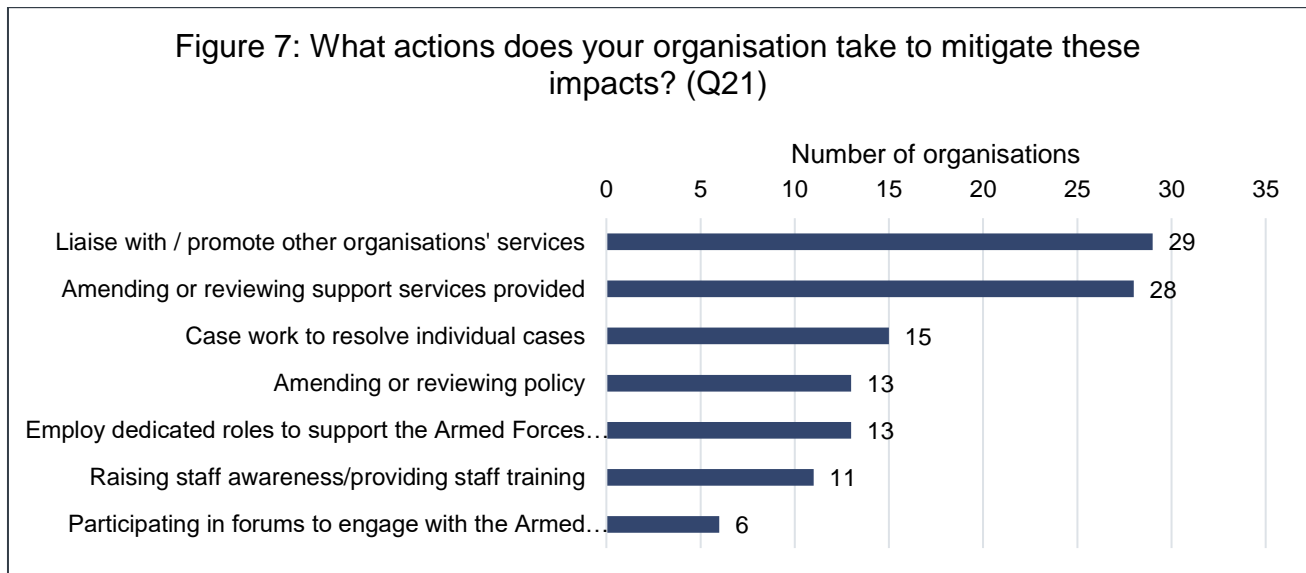
The nature of the impacts of Service life on organisations' own service users

The 89 organisations who were aware that any of their own service users have been negatively impacted by Service life were asked what those impacts were. Responders were given a free text box to answer, and the common themes were identified (Figure 6). Please note, the total comes to more than 89 as some organisations mentioned more than one theme. The themes mainly relate to health, education and housing, which is reassuring as these are the three areas in scope of the current Duty. However, some other themes were also mentioned, including substance misuse, transition to civilian life, and suicide and bereavement.



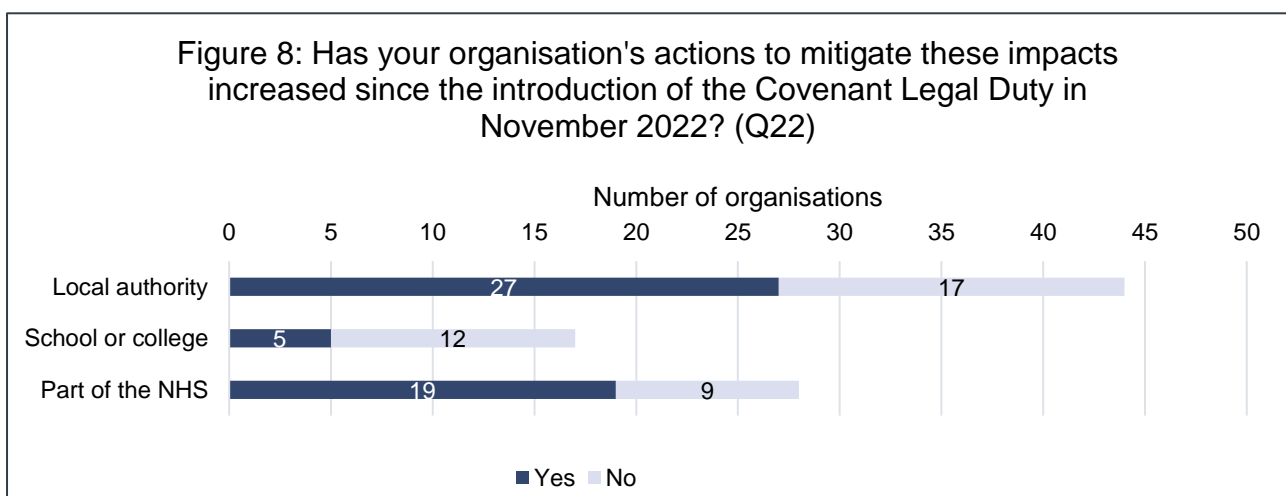
Action to mitigate the negative impacts of Service life

The 89 organisations who were aware that any of their own service users have been negatively impacted by Service life were asked what actions they take to mitigate these impacts, and 88 organisations responded. The common themes were identified (Figure 7). Please note, the total comes to more than 88 as some organisations mentioned more than one theme. The majority of actions were around signposting to other services, reviewing and amending their own practices and policies, or engaging with the Armed Forces community.



Change in action to mitigate the negative impacts of Service life since introduction of the Duty

The 89 organisations who were aware that any of their own service users have been negatively impacted by Service life were asked if their actions to mitigate these impacts have increased since introduction of the Duty. A majority (51 of the 89) said they have taken additional action to mitigate these impacts since the introduction of the Duty (Figure 8). Among the 89, most of the local authorities and NHS bodies said they have taken additional action, whereas only a minority of the schools and colleges said they have.

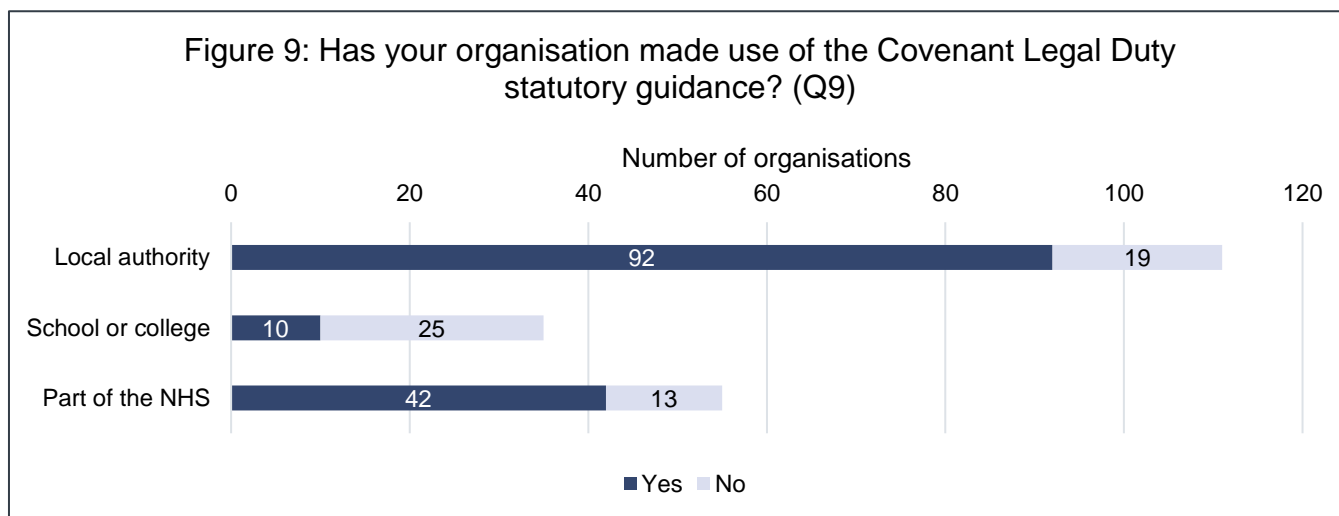


Appendix C – Infrastructure supporting Duty implementation

The survey was also used to assess how many of the responding organisations have established the various infrastructure elements that can support implementation of the Duty.

Making use of the statutory guidance

The [statutory guidance](#) provides an overview of the Duty, including what it is and to whom and when it applies. It explains the concepts of disadvantage and special provision. It describes in detail some of the unique obligations and sacrifices of Service life, and the disadvantages that can arise. Overall, more than two-thirds of responders said they had made use of the guidance (Figure 9). However, while this was true of most local authorities and NHS bodies responding, it was only true of a minority of the schools and colleges responding.



Provision of staff training about the Covenant

About half the organisations responding (110 of the 201) provided their staff with training about the Covenant (Figure 10). The majority of the local authorities and NHS bodies responding provided training, but only a small minority of the schools and colleges responding did.

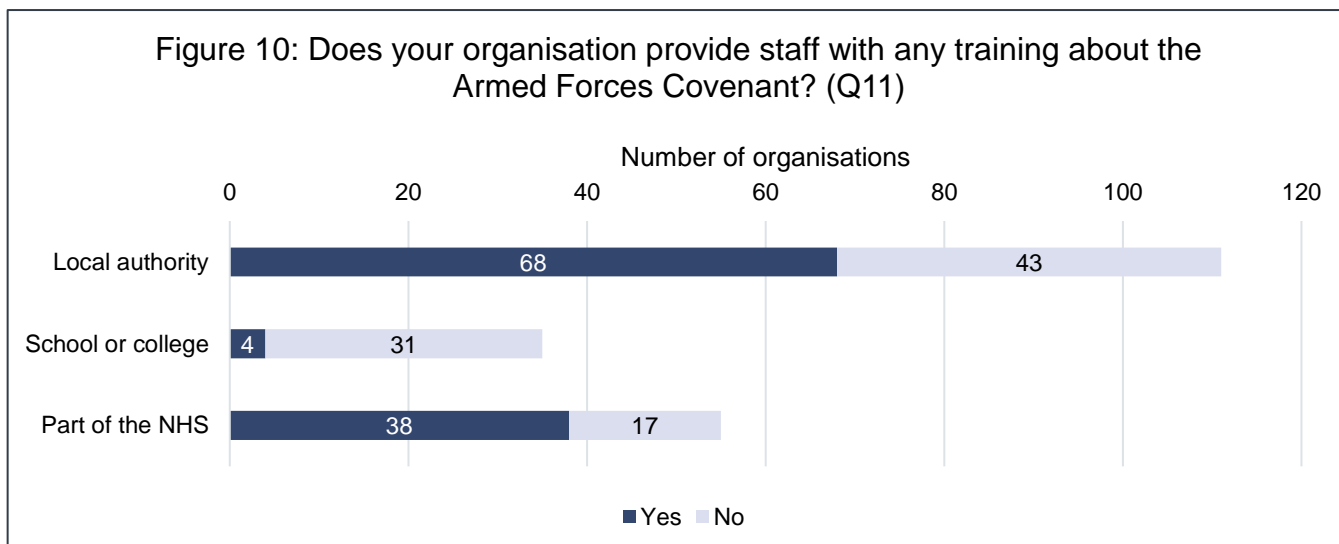
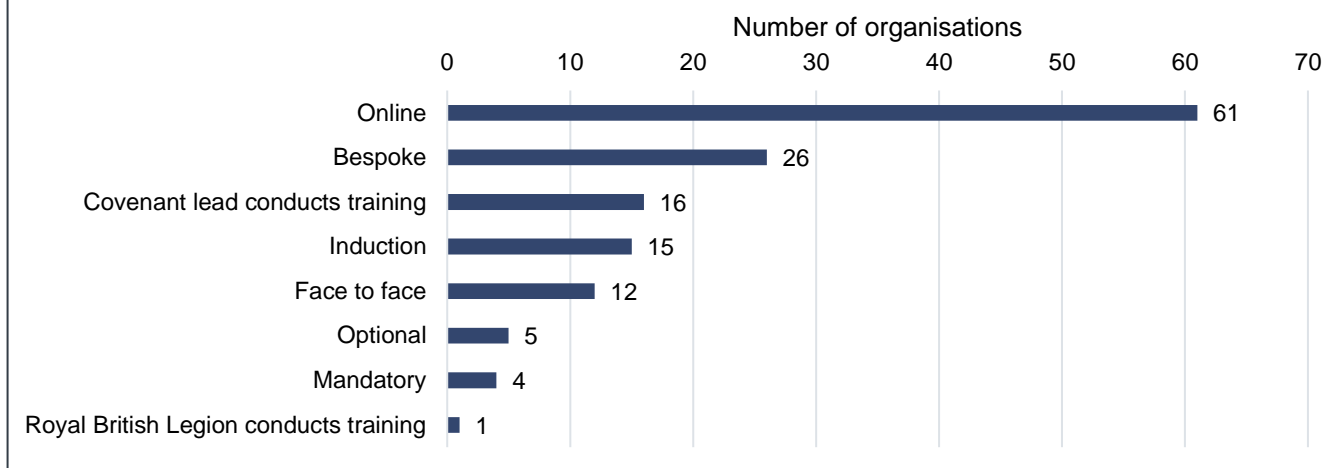


Figure 11: Further information about Covenant training provided (Q12)



These 110 organisations that provide training were asked to provide further details in a free text box. The responses were grouped into themes (Figure 11). Please note, the total comes to more than 110 as some organisations mentioned more than one theme. The theme mentioned most frequently was that the training is online. The training developed for the Warwickshire County Council e-learning programme was specifically mentioned.

Implementing the Our Community – Our Covenant ‘core infrastructure’

In 2016, the Forces in Mind Trust published the first [Our Community – Our Covenant](#) (OCOC) report and in 2017 published the [second edition](#). These reports outline the components of a ‘core infrastructure’ that the Trust’s research indicates help organisations deliver the Covenant. The Trust also conducted a survey of local authorities to find out which were implementing the different elements of the core infrastructure. Some of the questions from the Trust’s survey were replicated in this Duty impact survey, so the results can be compared.

Figure 12 gives the results from the two surveys. (The OCOC figures are taken from Figure 12 in the 2016 OCOC report.) The number of responses (‘n’) is also provided for each question. It should be noted that the Trust’s survey achieved a larger sample size than this Duty survey. Also, the overlap of local authorities completing the two surveys is unclear.

Across all seven questions, the local authority responses to this Duty survey showed an improvement on the OCOC survey responses. That is, a higher proportion answered ‘Yes, this practice is in place and very active’, and a lower proportion answered ‘No, this practice is not in place’. This is as hoped, given this Duty survey was conducted eight years after the 2016 OCOC survey and the Duty has subsequently come into force.

The responses for NHS bodies are broadly similar to local authorities, or slightly behind, indicating that, when it comes to implementing this core infrastructure, the NHS bodies responding are in a broadly similar place to, or slightly behind, the local authorities responding.

The data is much less positive for schools and colleges, with many responding ‘No, this practice is not in place’ to the questions. For example, the majority of schools and colleges responding do not have a Covenant champion, a clear public statement, or an action plan.

Figure 12: Does your organisation have the following practices in place?
(Q17)

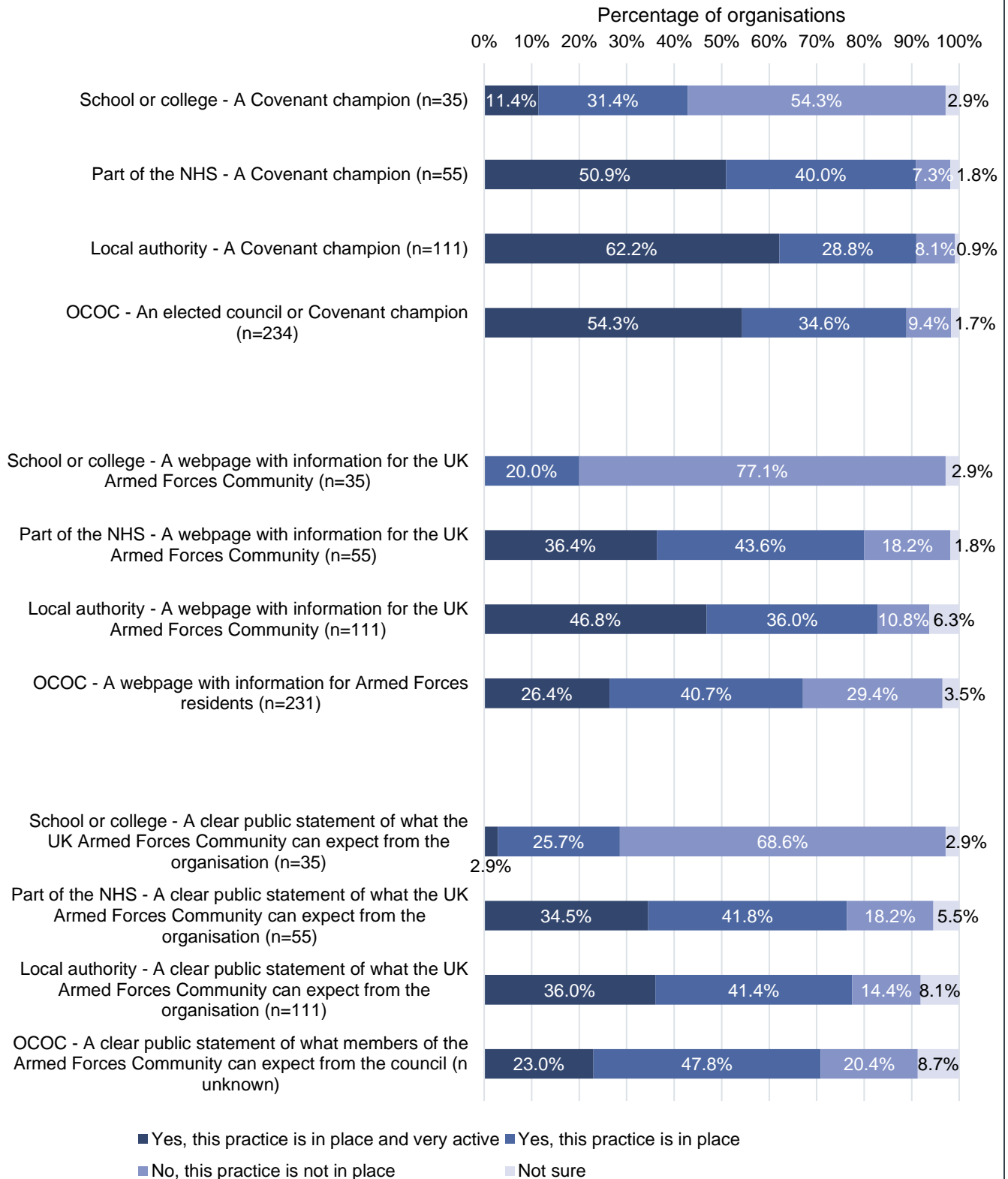
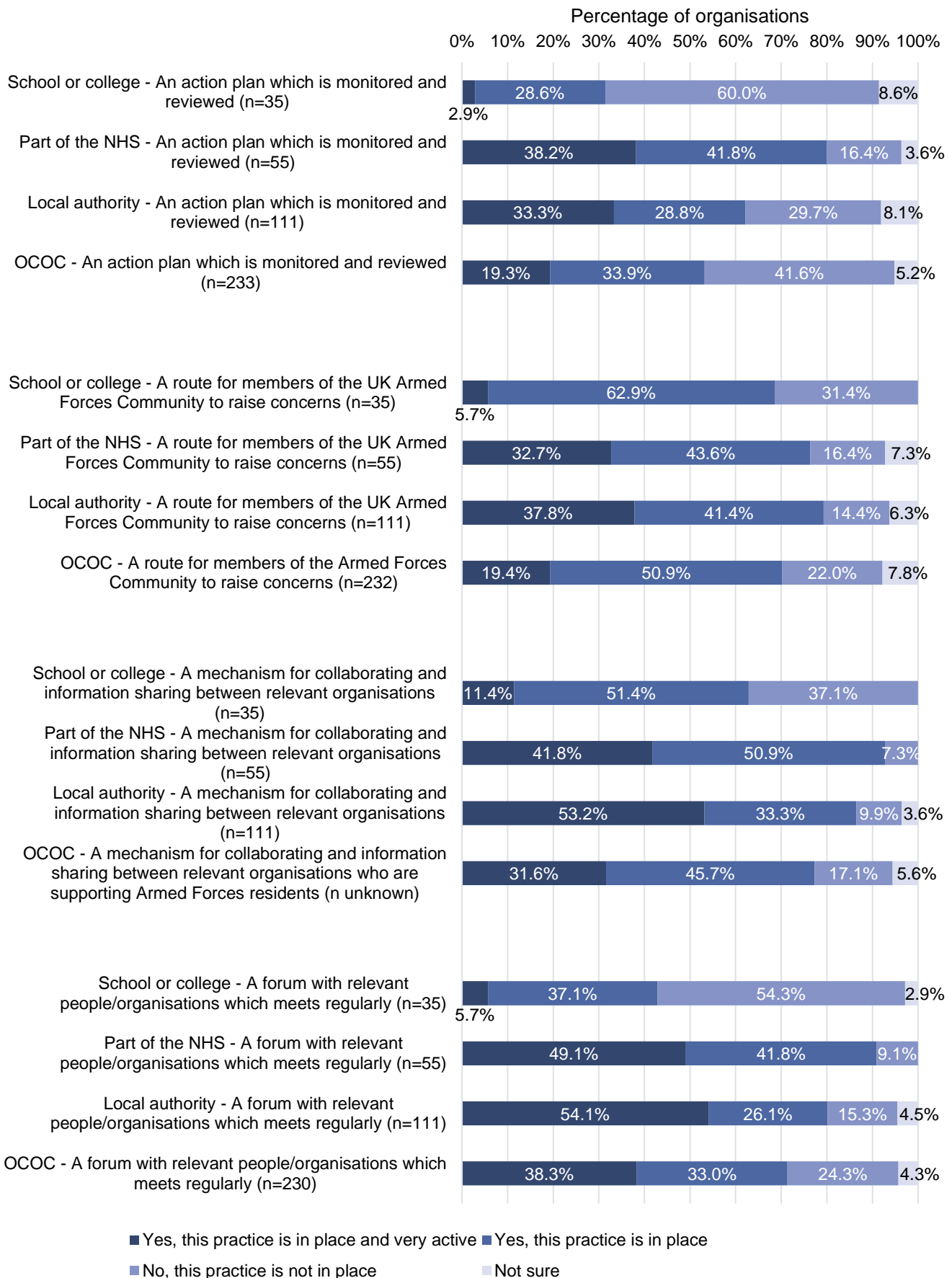


Figure 12 continued: Does your organisation have the following practices in place? (Q17)

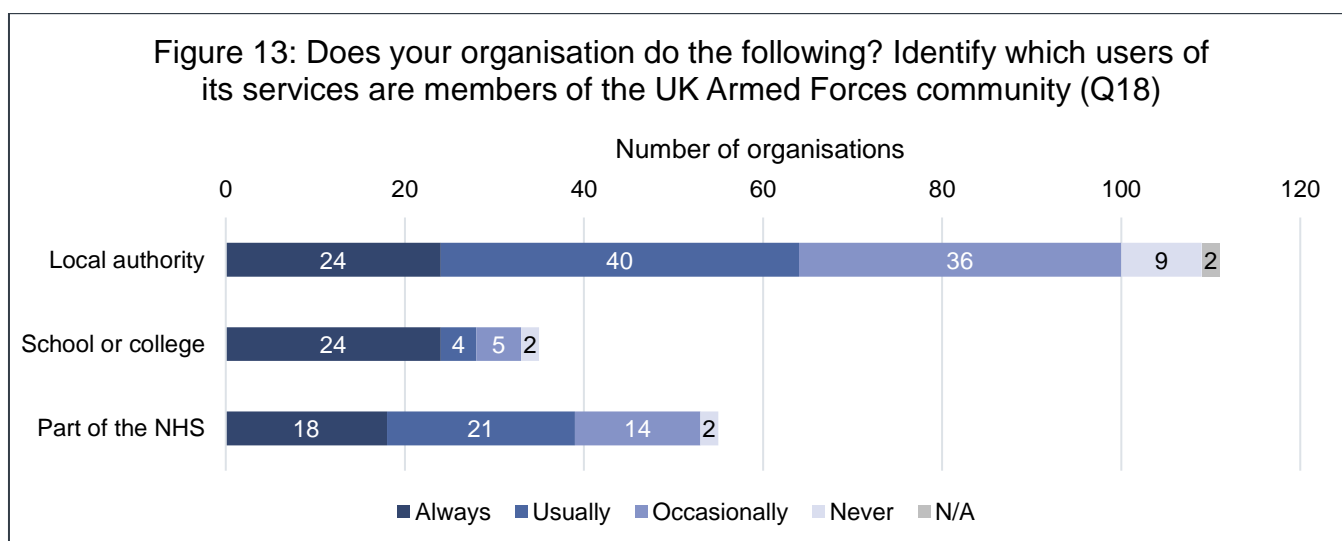


Overall, the number of organisations with each practice in place were (in descending order):

- 169 responders: a **mechanism for collaborating and information sharing** between relevant organisations
- 166 responders: a **Covenant champion**
- 154 responders: a **route** for members of the UK Armed Forces community **to raise concerns**
- 154 responders: a **forum** with relevant people/organisations which meets regularly
- 143 responders: a **webpage** with information for the UK Armed Forces
- 138 responders: a **clear public statement** of what the UK Armed Forces community can expect from the organisation
- 124 responders: an **action plan** which is monitored and reviewed

Identifying which users of their services are members of the Armed Forces community

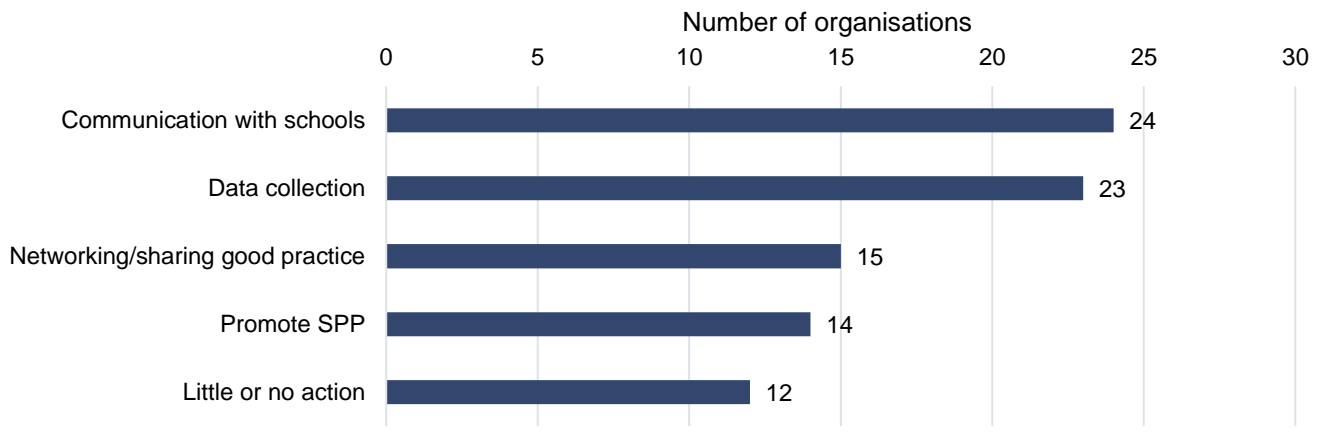
Identifying which users of their services are members of the Armed Forces community is a key step for organisations in helping to ensure the Armed Forces' needs are met. The majority of responders (131 of the 201) said they 'always' or 'usually' do this (Figure 13). The proportion is slightly higher for schools and colleges.



The 111 local authorities responding were asked what actions they have taken to encourage schools to identify children from Service families. The responses have been grouped into themes (Figure 14).

The most common themes were by communication with schools, and collection of data to identify Service children, such as through surveys, or asking upon registration. Twelve local authorities took little or no action to encourage schools to identify Service children. However, some pointed out that they were not the education authority, or their schools did not require further encouragement, as they already took action to identify Service children.

Figure 14: What actions does your organisation [a local authority] take to encourage schools to identify children from Service families? (Q24)

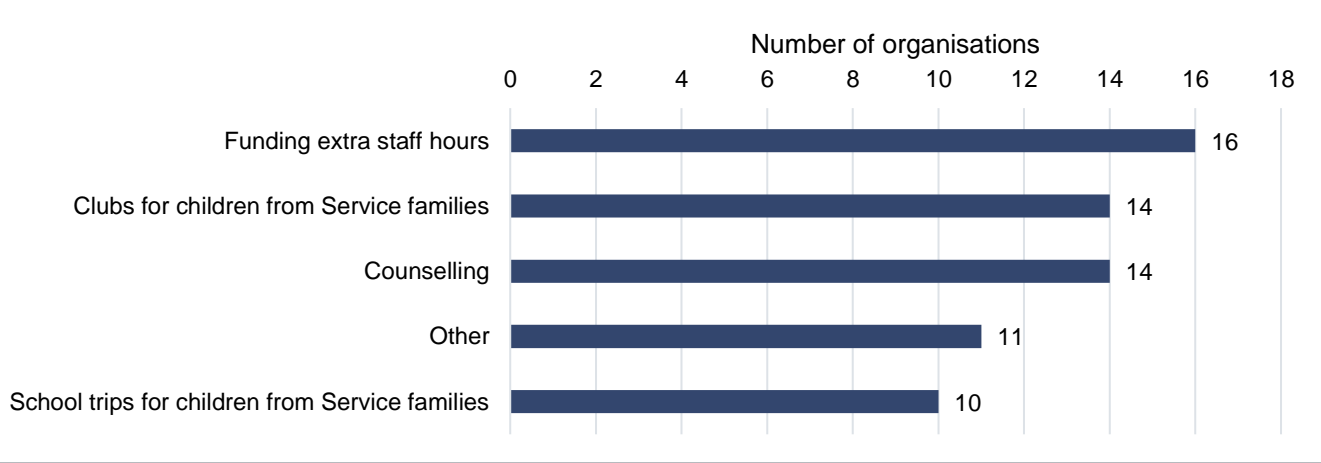


Using the Service Pupil Premium (England only)

In England, extra funding to schools with enrolled Service children is available through the Service Pupil Premium (SPP). This can be used to help remove disadvantage. The SPP is only available in England, so the 28 schools and colleges responding based in England were asked if they receive the SPP (Q28), and all 28 do.

These 28 were asked how their SPP funding is spent (Figure 15). Among these 28 schools and colleges, the most common use of the SPP was funding extra staff hours, followed by counselling and clubs for Service children. 'Other' uses of SPP included tuition, transport to and from school, and additional activities such as music sessions and coffee mornings. Please note, the total comes to more than 28 as some organisations selected more than one answer.

Figure 15: How is the Service Pupil Premium spent? (Q29)

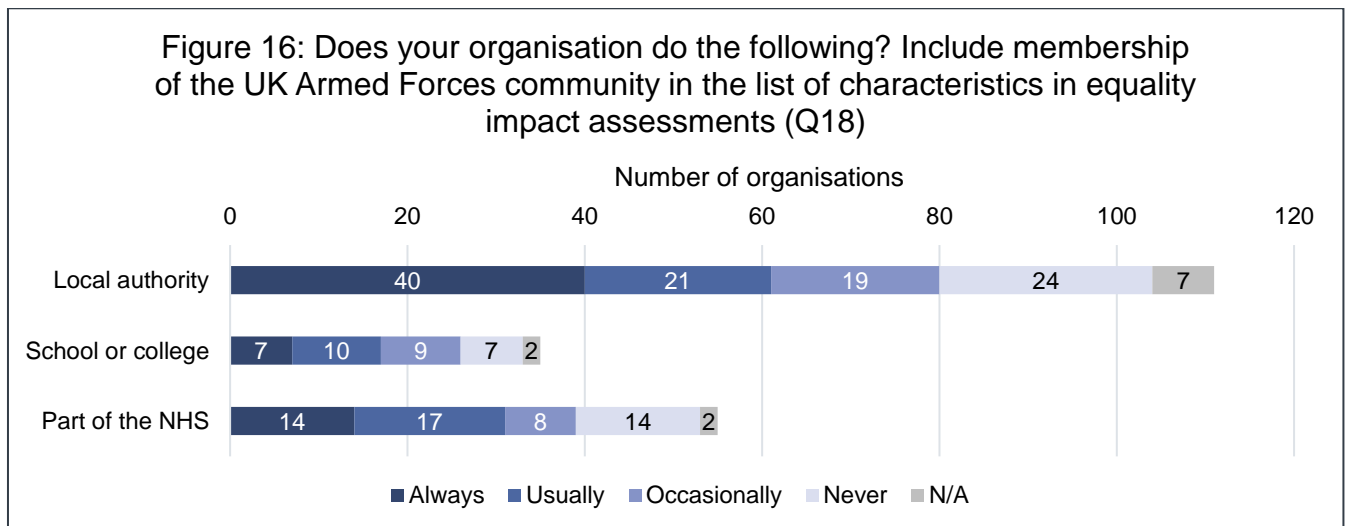


Using the Thriving Lives Toolkit

The Thriving Lives Toolkit helps schools support children in Service families. It provides resources and a framework to help schools reflect on their practice. The 35 schools that participated in this survey were asked if they use this toolkit (Q30), and eight said they do. These eight were asked how the toolkit has influenced policy and practice (Q31). Four said they had seen a positive influence on policy and practice. They felt it provided a clear pathway and improved their understanding of the needs of children from Service families. The other four schools were in the early stages of use or did not comment.

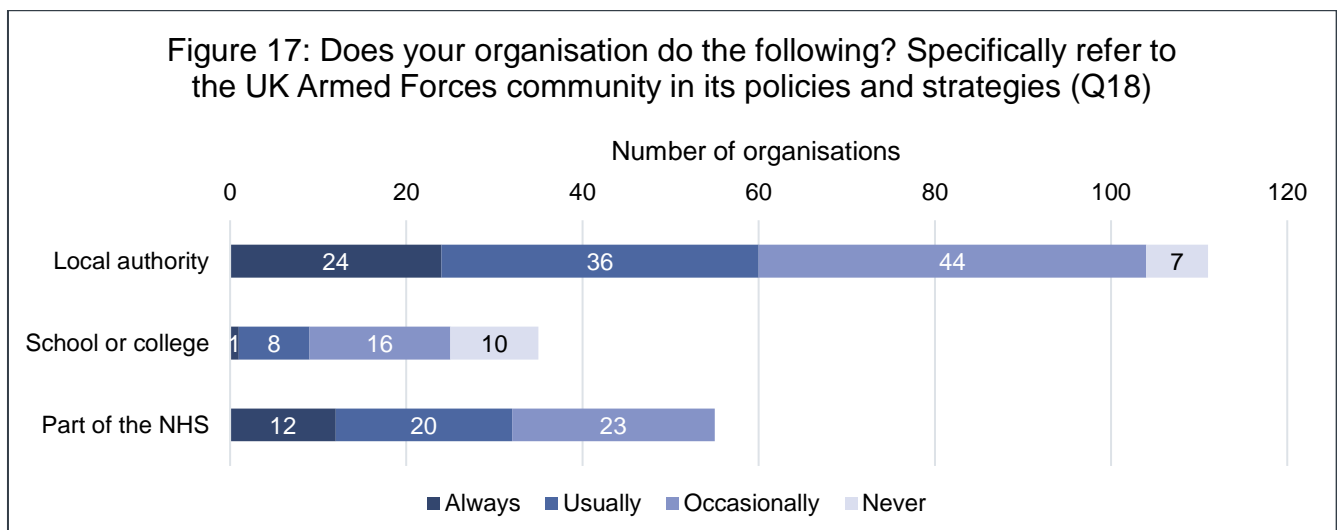
Including membership of the Armed Forces community in equality impact assessments

About half the responders (109 of the 201) 'always' or 'usually' include membership of the UK Armed Forces community in their equality impact assessments (Figure 16). The proportions of responses were fairly similar for the three types of organisation.



Specifically referring to the Armed Forces community in policies and strategies

About half the responders (101 of 201) 'always' or 'usually' specifically refer to the Armed Forces community in their policies and strategies (Figure 17). The proportions were fairly similar for local authorities and NHS bodies, but lower for schools and colleges.



Appendix D – Survey methodology and organisations responding

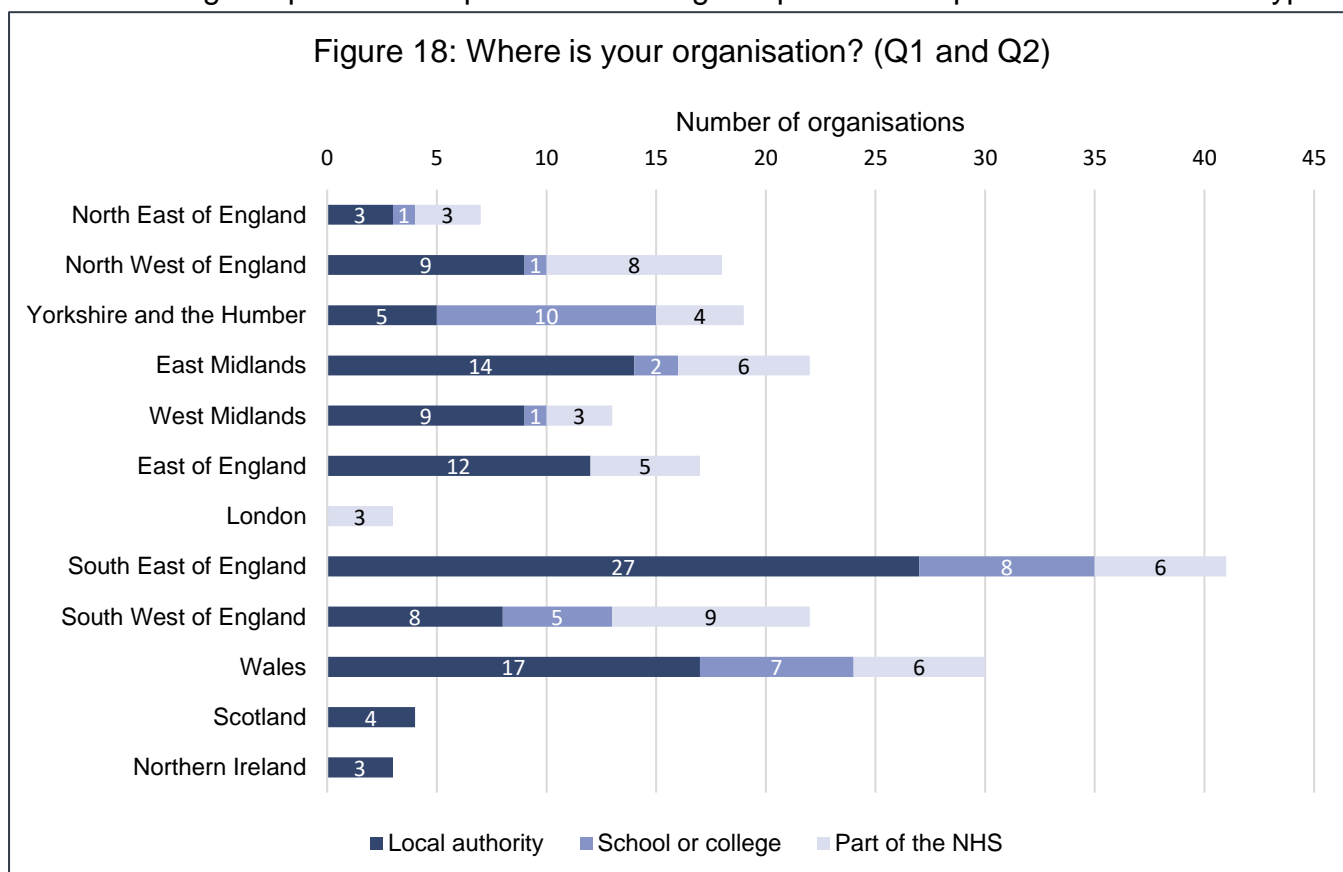
This survey was aimed at organisations subject to the Duty. These are specified public bodies responsible for providing local healthcare, education and housing services to the general population. A full list of bodies subject to the Duty can be found in the [statutory guidance](#).

In total, 201 responses were received:

- 111 responses from local authorities, including city and county councils, borough and metropolitan borough councils, and combined and unitary authorities
- 35 responses from schools or colleges, including primary schools, high schools, academies and colleges
- 55 responses from NHS bodies, including trusts and foundation trusts, local health boards, integrated care boards and NHS England

Clearly, many organisations subject to the Duty did not respond. The organisations that did respond are not a random, representative sample of all bodies subject to the Duty, but are likely the ones already most engaged with the Covenant. Therefore, **it should not be assumed that the results from this survey are representative of all bodies subject to the Duty**. Nevertheless, the data collected has provided valuable insight into where the Duty is working and where further support is required.

Figure 18 shows the number of organisations responding from each region of the UK, split by type of organisation. While the survey was aimed at the whole UK, the majority of responses were from England (164), with 30 from Wales, four from Scotland, and three from Northern Ireland. All regions provided responses. Most regions provided responses from all three types



of organisation, but this was not true of every region. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, only local authorities responded and in London, only NHS bodies.

The questions asked are listed below. The survey included both closed and open questions. For closed questions, responders were offered a range of options and asked to select the most appropriate. There was also an 'Other' option where appropriate. For open questions, responders had space to write free-text answers. While most questions were mandatory for all responders, some were optional or were only relevant to some responders.

Survey

Background information

1. Where is your organisation?

- England Wales Scotland N Ireland

2. (If Q1 is 'England':) Region of England

- North East East Midlands East of England South East
 North West West Midlands London South West
 Yorkshire and the Humber

3. What is your organisation?

- Local authority School or college Part of the NHS None of the above

[Responders answering 'None of the above' were not able to answer any further questions.]

4. Name of organisation _____

5. What is your role within your organisation?

- Management Policy official Teacher/headteacher
 Admin staff Healthcare professional Other_____

6. Contact email _____

Covenant awareness and activity

7. How much does your organisation know about the Armed Forces Covenant?

- 0 - Nothing 2 - A moderate amount
 1 - A little 3 - A lot

8. How much does your organisation know about the Covenant Legal Duty?

- 0 - Nothing 2 - A moderate amount
 1 - A little 3 - A lot

9. Has your organisation made use of the Covenant Legal Duty Statutory Guidance?

- Yes No

10. Has your organisation's understanding of the Covenant increased as a result of the introduction of the Covenant Legal Duty in November 2022?

- Yes
- No

11. Does your organisation provide staff with any training about the Armed Forces Covenant?

- Yes
- No

12. (If Q11 is 'Yes':) Please provide details _____

13. How much does your organisation know about the potential impacts of Service life on the UK Armed Forces community?

- 0 - Nothing
- 1 - A little
- 2 - A moderate amount
- 3 - A lot

14. Has your organisation's knowledge of the impacts of Service life increased as a result of the introduction of the Covenant Legal Duty in November 2022?

- Yes
- No

15. Has your organisation done anything differently as a result of the introduction of the Covenant Legal Duty in November 2022?

- Yes
- No

16. (If Q15 is 'Yes':) What has your organisation done differently as a result of the introduction of the Covenant Legal Duty in November 2022? _____

17. Does your organisation have the following practices in place?

	Yes, this practice is in place and very active	Yes, this practice is in place	No, this practice is not in place	Not sure
A Covenant Champion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A webpage with information for the UK Armed Forces Communitycommunity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A clear public statement of what the UK Armed Forces community can expect from the organisation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
An action plan which is monitored and reviewed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A route for members of the UK Armed Forces community to raise concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Yes, this practice is in place and very active	Yes, this practice is in place	No, this practice is not in place	Not sure
A mechanism for collaborating and information sharing between relevant organisations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A forum with relevant people/organisations which meets regularly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Does your organisation do the following?

	Always	Usually	Occasionally	Never	N/A
Include membership of the UK Armed Forces community in the list of characteristics in equality impact assessments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specifically refer to the UK Armed Forces community in its policies and strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identify which users of its services are members of the UK Armed Forces community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take action to mitigate the impacts of Service life on the UK Armed Forces community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. Are you aware that any of your service users, who are members of the UK Armed Forces community, have been negatively impacted by Service life?

- Yes No

20. (If Q19 is 'Yes':) How have these members of the UK Armed Forces community been negatively impacted by Service life? _____

21. (If Q19 is 'Yes':) What actions does your organisation take to mitigate these impacts? _____

22. (If Q19 is 'Yes':) Has your organisation's actions to mitigate these impacts increased since the introduction of the Covenant Legal Duty in November 2022?

- Yes No

Questions for local authorities only

23. How many schools are in your local authority? (If known) _____

24. What actions does your organisation take to encourage schools to identify children from Service families? _____

Questions for schools only

25. Type of school

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Local authority-maintained school – primary | <input type="radio"/> Local authority-maintained school – secondary |
| <input type="radio"/> Academy – primary | <input type="radio"/> Academy – secondary |
| <input type="radio"/> Non-maintained special school | <input type="radio"/> Further education institution |
| <input type="radio"/> Special post-16 institution | <input type="radio"/> Other |

26. How many children are in your school? _____

27. How many children in your school are from Service families? _____

28. (If Q1 is 'England':) Does your school receive dedicated funding for children from Service families (Service Pupil Premium)?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|

29. (If Q1 is 'England' and Q28 is 'Yes':) How is this dedicated funding spent?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Counselling | <input type="radio"/> School trips for children from Service families |
| <input type="radio"/> Clubs for children from Service families | |
| <input type="radio"/> Funding extra staff hours | <input type="radio"/> Other |

30. Does your school use the Thriving Lives Toolkit?

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Yes | <input type="radio"/> No |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|

31. (If Q30 is 'Yes':) How has this influenced policy and practice for children from Service families?

32. Further information. If there is anything you would like to add that hasn't been covered in this survey, please do so here. For example, further information about your experience of the impacts of Service life on the Armed Forces community, and actions taken to mitigate these impacts. In particular, please consider any disadvantages relating to the functions in the statutory guidance.



Annex A: Metrics

Table 1: Percentage¹ of Service children and non-Service, non-FSM children meeting the expected standard² in phonic decoding at the end of Year 1

		Number of eligible pupils	% of pupils meeting the expected standard in phonic decoding	% of pupils not meeting the expected standard in phonic decoding	% absent	% disapplied
2018	Service children	6,208	84	15	0	1
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	566,895	84	14	0	1
2019	Service children	5,997	84	15	0	1
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	537,948	84	14	0	1
2022	Service children	5,757	80	19	0	1
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	490,626	79	18	0	2
2023	Service children	5,340	83	16	0	1
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	487,490	82	15	0	2

Source: National Pupil Database, phonics results data

Footnotes

¹ Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid phonics record in the phonics screening check. Excludes pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools.

² The mark for the phonics screening check can be between 0 and 40. If a pupil's mark is at or above the threshold mark of 32, they are considered to have met the expected standard.

Table 2a: Percentage¹ of Service children and non-Service, non-FSM children reaching the expected standard at the end of key stage 2

		% of pupils achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics	% of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics (combined) ²
2018 ³	Service children	-	68.3
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	-	67.5
2019 ³	Service children	-	69
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	-	68
2022 ⁴	Service children	-	61.1
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	-	64.8
2023 ⁴	Service children	-	62.7
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	-	66.0

Source: National Pupil Database, key stage 2 results data

Footnotes

¹ Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record and eligible pupils at the end of KS2. Excludes pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools.

² Includes those pupils who reached the expected standard in all of reading, writing and mathematics. The expected standard in reading and mathematics is a scaled score of 100 or above, and pupils assessed as working at greater depth within the expected standard in writing.

³ Due to changes in national curriculum assessments, the expected and higher standards in 2016, 2017 and 2018 are not comparable with previous years.

⁴ Data is not available for 2020 and 2021 as assessments were cancelled in these years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2b: Percentage¹ of Service children and non-Service, non-FSM children working at greater depth within the expected standard at the end of key stage 2

		% of pupils achieving level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics	% of pupils meeting the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics (combined) ²
2018 ³	Service children	-	10.6
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	-	11
2019 ³	Service children	-	10
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	-	12
2022 ⁴	Service children	-	6.9
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	-	8.8
2023 ⁴	Service children	-	7.9
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	-	9.9

Source: National Pupil Database, key stage 2 results data

Footnotes

¹ Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record and eligible pupils at the end of key stage 2. Excludes pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools.

² Includes those pupils who reached a higher standard in all of reading, writing and mathematics. A higher standard is a scaled score of 110 or more in reading and mathematics, and pupils assessed as working at greater depth within the expected standard in writing.

³ Due to changes in national curriculum assessments, the expected and higher standards from 2016 onwards.

⁴ Data is not available for 2020 and 2021 as assessments were cancelled in these years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 2c: Average progress scores for Service children and non-Service, non-FSM children¹ at the end of key stage 2

		Reading			Writing			Mathematics		
		Progress score	Lower confidence interval	Upper confidence interval	Progress score	Lower confidence interval	Upper confidence interval	Progress score	Lower confidence interval	Upper confidence interval
2018	Service children	0.2	0	0.3	-0.1	-0.2	0.1	-0.3	-0.4	-0.1
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
2019	Service children	0.1	-0.1	0.2	-0.1	-0.2	0.1	-0.3	-0.4	-0.1
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
2022	Service children	0.2	0.3	0	-0.1	0.1	-0.3	-0.2	0	-0.3
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.4
2023	Service children ³	0.2	0.1	0.4	0	-0.2	0.1	-0.3	-0.5	-0.2
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.5

Source: National Pupil Database, key stage 2 results data

Footnotes

¹ Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record and eligible pupils at the end of key stage 2. Excludes pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools.

Table 3a: Percentage¹ of Service children and non-Service, non-FSM children achieving key grades in GCSE in English and mathematics (coverage: England)

		% of pupils achieving grades 9 to 4 in English and maths ²	% of pupils achieving grades 9 to 5 in English and mathematics ³
2019	Service children	69.2	44.3
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	68.4	46.7
2020 ⁴	Service children	76.6	53.3
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	75.4	54.1
2021 ⁵	Service children	77.5	54.1
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	77.1	57.1
2022	Service children	73.6	50.9
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	74.3	55.2
2023	Service children	69.7	47.3
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	71.3	51.0

Source: National Pupil Database, key stage 4 results data

Footnotes

¹ Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record and eligible pupils at the end of key stage 4. Excludes pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools.

² The 9 to 4 pass shows pupils who achieved a grade 4 or above in English and mathematics and is provided alongside the headline measure for transparency and comparability to the old measure.

³ From 2017, headline threshold attainment measures use grade 5 for reformed English and mathematics.

⁴ The pupil attainment data for 2020 is based on centre assessment grades rather than exams. Summer 2020 exams were cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the 2019 to 2020 data should not be directly compared to attainment data from previous years for the purposes of measuring changes in student performance.

⁵ Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures, the summer 2021 exam series was cancelled (as it was in 2020). Pupils scheduled to sit GCSE exams in 2021 were awarded a teacher assessment grade submitted by their school. This is a different process to 2020 where centre assessment grades were awarded. Due to the changed awarding process for GCSE grades, it is recommended that year-on-year comparisons are not made. For further information, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualifications-in-summer-2021

Table 3b: Percentage¹ of Service children and non-Service, non-FSM children entering the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and achieving key grades

Year	Group	Number of pupils at the end of key stage 4	% of pupils entered for all EBacc components	% of pupils who achieved EBacc for all components (grades A* to C / 9 to 4 pass) ²	% of pupils who achieved all EBacc components (grades 9 to 5 pass in English and maths) ³
2019	Service children	4,136	38.1	24.5	15.9
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	462,292	42.5	27.2	18.9
2020 ⁴	Service children	4,347	37.9	29.5	20.8
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	468,989	42.5	32.7	23.6
2021 ⁵	Service children	4,570	37.7	28.6	20.3
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	463,488	41.7	32.9	24.4
2022	Service children	4,687	36.9	25.7	19.2
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	461,146	42.0	30.2	23.2
2023	Service children	4,632	36.5	23.5	16.3
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	465,119	42.8	27.8	19.8

Source: National Pupil Database, key stage 4 results data

Footnotes

¹ Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record and eligible pupils at the end of key stage 4. Excludes pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools.

² The 9 to 4 pass shows pupils who achieved a grade 4 or above in English and mathematics and is provided alongside the headline measure for transparency and comparability to the old measure.

³ From 2017, headline threshold attainment measures use grade 5 for reformed English and mathematics.

⁴ The pupil attainment data for 2020 is based on centre assessment grades rather than exams. Summer 2020 exams were cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the 2019 to 2020 data should not be directly compared to attainment data from previous years for the purposes of measuring changes in student performance.

⁵ Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures, the summer 2021 exam series was cancelled (as it was in 2020). Pupils scheduled to sit GCSE exams in 2021 were awarded a teacher assessment grade submitted by their school. This is a different process to 2020 where centre assessment grades were

awarded. Due to the changed awarding process for GCSE grades, it is recommended that year-on-year comparisons are not made. For further information, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualifications-in-summer-2021

Table 3c: Average attainment 8 and progress 8 scores for Service children and non-Service, non-FSM children¹

Year	Group	Average attainment 8 score per pupil	Average progress 8 score	Lower confidence interval for progress 8	Upper confidence interval for progress 8
2019	Service children	48.0	0.00	-0.04	0.04
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	48.6	0.06	0.05	0.06
2020 ²	Service children	52.0	-	-	-
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	52.4	-	-	-
2021 ³	Service children	52.5	-	-	-
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	53.6	-	-	-
2022	Service children	50.5	0.04	0.00	0.08
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	51.8	0.11	0.11	0.12
2023	Service children	48.1	0.04	0	0.08
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	49.6	0.13	0.13	0.14

Source: National Pupil Database key stage 4 results data

Footnotes

¹ Includes pupils at state-funded schools in England with a valid school census record and eligible pupils at the end of key stage 4. Excludes pupils in alternative provision, pupil referral units and international schools.

² The pupil attainment data for 2020 is based on centre assessment grades rather than exams. Summer 2020 exams were cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result the 2019 to 2020 data should not be directly compared to attainment data from previous years for the purposes of measuring changes in student performance. In addition, in response to the changes in grade awarding process, DfE announced it was not publishing school accountability statistics using 2020 data, which explains the absence of 2020 progress 8 data.

³ Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures, the summer 2021 exam series was cancelled (as it was in 2020). Pupils scheduled to sit GCSE exams in 2021 were awarded a teacher assessment grade submitted by their school. This is a different process to 2020 where centre assessment grades were awarded. Due to the changed awarding process for GCSE grades, it is recommended that year-on-year comparisons are not made. For further information, see: www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-qualifications-in-summer-2021

Table 4a: Percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard, by number of school moves¹ from years 1 to 6 for Service children and non-Service, non-FSM children

		Number of moves from year 1 to year 6 ¹							
		% of pupils reported in spring census				% of pupils achieving the expected standard			
		0	1	2	3+	0	1	2	3+
2018/19 ²	Service children	34.1	40.7	16.8	8.40	72.0	68.9	64.5	64.0
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	64.2	29.5	5.2	1.20	71.7	67.8	62.0	53.7
2021/22	Service children	55.2	35.8	8.0	1.10	60.9	60.0	62.4	51.2
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	75.9	22.2	1.8	0.10	66.5	63.3	58.4	51.6
2022/23	Service children ³	84.0	13.1	2.6	0.30	63.9	63.1	62.4	54.5
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	92.9	6.5	0.5	0.00	67.6	61.3	57.1	54.9

Footnotes

¹ Number of school moves between years 1 and 6 for pupils finishing year 6 in the academic year stated.

² Based on revised figures in the National Pupil Database, which may differ slightly from finalised published figures.

³ Percentages for moves of 3+ are volatile, based on very small numbers of pupils, and conclusions should be treated with caution.

Table 4b: Percentage of pupils with English and maths grades 5 to 9, by number of school moves from years 7 to 11 for Service children and non-Service, non-FSM children

		Number of moves from year 7 to year 11 ¹							
		% of pupils reported in spring census				% of pupils achieving English and maths grades 9 to 5			
		0	1	2	3+	0	1	2	3+
2019/20 ²	Service children ³	90.9	7.9	1.0	0.2	51.1	32.2	24.4	50.0
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	94.9	4.7	0.4	0.0	53.2	32.0	16.9	13.2
2020/21 ⁴	Service children	93.0	6.4	0.6	0.0	52.2	28.3	26.9	0.0
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	96.4	3.4	0.2	0.0	55.9	33.6	22.7	11.1
2021/22 ⁵ (revised)	Service children ³	96.5	3.3	0.2	0.0	48.2	20.5	0.0	0.0
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	98.2	1.7	0.1	0.0	54.0	20.8	11.2	6.1
2022/23 ⁵	Service children ³	95.5	4.2	0.3	0.0	45.3	23.2	15.4	0.0
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	97.0	2.8	0.2	0.0	50.2	20.9	9.9	9.1

Source: National Pupil Database, key stage 4 results data

Footnotes

¹ Number of school moves between years 7 and 11 for pupils finishing year 11 in the academic year stated.

² The pupil attainment data for 2020 is based on centre assessment grades rather than exams. Summer 2020 exams were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the 2019 to 2020 data should not be directly compared to attainment data from previous years for the purposes of measuring changes in student performance.

³ Percentages for moves of 3+ are volatile, based on very small numbers of pupils, and conclusions should be treated with caution.

⁴ The pupil attainment data for 2021 is based on teacher assessment grades submitted by their school rather than exams. This is a different process to 2020 where centre assessment grades were awarded. Due to the changed awarding process for GCSE grades, it is recommended that year-on-year comparisons are not made to 2020 or other years.

⁵ Based on revised figures in the National Pupil Database, which may differ slightly from finalised published figures.

Table 5: Ofsted rating¹ of schools attended by Service children and non-Service, non-FSM children

		Ofsted rating				
		Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Unavailable ²
England	Service children	12.9%	74.6%	9.3%	2.2%	1.0%
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	16.8%	72.1%	8.2%	2.1%	0.8%
East Midlands	Service children	17.3%	72.5%	8.2%	1.9%	0.2%
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	11.4%	74.3%	10.8%	2.9%	0.6%
East of England	Service children	10.1%	74.8%	10.3%	1.4%	3.3%
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	15.8%	71.9%	9.2%	1.9%	1.3%
London	Service children	30.2%	62.9%	6.1%	0.3%	0.4%
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	28.7%	67.1%	3.1%	0.3%	0.8%
North East	Service children	12.6%	74.3%	9.2%	2.5%	1.3%
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	16.1%	71.2%	9.2%	2.3%	1.2%
North West	Service children	12.0%	72.6%	12.7%	1.8%	0.9%
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	15.0%	70.5%	11.0%	2.5%	0.9%
South East	Service children	15.0%	74.9%	8.1%	1.7%	0.2%
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	17.1%	73.9%	6.8%	1.8%	0.4%
South West	Service children	9.7%	76.7%	10.3%	2.1%	1.3%
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	12.4%	74.6%	9.4%	2.5%	0.9%
West Midlands	Service children	10.8%	76.9%	8.0%	3.9%	0.4%
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	13.6%	74.1%	8.3%	2.9%	1.1%

		Ofsted rating				
		Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Unavailable ²
Yorkshire and The Humber	Service children	13.7%	71.6%	9.6%	3.6%	1.5%
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	15.8%	72.0%	8.8%	2.8%	0.6%

Source: National Pupil Database, Ofsted December 2023

Footnotes

¹ School attended as recorded in spring census 2023 to 2024, Ofsted rating as of 31 December 2023 reported in Get Information About Schools. This data may need to be revised, as Ofsted inspection ratings in Get Information About Schools have not yet been updated with changes to the Ofsted methodology published in June 2018. See www.gov.uk/government/statistics/changes-to-ofsteds-statistical-reporting-of-inspection-outcomes-for-state-funded-schools-an-analysis-of-the-changes and www.gov.uk/government/collections/maintained-schools-and-academies-inspections-and-outcomes-official-statistics

² Includes pupils at schools that are new and have not been inspected. Does not include pupils at MOD overseas schools, which are not subject to Ofsted inspection.

Table 6a: Pupil destinations after completing key stage 4 by Service child status in year 11
Coverage: England (state-funded schools)¹

Destination year ²		Number of eligible pupils	% of eligible pupils					
			Any sustained education or employment	Any sustained education destination	Sustained apprenticeships	Sustained employment destination	Destination not sustained	Activity not captured in the data
2018/19	Service children	3,782	95	87	4	4	4	1
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	453,803	95	88	4	3	4	1
2019/20 ³	Service children	3,971	95	87	4	4	4	1
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	462,731	95	88	4	3	4	1
2020/21 ⁴	Service children	4,345	96	90	3	3	3	1
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	469,281	95	90	3	2	4	1
2021/22 ²	Service children	4,574	95	87	4	5	4	1
	Non-Service, non-FSM children	463,776	95	88	4	4	4	1

Source: Longitudinal Education Outcomes dataset

Footnotes

¹ State-funded schools include local authority maintained schools, academies, free schools, city technology colleges, further education colleges with provision for 14-to-16-year-olds, state-funded special schools and non-maintained special schools.

² Employment and benefits data from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Department for Work and Pensions from the Longitudinal Education Outcomes dataset was included for the first time in 2014 to 2015 and accounted for a 1 percentage point increase in employment destinations. Direct comparison with previous years' employment estimates should be treated with caution. Education destinations are not affected.

³ The first two terms of the 2019 to 2020 academic year were mostly unaffected by the COVID-19 disruption. The only exception is data for students progressing to apprenticeships. This is because the methodology takes into account whether students have sustained an apprenticeship for six months at any time in the 2019 to 2020 academic year (between August 2019 and July 2020), rather than the first two terms for other destinations.

⁴ The first two terms of the 2020 to 2021 academic year are affected by the COVID-19 disruption. Many employers and apprenticeship providers took on fewer individuals during the pandemic and so it is anticipated that sustained employment and apprenticeship destinations will be lower than for previous years.

Table 6b: Student destinations after 16 to 18 study (all level 3 qualifications) by Service child status in year 13¹ (time series²)

Coverage: England (mainstream schools and colleges)

Destination year	Number of eligible pupils	Service children percentages								
		Any sustained education or employment	Any sustained education destination	Further education (level 3 and below)	Higher education (level 4 and above)	Other education destinations	Sustained apprenticeships	Sustained employment destination	Destination not sustained	Activity not captured in the data
2018/19 ⁴	2,409	91	55	5	48	3	6	30	7	2
2019/20 ^{4, 5}	2,668	90	52	5	45	2	6	32	7	2
2020/21	2,692	89	58	7	49	3	4	26	9	2
2021/22	2,646	91	58	5	51	2	5	28	7	2

Destination year	Number of eligible pupils	Non-Service and non-FSM children percentages								
		Any sustained education or employment	Any sustained education destination	Further education (level 3 and below)	Higher education (level 4 and above)	Other education destinations	Sustained apprenticeships	Sustained employment destination	Destination not sustained	Activity not captured in the data
2018/19 ⁴	319,079	89	58	5	51	2	7	24	8	4
2019/20 ^{4,5}	331,401	88	58	6	51	2	6	24	8	4
2020/21	335,225	86	62	7	53	2	4	20	10	4
2021/22	316,995	89	61	5	55	1	5	23	7	3

Source: Longitudinal Education Outcomes dataset

Footnotes

¹ Service child status was determined by looking across three years before students reached the end of 16 to 18 study. The majority of them would have been at the end of key stage 4 study two years before.

² Employment and benefits data from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Department for Work and Pensions from the Longitudinal Education Outcomes dataset have increased coverage and estimates of employment substantially from 2014 to 2015. This time series for the years 2010 to 2011, to 2013 to 2014 has been updated to include Longitudinal Education Outcomes data. These revised statistics were first published in the statistical working paper on improvements to destination measures in August 2016.

³ The data shows how many students took any level 3 qualification in the destination years 2018 to 2019. This year's data has examined how many students have taken any level 3 qualification. Due to changes in which qualifications are counted as approved or unapproved, presenting all level 3 for the past two years makes the data more comparable.

⁴ The first two terms of the 2020 to 2021 academic year are affected by the COVID-19 disruption. Many employers and apprenticeship providers took on fewer individuals during the pandemic and so it is anticipated that sustained employment and apprenticeship destinations will be lower than for previous years.

Table 7: New social housing lettings in England and length of time in local authority area immediately before this letting, for households containing a member/veteran of the UK regular Armed Forces and non-Service households

Length of time household had lived in the local authority area immediately before this letting	2020/21			2021/22			2022/23		
	% of those still serving or who left within the last 5 years	% of those who left more than 5 years ago	% of the non-Service population	% of those still serving or who left within the last 5 years	% of those who left more than 5 years ago	% of the non-Service population	% of those still serving or who left within the last 5 years	% of those who left more than 5 years ago	% of the non-Service population
New to local authority area	18.5	13.3	9.3	20.6	13.3	8.5	27.1	15.5	11.8
Less than 1 year	7.3	6.5	6.3	9	5.4	5.7	7.1	4.9	5.9
1 to 2 years	8.1	4.2	5.0	5.4	3.5	4.8	3.2	3.4	4.1
2 to 3 years	5.0	3.1	3.7	4.3	2.8	3.7	3.7	2.3	3.6
3 to 4 years	4.0	2.2	2.8	5.2	1.7	3	3.2	1.8	2.8
4 to 5 years	8.7	3.4	3.8	3.8	2.8	3.8	4.7	3.5	3.7
More than 5 years	48.4	67.3	69.1	51.9	70.4	70.4	51.0	62.5	68.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	481	1,875	166,608	447	1,672	177,588	623	1,325	163,071

Source: CORE social housing lettings 2018 to 2019, 2019 to 2020, and 2020 to 2021, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Note: Any discrepancies in totals are due to rounding.

Table 8: Length of time on waiting list for current social housing/accommodation, estimated percentages, for Service population and non-Service population in England

Length of time on waiting list before allocation	2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
	% of the Service population and families	% of the non-Service population	% of the Service population and families	% of the non-Service population	% of the Service population and families	% of the non-Service population	% of the Service population and families	% of the non-Service population
Less than 6 months	68.2	55.4	52.5	58.0	67.2	52.5	69.1	51.5
6 months to 1 year	16.7	14.9	12.4	9.2	10.3	16.2	10.6	17.5
1 to 2 years	7.6	8.7	21.8	11.5	5.2	11.1	8.0	8.6
2 to 3 years	u	6.4	u	6.2	4.1	5.9	5.6	9.0
3 to 5 years	3.5	5.9	u	7.6	7.2	5.7	u	6.3
5 years or more	2.4	8.7	u	7.6	6	8.5	4.4	7.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Sample size	199	4,394	46	940	88	2,767	134	4,646

Source: English Housing Survey 2018 to 2019, 2020 to 2021, and 2022 to 2023 full household sample.

To safeguard against data disclosure, findings derived from unweighted cell counts of less than 5 and more than 0 are replaced with a 'u.' The 2020 to 2021 English Housing Survey sample was much smaller than previous years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 9: Satisfaction with social rented sector, estimated percentages, for Service population and non-Service population in England

		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
		Service population and families	Non-Service population	Service population and families	Non-Service population	Service population and families	Non-Service population
Satisfaction with accommodation	Satisfied (%)	74.4	71.3	76.3	74	73.9	69.2
	Sample size	79	1,112	222	3,746	320	5,134
Satisfaction with tenure	Satisfied (%)	79.8	77.1	85.9	78.3	76.6	74.9
	Sample size	86	1,188	230	4,020	340	5,540
Satisfaction with area	Satisfied (%)	80.1	78.4	83.8	78.7	84.9	77.1
	Sample size	84	1,230	233	3,955	373	5,666
Satisfaction with repairs/maintenance	Satisfied (%)	77.4	61.7	67.9	59	65	53.2
	Sample size	76	968	200	3,042	278	3,908

Source: English Housing Survey 2020 to 2021, 2021 to 2022, and 2022 to 2023 full household sample.

Note: The 2020 to 2021 English Housing Survey sample was much smaller than previous years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 10: Satisfaction with private rented sector, estimated percentages, for Service population and non-Service population in England

		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
		Service population and families	Non-Service population	Service population and families	Non-Service population	Service population and families	Non-Service population	Service population and families	Non-Service population
Satisfaction with accommodation	Satisfied (%)	78.0	81.7	63.5	78.7	80.9	79.1	84.8	79.4
	Sample size	233	4,478	83	1,408	222	2,837	194	4,532
Satisfaction with tenure	Satisfied (%)	67.4	69.0	72.3	62.5	58.2	66.2	65.1	66.4
	Sample size	218	3,723	95	1,102	175	2,464	149	3599
Satisfaction with area	Satisfied (%)	81.9	83.5	97.5	85.4	90.7	85.9	84.1	85.7
	Sample size	251	4,594	126	1,549	217	3,061	207	4955
Satisfaction with repairs/maintenance	Satisfied (%)	64.8	74.5	64.3	75.2	68.7	74.1	69.3	69.1
	Sample size	204	3,958	85	1,291	145	2,635	168	3952

Source: English Housing Survey 2019 to 2020, 2020 to 2021, 2021 to 2022, and 2022 to 2023 full household sample.

Note: The 2020 to 2021 English Housing Survey sample was much smaller than previous years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 11: UK Armed Forces personnel¹, wait times for cancer treatment in England, numbers and percentages

		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		2022/23		2023/24	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Four-week (28 days) wait from urgent referral to patient told they have cancer, or cancer is definitively excluded	Service personnel ¹					1,354	79.8	2,785	77.2	2,887	78.2
	England					1,365,360	71.1	2,862,261	70.3	3,095,346	72.8
	Target ²						75		75		75
One-month (31-day) diagnosis to first treatment wait for all cancers ³	Service personnel	111	97.3	115	95.7	105	97.1	132	91.7	124	91.1
	England	316,588	96.0	275,553	95.0	321,755	93.5	333,590	91.7	348,543	90.6
	Target ²		96		96		96		96		96

Source: [Cancer Waiting Times Database \(CWT-Db\), NHS England](#)

1. 'Service personnel' refers to all Defence Medical Services-registered patients. This will include Service families who are Defence Medical Services registered.
2. Operational standard: expected level of performance based on case mix, clinical requirements, potential numbers of patients unfit for treatment or electing to delay treatment (patient choice).
3. Patients treated within 31 days of the decision to treat date

Table 12: UK Armed Forces veterans, Op RESTORE referrals and enquiry source

Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 ¹	2024/25 ² (partial)	Total
Referrals received	50	41	149	265	386	260	1151
Specialities							
Musculoskeletal and pain	66%	78%	80%	93%	83%	76%	87%
Neurology	12%	5%	6%	4%	5%	6%	5%
Mental health (no physical health issues)	8%	5%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Other	14%	12%	14%	3%	13%	18%	7%
Enquiry source							
GP	66%	51%	37%	67%	93%	94%	70%
Self/spouse	22%	12%	14%	3%	1%	3%	4%
Mental health provider	4%	7%	33%	21%	3%	0%	11%
Third sector	2%	22%	8%	5%	2%	2%	4%
Other	6%	7%	8%	4%	1%	0%	2%

Source: NHS England

1. 2023 to 2024 is April to August.

2. week effective from June 2023 – Op RESTORE.

Annex B: Further information

To find out more about the Armed Forces Covenant and what it means for you, please visit armedforcescovenant.gov.uk.

If you believe you are being disadvantaged because of your membership of the Armed Forces community, please contact your Families Federation (details below) or the MOD Covenant team by emailing covenant-mailbox@mod.gov.uk.

Documents published by the UK government:

- [Previous Armed Forces Covenant annual reports](#)
- [UK Armed Forces Families Strategy 2022 to 2032](#)
- [Veterans' Strategy Action Plan: 2022 to 2024](#)
- [Statutory guidance on the Covenant Duty](#)
- [Living in our shoes: Understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces families](#)
- [Armed Forces continuous attitude survey](#)
- [Armed Forces Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan](#)

Documents published by other organisations:

- [Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's annual reports](#)
- [Veterans and Armed Forces community: Scottish Government support 2023](#)
- [Welsh Government's Armed Forces Covenant: annual report 2022](#)
- [Understanding the lived experience of military-to-civilian transition and post-Service life among non-UK veterans 2024](#)
- [Top 10 priorities for veterans' health research](#)

Other sources of information and support:

- Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust: covenantfund.org.uk
- Armed Forces Healthcare in England: nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/military-healthcare
- Army Families Federation: aff.org.uk

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- Defence Discount Service: defencediscountservice.co.uk
 - Fighting with Pride: fightingwithpride.org.uk
 - Financial top tips for Service personnel: gov.uk/government/publications/financial-top-tips-for-service-personnel
 - Forces Families Jobs: forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk
 - Forces-Friendly Insurers: biba.org.uk/armed-forces-biba-members-can-help
 - HeadFIT: headfit.org
 - Joining Forces Credit Union: joiningforcescu.co.uk
 - National Insurance credits for partners of Service personnel overseas: gov.uk/guidance/national-insurance-credits-for-partners-of-armed-forces-personnel-BFPO
 - Naval Families Federation: nff.org.uk
 - Royal Air Force Families Federation: raf-ff.org.uk
 - SSAFA: ssafa.org.uk
 - Support for Veterans and their Families: [Support for veterans and their families - GOV.UK](https://gov.uk/government/support-for-veterans-and-their-families)
 - The SCiP Alliance: scipalliance.org
 - The Confederation of Service Charities: cobseo.org.uk
 - The Royal British Legion: britishlegion.org.uk
 - The War Widows' Association: warwidows.org.uk
 - Veteran friendly GP practices: rcgp.org.uk/clinical-and-research/resources/a-to-z-clinical-resources/veteran-friendly-gp-practices
 - Veteran support in Wales: gov.wales/armed-forces-and-veterans
 - Veterans NHS Wales: veteranswales.co.uk
 - Veterans UK: gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk
 - Veterans Work: veteranswork.org.uk

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