
THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT ANNUAL REPORT 2025



The Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2025

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



© Crown copyright 2025

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/official-documents

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at
Covenant-Mailbox@mod.gov.uk

ISBN 978-1-5286-6023-5

E03463894 12/25

Printed on paper containing 40% recycled fibre content minimum

Printed in the UK by HH Associates Ltd. on behalf of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office



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
their Families and the Bereaved.

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 including the bereaved, 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 the 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.

Contents

Ministerial foreword	3
External observations	5
The charity sector	5
Key messages	6
The Armed Forces Covenant	7
Supporting Armed Forces families	8
Policy and programmes	8
Chapter 1: Health and healthcare	14
Healthcare services	15
Armed Forces healthcare policies	19
Veterans	21
The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme	26
Chapter 2: Education	27
Educational outcomes for service children	28
Supporting service children's education	29
Higher education	32
Destinations of service children after Key Stage 4 and 5	32
Apprenticeships	33
Education across devolved governments	33
Chapter 3: Housing and accommodation	35
Single Living Accommodation	36
Service Families Accommodation	36
Home ownership	39
Homelessness	41

Chapter 4: Transition and employment	44
Service families	45
Support for service leavers	47
Veterans in employment	50
Chapter 5: Inquests and judicial engagement	56
The Defence Inquests Unit	56
Safety-related fatalities among the Armed Forces	57
Chapter 6: Direct support for the Armed Forces community	58
VALOUR	59
Veterans' Strategy	60
The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust	60
The bereaved community	66
Chapter 7: Community partnerships and workplace engagement	69
Armed Forces Covenant signatories	70
Employer awareness and attitudes monitor results	72
The Armed Forces Covenant annual conference	73
Armed Forces Covenant awareness	74
Veterans Commissioners	75
Chapter 8: The Covenant Legal Duty	76
The Covenant Legal Duty	77
The House of Commons Defence Committee	80
Devolved governments	80
Chapter 9: Beyond the Covenant	82
Initiatives	83
Annex A: DfE statistics on service children education – England only	86

Ministerial foreword

It is an honour to present this year's annual report, marking a year of significant reform and renewal across defence. At a time of heightened global instability, the role of our Armed Forces has never been more vital. In an era of persistent and evolving threats, our ability to defend the nation and uphold our commitments abroad rests squarely on the professionalism of our service personnel and the resilience of the families and communities who support them. This government has committed to renewing the nation's contract with the Armed Forces community, delivering two above inflation pay awards for service personnel, we are delivering on our promise to make Britain secure at home and strong abroad.

Earlier this year the Prime Minister announced our plans for the extension of the Armed Forces Covenant Legal Duty. This law will make sure that respect and consideration for our Armed Forces community is not just spoken but woven into the very fabric of our policy and service delivery decisions. This stronger legislation will ensure all government departments, including devolved governments, will be legally required to consider the needs of the Armed Forces community when making policy or decisions, giving them a meaningful voice and delivering on this government's pledge to put our Armed Forces community at the very heart of government decision-making. Their courage, duty and sacrifice are the foundation of our national values, and they deserve nothing less.

We are delivering a whole-of-society approach to defence through our first of its kind Strategic Defence Review, published in June 2025. This landmark review set out 62 recommendations, all of which have been accepted in full. These reforms are already transforming defence: establishing new structures, strengthening accountability, and ensuring our people are supported with the tools, training and welfare they deserve. Crucially, the review reinforces our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, recognising that national defence is a shared responsibility across government, communities and industry.

We have matched this strategic intent with decisive action, delivering tangible improvements to the lives of our service personnel and their families. We are on a mission to raise morale, putting people at the heart of our defence plans. This includes the largest Armed Forces pay award in more than two decades – including a 35% uplift for new recruits – demonstrating our recognition of the pressures of service life. Alongside this, backed by £50 million of funding, VALOUR – announced in May of this year – will ensure veterans across the UK will have easier access to essential care and support. Forming part of the Government's commitment to renew the nation's contract with those who have served through the Plan for Change.

We have taken bold action to improve housing, recently announcing our new Defence Housing Strategy with a record multi-year deal of £9 billion in investment, delivering on commitments made in the Strategic Defence Review. This funding follows January's landmark deal with the reacquisition of over 36,000 service homes from private companies, to deal with long-standing concerns around affordability and quality. Alongside this is the 'homes for heroes' policy means that under this government, support will be there for veterans at risk of homelessness. This includes the removal of the local connection test, making it easier to access social housing, and a new 'Forces First' approach to reforming Defence land for new housing

In September 2025, we expanded early years childcare funding overseas to match the offer available in England, enabling working families to access defence-funded childcare for 30 hours per week, per child, for 38 weeks of the year, from nine months of age until school start. This initiative benefits 900 service families and supports 2,000 children globally, delivering a combined saving of £5 million per year. Moreover, the Service Pupil Support programme continues to provide additional funding to educational providers, ensuring the needs of service pupils are met through effective interventions along their educational journeys. In the latest funding round, just over £2.5 million was awarded to 34 projects across the UK, all dedicated to helping service pupils thrive.

We are also delivering greater fairness and accountability. The introduction of a new tri-service complaints process, supported by the establishment of a violence against women and girls taskforce, ensures all personnel are protected from discrimination, harassment and bullying. We have taken a major step to strengthening support for our Armed Forces, and the families who stand beside them. Our Armed Forces Commissioner Act 2025 will establish an independent commissioner, delivering on our manifesto commitment to establish a strong independent champion for our forces reporting to parliament rather than ministers

The past year has been one of bold action for our forces and their families: securing pay, housing, welfare, oversight and long-term investment in our people and capabilities. The work continues, but the direction is clear. Our Armed Forces and their families make extraordinary sacrifices. In return, they deserve respect, support and fair treatment. The Armed Forces Covenant is built on a simple but powerful principle: no one in the Armed Forces community should face disadvantage in accessing public or commercial services. We are putting the Armed Forces community at the very heart of government decision-making. Their courage, duty and sacrifice are the foundation of our national values, and they deserve nothing less.

This report demonstrates our unwavering commitment to that principle, and our determination to build a defence community that is valued, protected and empowered.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'J Healey'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

THE RT HON JOHN HEALEY MP
Secretary of State for Defence

External observations

Introduction

Cobseo, The Royal British Legion (RBL) and the Families Federations welcome the opportunity to represent sector-wide observations on the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report. We acknowledge the steps taken throughout 2025 to improve the lives of, and deliver better support for, the Armed Forces community.

For the first time, these comments capture views from across the Armed Forces charity sector and encompass in one set of observations those which have historically been provided by the observing organisations separately. This collective response offers a co-ordinated assessment of progress in the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant, and its Legal Duty, throughout 2025.

The charity sector

Cobseo, as the Confederation of Service Charities, supports, convenes, facilitates and enables its members through effective information exchange, helping to identify and evidence issues of common concern, and coordinate necessary and appropriate action. Cobseo represents and champions the needs and opinions of its member organisations, individually and collectively.

The RBL is the UK's largest charity dedicated to bringing society together to recognise, remember, and support the Armed Forces community, and ensuring that their unique contribution is not forgotten. The RBL helps the Armed Forces community with employment, financial issues and recovery, through to lifelong care and independent living.

The three **single Service Families Federations** are independent and evidence-based organisations who work to improve the quality of life for serving personnel and their families. They provide support and guidance on matters affecting the daily lives of Service families, acting as an advocate when appropriate to resolve complex issues with their respective Services, with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and with other government departments and organisational stakeholders.

Key messages

We acknowledge that the Covenant seeks to ensure that members of the Armed Forces community receive the respect, support and fair treatment that they deserve and that they should face no disadvantage compared to their civilian peers. Where appropriate, special consideration should be given to those who have given the most, such as the injured and the bereaved.

Statutory funded support programmes

Throughout 2025, we welcomed a number of new and ongoing initiatives that have progressed the aims of the Covenant. Tailored programmes, such as Op FORTITUDE, Op COURAGE, and Op COMMUNITY continue to offer essential support to members of the Armed Forces community. The expansion of support provided through Op NOVA for those navigating the justice system, as well as the introduction of Op ASCEND for veteran employment, are welcome initiatives that go some way in mitigating the Armed Forces community's most current needs.

VALOUR

The announcement of VALOUR in 2025 is broadly welcomed by the sector as a means of ensuring that veterans can access essential care and support through better co-ordinated services, informed by data and evidence. We welcome the intent to expand the service to serving personnel, families and the bereaved in future iterations. The VALOUR brand and marketing must be considered, as the programme is expanded, to ensure that it is relevant and accessible to the wider Armed Forces community.

Exploiting best practice

There are demonstrable examples of best practice in areas across the UK, such as through community-led and Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT)-backed initiatives, which have the potential to be scaled-up through continued support from VALOUR grants and governance, while maintaining what is already effective.

Data and evidence

We are pleased that data and evidence are set to play a foundational role in informing continued support through VALOUR. This innovation must establish a clear precedent to improve data collection, data standards, and evaluation across the sector. The planned future expansion of VALOUR to include serving personnel, veterans and bereaved family members will future-proof the concept, but require the broader voice of the Armed Forces community to be built into service design to make this expansion effective.

The Armed Forces Covenant

Extension of Legal Duty

We welcome the commitment to extend the Armed Forces Covenant Legal Duty (the 'Covenant Duty') as this marks a significant step towards strengthening the Covenant principles. Expanding the Covenant Duty to cover fourteen new policy matters throughout the UK and devolved governments will ensure a more comprehensive and consistent approach to supporting the Armed Forces community.

Implementation

While this extension is broadly welcomed, there remains some significant challenges in how the extended Covenant Duty will be implemented, and its impact monitored. Awareness and understanding of the Covenant principles is largely inconsistent across those delivering the Covenant Duty, the wider public, and the Armed Forces community. A renewed and ongoing awareness campaign is necessary in the coming year to drive greater consistency in the application of the Covenant and Covenant Duty principles.

Training

The comprehensive introduction of high-quality training across all levels of government and public bodies would help address inconsistencies in the application of Covenant principles within and between organisations. While there are existing examples of these resources through which there has been demonstrable success in subsequent Covenant implementation, there is no consistent approach to this. Accessible, evidence-based training and guidance is needed to establish a shared understanding of the Covenant Duty, and expectations of those delivering it.

Resource

Organisations within scope of the existing Covenant Duty regularly report limited and unsustainable funding as a notable concern, limiting the scope for important initiatives such as relevant training, Covenant promotion and dedicated Armed Forces support roles. This must be addressed as the Covenant is brought fully into law. Additionally, the integration of the Covenant Duty into mainstream strategies and services across the UK would further mitigate its potential vulnerability to varied local priorities and budget constraints.

Clarity

Consistency in Covenant Duty application and monitoring is predicated on its principles and scope being clearly defined, effectively applied, and robustly enforced. This includes the need for a definition of 'due regard', and the nuances of policy areas that fall within scope of the new Covenant Duty; for example, whether the extended scope of Covenant Duty covers social care for both adults and children, and organisations and businesses commissioned by government to deliver statutory services.

Alignment

Throughout this report, the strength of collaboration and partnerships is clear, and the co-ordination of resources and expertise has driven tangible change for the Armed Forces community. We look forward to ongoing engagement with MOD, and all other government departments, to help ensure the most impactful implementation of the Covenant Duty for the entire Armed Forces community.

Supporting Armed Forces families

Current Armed Forces Families Strategy

We have seen progress this year in the offer of tailored and accessible support to Armed Forces families. Recognising the unique needs of Armed Forces families is strategically significant, as is ensuring that this group is not unintentionally marginalised by language and terminology. It is essential that MOD establish clearer aims and accountability measures, in line with the Armed Forces Families Strategy, to ensure that the Covenant remains relevant to families of serving personnel, veterans, and the bereaved, and is fully reflected in future reporting.

Future Armed Forces Families Strategy

The current Armed Forces Families Strategy comprises several discrete programmes, such as wrap-around childcare and overseas employment. We continue to believe that, while such programmes are worthy, they fall short of addressing policy areas which might have a more profound outcome. Examples could include the balance between mobility and stability and placing family considerations at the heart of service personnel career management. We remain keen to engage on this key issue with the MOD.

The bereaved community

We are pleased to see progress and further commitment to address the unique needs of the bereaved Armed Forces community. Improving support for bereaved military families through the AFCFT, the Defence Bereaved Families Group (DBFG), a renewed Purple Book offer, and effective forums and resources to meet the needs of this group. We urge MOD to continue this progress and to ensure that the support to the bereaved community is enduring, accessible and effective.

Policy and programmes

While progress across a number of policy areas has been demonstrated, ongoing challenges remain across the Armed Forces community.

Health and care

Despite local healthcare services being within scope of the existing Covenant Duty, significant and long-standing issues persist for the Armed Forces community. Lack of continuity of primary and secondary care for service families remains a concern, whereby high mobility

across the UK and overseas can result in delayed or inconsistent treatment, and limited information transferability, which can impact the ability to make informed decisions about healthcare. The work of the NHS Armed Forces commissioning team continues to provide vital support for mobile families when faced with the impact of moving back to the UK, between Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) or across UK borders. However, progress must be made promptly to implement tools and resources to transfer information and improve awareness, which will in turn mitigate the impact of higher mobility across borders for the Armed Forces community.

As highlighted previously in the observations, tailored initiatives to support veterans accessing and navigating health services, such as Op COURAGE, Op RESTORE and Op COMMUNITY, are welcome. These programmes facilitate increased awareness of the needs of the Armed Forces community and their families, and lead to better-informed support from medical professionals.

The variation in support for the Armed Forces community is equally apparent across ICBs, particularly between health and social care provision. Health is subject to the Covenant Duty, while social care is not, despite the often-inextricable link between these services. The need for greater awareness and support for the Armed Forces community within social care is apparent within the take-up and experiences of care homes and providers accredited through the Veteran Friendly Framework. The inclusion of social care within the extended Covenant Duty is also welcome and necessary progress.

Housing

Housing continues to present a significant challenge, spanning across the Armed Forces community. Following the Strategic Defence Review (SDR), we welcome the significant investment across Service Families Accommodation (SFA) and single living accommodation (SLA). However, uncertainties remain about future subsidised housing options in light of the paused Modernised Accommodation Offer, particularly for those in long-term relationships and those who have their children for 80 days or more a year. We are pleased to see measures to support increased home ownership among serving families. However, we encourage an urgent approach to establishing consistency in the application of council tax discount for members of the Armed Forces who own homes but reside in SFA elsewhere in mainland UK, and in particular, those posted overseas who are currently being charged an empty home or second home premium by certain local authorities.

Significant concern remains for service families who separate and remain in SFA beyond the 93-day notice period and face subsequent trespass charges ('mesne profits'), but unlike their civilian peers, cannot claim Universal Credit housing costs element to cover these costs owing to licensing restrictions. It is essential that MOD and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) collaborate urgently and effectively to rectify this disadvantage. Resources to establish a consistent awareness of these challenges, and of the Covenant Duty, are necessary for local authorities to support the Armed Forces community effectively.

We are pleased to see the continuation of tailored support for those facing housing challenges upon leaving service through the extension of Op FORTITUDE into 2026, alongside legislative

measures and housing options across Wales and Scotland. Suitable and affordable housing is fundamental to both operational effectiveness in service and the ability to thrive in civilian life upon leaving service. The meaningful integration of the Covenant Duty into housing strategies and standards, alongside long-term and sustainable funding, is fundamental in facilitating housing access on an equitable footing for the Armed Forces community. In addition, responsibility also lies with MOD to provide better information on housing options from the outset for serving personnel and families, so they can better prepare financially for their chosen accommodation option prior to leaving service.

Education and childcare

While education policy falls within the scope of the existing Covenant Duty, we consider it necessary that MOD continues to work closely with the Department for Education (DfE) and devolved equivalents to drive measures to achieve equitable outcomes for the Armed Forces community when navigating education systems, allowing all children and young people from an Armed Forces background to thrive. We welcome the contributions of the Service Children's Progression Alliance (SCiP Alliance) and Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru (SSCE Cymru), through which knowledge and resources have been effective in helping to mitigate disadvantage and meet the unique needs of Service children. Going forward, it remains essential that UK-wide metrics are established to monitor the scale and nature of experiences and outcomes of service children.

Service families continue to report education-related issues for service children, which are often linked to mobility and/or separation. For some, this may be due to regular or short-notice assignments across the UK and abroad, and consequent issues with educational transitions, including accessing school places, or navigating different education systems and processes. These challenges can be exacerbated for children with special or additional education need and/or disabilities (SEND/AN) who may experience delays in accessing assessments or the provision that can meet their needs, and may be hindered by inconsistent thresholds for SEND/AN support. MOD Local Authority Partnership (MODLAP) guidance is a positive step forward, and we urge MOD to consider developing equivalent resources in partnership with the Devolved Nations and overseas settings.

We acknowledge the expansion of the defence wraparound childcare (WAC) scheme as a means of facilitating greater accessibility of the employment of, and wider support for, serving families. However, disparities in availability and affordability of childcare across the UK and overseas remains a concern. We encourage MOD to utilise the extended Covenant Duty as a vehicle to work with local authorities and providers to address any challenges or gaps in provision to enable service families to access equitable early learning and childcare provision, as well as bringing greater consistency to funded childcare provision for families assigned across UK nations and overseas.

Immigration and visas

We are disappointed that the unique circumstances, and frequent challenges, faced by non-UK Armed Forces personnel and their families receive limited recognition in this report. Personnel continue to face barriers accessing eVisas, and in turn share codes, which restricts their access to certain financial products, housing and employment. These challenges can persist

upon leaving service, whereby leave outside the rules affords UK residency until indefinite leave to remain is granted, yet there is no recourse to public funds or employment.

Despite the government's welcome commitment to waive fees for indefinite leave to remain for families of non-UK personnel, there has been no progress in bringing in this policy change. As a result, this group continues to face considerable financial barriers to supporting family members during their service, equating to almost £15,000 for a spouse and two children, prior to incurring fees for travel, postage, and biometrics costs. In recognition of the significant contribution of non-UK personnel and their families to the Armed Forces, it is essential that these commitments are met promptly, and in line with the renewed obligation to provide stronger support for this group under the extended Covenant Duty.

Employment and transition

For those transitioning out of service and navigating the civilian labour market, it is encouraging to see that an array of support mechanisms have been introduced, or continued, throughout this year. Industry-led employment initiatives, such as Step Into Health and Op ASCEND have demonstrated their effectiveness in providing the tools to facilitate appropriate employment for service-leavers. Further evaluation of these schemes would be welcome to determine the sustainability of employment for this group, and the nature of work in line with ambition and skill. As part of this work, formal extension of Op ASCEND to include partners of serving personnel would be welcome progress in the coming year. The defence employer recognition scheme (ERS) has continued to drive a clear increase in Covenant awareness and implementation across a range of employers, enabling more fulfilling careers for service-leavers, reservists and serving families, with employment support that is founded in knowledge, understanding, and an ambition to mitigate any disadvantage.

Employment support for Armed Forces spouses and partners is fundamental to ensuring that families can make informed choices about assignments as well as recognising their importance to serving personnel throughout their career. To this end, expanding programmes aimed at service leavers and veterans, to include spouses and partners of serving personnel and those bereaved in service, would reap tangible benefits to the whole community, supporting them to access sustainable and fulfilling employment. There remains a notable lack of guidance and support for spouses and partners of serving personnel overseas. While the ongoing work to create a government wide international remote working (IRW) policy approach is appreciated, this is only pertinent to Civil Service employees. Similarly, there is a lack of information for employers around the nuances and impact of host nation agreements, and a need to create wider initiatives for accessible employment overseas.

The ongoing support delivered by Armed Forces champions throughout statutory services continues to have a significant and positive impact on representing the needs of the Armed Forces community, as well as upholding the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant in service delivery. It is essential that such initiatives are resourced and regularly evaluated, to ensure that champions are equipped to meet current needs of the Armed Forces community on a consistent basis, regardless of location.

Financial wellbeing

We recognise the uptake of Universal Credit amongst serving personnel and their families as indicative of financial wellbeing challenges. Complicated and unaddressed policy interactions, such as the requirements to reclaim the higher rate of Stamp Duty Land Tax for homeowners in service, further demonstrate the need for a stronger Covenant Duty within currently overlooked policy landscapes.

Similarly, for injured veterans and bereaved families who claim military compensation after leaving service, treatment of these payments as regular income within means tests for certain welfare benefits demonstrates evident disadvantage in comparison to their civilian peers, who have equivalent payments awarded through the court disregarded as income in full. Encompassing service-related compensation within scope of the extended Covenant Duty is also essential in addressing key recommendations from the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Quinquennial Review, and generating momentum for further review, ensuring that this scheme is fit for purpose in meeting current need.

Implementing the Covenant in the devolved nations

As the principal theme of this observation, the necessity for consistent and thorough application of the Covenant Duty is predicated on its application across devolved nations. We believe that this requires regularity in standards, while recognising the unique needs of the Armed Forces community across respective nations. Although we welcome pockets of good practice to mitigate this, such as devolved-specific homelessness support programmes, health accreditation schemes, and existing support for service children, we are disheartened to see considerable limitation in the UK-wide progress in Covenant delivery. Many challenges raised throughout these observations are founded in disjointed experiences of those assigned during service, resettling, and upholding post-service lives across the devolved nations. It is essential that MOD proactively drive the Covenant Duty expansion in such a way that accounts for the differences in need across the devolved nations, which in turn ensures that the Armed Forces community experience no disadvantage and thrive regardless of their location.

Measuring impact

As acknowledged throughout these observations, we recognise the wealth of activity, both planned and ongoing, aimed at improving the lives of the Armed Forces community. It is essential that the outcomes of these initiatives are monitored closely, using robust evidence, to ensure that gaps and areas for improvement are identified, to inform future provision.

There is still work to do to develop the necessary governance and oversight processes, in conjunction with the military charity sector, which is a cornerstone in the support landscape.

We are eager to see significant improvements in the delivery of the Covenant over the coming year, and recognise the opportunities presented by the extension of the Legal Duty. Over the coming months, we will be working together to agree a full record of our expectations and requirements of the forthcoming legislation, guidance and implementation tools. We look forward to working closely with the MOD Covenant team, and the new Armed Forces

Commissioner, throughout this process to represent the Armed Forces community and deliver maximum impact.

Chapter 1: Health and healthcare



Introduction

Ensuring that the Armed Forces community receives timely, high-quality healthcare is a top priority for defence and its partners. This chapter sets out the current state of medical, dental and mental health provision for the Armed Forces community. It highlights progress in policy development, specialist programmes and collaborations with the NHS and devolved governments, while also recognising ongoing challenges such as dental access and specialist care pathways.

At a glance

- The single point of contact operated by NHS England continues to support the Armed Forces community in accessing healthcare.
- The electronic health record integration between MOD and NHS remains on track for 2026.
- Since its initial establishment as the Veteran Trauma Network and now as Op RESTORE, the service has received over 1,350 referrals.
- Since Op NOVA started in 2023, the service has received over 2,500 referrals for support for veterans in contact with the justice system, with 1,397 referrals received in 2024/2025.

Healthcare services

Medical and dental

According to the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) 2025, service personnel's satisfaction with access to medical care is unchanged this year at 77%.¹ This is above the low levels reported in 2022 and 2023, but below the peak level reported in 2020. Satisfaction with medical treatment follows a similar trend, with 75% satisfied this year, down from 80% reported in 2020.

These findings broadly mirror wider trends in the general population. The 2025 NHS GP Patient Survey reported that 75.4% of patients rated their overall GP practice experience a good.²

Levels of satisfaction with access to dental care and dental treatment are unchanged since 2022. Although stable over the last three years, satisfaction with access to dental care has

¹ MOD, Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2025, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/682af52a50dbd3ce8372ab83/Armed_Forces_Continuous_Attitude_Survey_2025_main_report.pdf

² NHS England, GP Patient Survey results 2025, available at: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhse-gp-patient-survey-results/2025>

fallen 12% and satisfaction with access to dental treatment has fallen 7% since 2020, remaining at the lowest reported levels (now 73% and 82%, respectively).

In NHS England's summary of the dental results from the 2025 GP Patient Survey, 78% of GP patients in England who tried to get a dental appointment in the last two years were successful.³ Of those service families who required dental treatment in the last 12 months, 74% were able to access it. This is an improvement on the previous year both for service families and in the general population.

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 may be impacted more severely due to the need to change dentists more frequently. Over four in nine families who moved while undergoing treatment were unable to continue their treatment (46%). The NHS is working with the Families Federations to make families aware of initiatives that may be in place in their locations, including through national initiatives to improve dental access, which include the following.

- **Golden hello scheme:** Through this incentivisation scheme, ICBs are recruiting posts which will see dentists receiving payments of £20,000 to work in those areas that need them most for three years. As of 20 August 2025, in England there were 94 dentists in post with a further 14 dentists who have been recruited, but are yet to start in post under this scheme.
- **Toothbrushing programmes:** We are also supporting more than 1,500 children in British military families overseas through our supervised toothbrushing programme.

A full public consultation was recently held on a package of changes to improve access to, and the quality of, NHS dentistry, which is hoped will deliver better care for the diverse oral health needs of people across England. The government is considering the outcomes of the consultation and will publish a response in due course.

If implemented, these reforms will cement our commitment to delivering more urgent dental care appointments every year, better support patients with complex treatment needs, and incentivise the delivery of more preventative care. The changes also seek to make NHS dentistry a more attractive workplace.

Op COMMUNITY

Although the Op COMMUNITY pathfinder programme ended in March 2025, the single point of contact operated by NHS England continues to support the Armed Forces community in accessing healthcare.

The single point of contact received over 75 queries during the reporting period from families, veterans and organisations supporting the Armed Forces community. These ranged from simple queries about how to access a service through to more complicated enquiries when

³ NHS England, GP Patient Survey Dental Statistics, January to March 2025, available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/gp-patient-survey-dental-statistics-january-to-march-2025-england/>

service personnel and their families are returning from an overseas posting and need to transfer their care back to the UK. Approximately 10% of the queries were still open at the end of the reporting period. This is a reflection of when they were received and the nature of the enquiry.

Learning from Op COMMUNITY pathfinder has informed the National Training and Education programme. This is designed to train staff across the NHS about the needs of the Armed Forces community.

Op CORTISONE

Significant progress has been made within the programme on the electronic healthcare record for the procurement of an up-to-date electronic healthcare information management system. This will connect MOD medical records with NHS systems across the UK, improving information sharing and ensuring smoother healthcare transitions for families and personnel returning from overseas or leaving service.

A preferred supplier has been selected, and the contract is expected to be signed by the end of 2025. This will be followed by a period of business and technical implementation activities ready for go-live of the primary medical care medicines management and intermediate care modules towards the end of 2026.

Other areas within the programme are developing at speed, specifically Project Mercury. Technology developed under Project Mercury will mean that military medics will be able to view, record and share clinical data on multiple devices while on global deployments even with limited or no connectivity. The project team remain focused on maintaining and accelerating delivery towards implementation of the first release of the system into live use by spring 2026.

The primary dental care project has recently restarted after having been on pause since October 2024. There is an immediate focus on the market engagement to identify a suitable suppliers and solutions. Procurement and mobilisation planning is underway for the new capability, with stakeholder engagement started to ensure clinical and operational needs are fully captured. CORTISONE is mindful that to retire the defence medical information capability programme (DMICP), dentistry firm base and deployed solutions need to be available. Therefore, clinical go-live will be before December 2027, in line with electronic health record and occupational health app, to ensure business readiness for retiring DMICP in March 2028.

Mental health

The mental health of our serving personnel and families remains a key focus point for our general health provision. Defence encourages mental fitness to be viewed as equally important as physical fitness and emphasises this in the training and provision for our serving community.

Serving personnel and families are entitled to use digital products such as Headspace or HeadFIT to help maintain their mental resilience and are supported by a 24-hour helpline if they are ever struggling and wish to speak to someone independent of the organisation or at short notice out-of-hours.

This year the published statistics for mental health in the Armed Forces indicate that, as per previous years, “the overall rate of mental health in the UK Armed Forces was broadly comparable to that seen in the UK general population” and that “latest data shows the rate for those needing specialist mental health treatment was lower in the UK Armed Forces than that seen in the UK general population”.⁴

The MOD acknowledges, however, that improvements should still be consistently strived for and that there remain instances of difficulties when accessing provision – particularly where mobility may be a factor.

The Defence Medical Services (DMS) is reshaping mental health provision through the mental health improvement programme to reduce waiting lists, improve timelines for patient recovery and refocus on earlier intervention. This will provide a single point of access for specialist mental health networks allowing quicker access to initial assessment and earlier allocation to the right treatment pathway. DMS is increasing access to resources and online therapy to improve the care offered by GPs.

Personnel recovery centres

As of April 2024, these centres have been 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 for personnel on recovery duty attendance delivered across the four personnel recovery centres between January and December 2024 were 1,144, with a further 295 delivered at the Battle Back Centre on the Multi Activity Course (MAC).

From January to September 2025 the total number of personnel on recovery duty attendance is 742, with a further 282 delivered at the MAC.

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.

As part of the Defence Recovery Capability Review, the delivery of the MAC is being scoped to be distributed geographically over three delivery sites to provide better accessibility across the UK from April 2026.

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

⁴ MOD, UK Armed Forces, Armed Forces Mental Health: Annual Summary and Trends Over Time, 2007/08 to 2024/25, 2025, available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68665b38dd1a7e01559e6d18/UK_armed_forces_mental_health_2024-25_annual_report.pdf

Armed Forces healthcare policies

Further work to improve the healthcare services provided to the Armed Forces is outlined in this section.

Lifestyles

The MOD is developing new policy that focuses on gambling harms reduction.

Research shows that veterans and serving personnel face a much higher risk of gambling-related harm than civilians. In the 2007 Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey, 1.4% of veterans met the criteria for problem gambling, compared with 0.17% of non-veterans – over eight times more likely. Importantly, this elevated risk was not attributable to difference in mental health, substance misuse or financial management.⁵

More recent data from the UK Armed Forces Veterans' Health Gambling Study, which included 1,037 veterans and 1,148 matched civilians, revealed that 43.1% of veterans had scores indicative of problem gambling, compared to 6.5% of non-veterans, meaning veterans were over ten times more likely to experience problem gambling.⁶

The new policy will examine innovations that can be made in-service and what skills/awareness can be raised to ensure that gambling is not something that begins post-transition.

Healthier weight interventions

The MOD has formalised the Defence Health and Wellbeing Advisor course, that provides a unique education and training to physical training instructors, healthcare, catering services and leaders involved in providing the executive functions (i.e. personnel) across the organisation. The focus of the course is to provide attendees with the knowledge and skills to deliver person-centred health behaviour change support, with a specific focus on nutrition, physical activity and sleep, while also recognising the interrelatedness of all health behaviours. While individual behaviours and choices ultimately determine health outcomes, training practitioners to provide appropriate support – specific to military personnel, their roles and their workplace contexts – will ensure defence interventions have the best chance of enduring success. This approach also recognises the impact of the defence environment, where Defence Holistic Wellbeing Approach trained practitioners can both raise individual responsibility, but also advocate for personnel where environmental/context challenges are beyond their abilities to bring about change. Once trained, practitioners can run healthier weight courses (e.g. DOfit programme) or provide 1:1 advice and guidance that takes into account the military environment and particular barriers/circumstances that personnel may face.

⁵ FiMT, Gambling Problems in UK Armed Forces Veterans: Preliminary Findings, available at: <https://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/gambling-armed-forces-veterans-2007-adult-psychiatric-morbidity-survey.pdf>

⁶ FiMT, The United Kingdom Armed Forces Veterans' Health and Gambling Study, available at: <https://s31949.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/20210906-SwanseaUni-Gambling2-Report-v8-FINAL.pdf>

Dietary supplements

In line with the latest research and guidance from NATO, defence is providing clearer guidance on the potential use of dietary supplements by individuals in MOD – but also for chain of command and catering services providers, where supplements may be provided at Crown expense to support specific nutritional strategies to maximise the health and performance of personnel. The new guidance will incorporate a framework that differentiates types of dietary supplements based on the quality and scope of current evidence, making it clear what may be considered, and what is not for consumption. The guidance will minimise risk to personnel, whilst acknowledging the potential benefits of certain dietary supplements in specific circumstances.

Pregnancy

Servicewomen who give birth whilst in service are sometimes at a higher risk of injury when returning post-maternity leave. To mitigate these issues and to better support our servicewomen, the MOD is formalising the tri-service pre- and post-natal instructors course. This course upskills key fitness personnel in how to support servicewomen to continue with appropriate exercise during pregnancy, building back up to full strength post-partum. These courses are expected to begin in 2026 and will complement the recent progress made when defence published the Perinatal Handbook, created by defence women's rehabilitation specialists to help service women maintain their fitness throughout pregnancy, giving advice on nutrition and safe exercise. Published in March 2025, the handbook offers guidance on exercise rehabilitation after childbirth, including a post-natal 0-to-6-week programme, a post-natal 6 weeks and over programme, and advice on a safely returning to running from 4 months post-natal.

Parenthood

Armed Forces personnel are currently able to access treatments in support of conception, such as in vitro fertilisation (IVF) or intrauterine insemination (IUI), if they experience difficulty with 'traditional conception'. However, there are reports of varied experiences while going through this process. The MOD is working to simplify the policy and guidance for serving personnel to help clarify what they can expect in terms of support and flexibility. This policy is due to be published in December 2025. In addition, information is being provided to those in key roles, (like those in the medical environment), so that personnel beginning their journey are more likely to receive consistent and current advice.

Catterick integrated care campus

Construction continues on the flagship NHS and MOD health complex in Catterick, with the build due to complete by spring 2026; work has already begun on the interior. Local residents have been given the opportunity to attend public drop-in sessions over the summer to see the progress of the build and speak to project leaders and construction experts.

IPC4V

Integrated Personalised Commissioning for Veterans: Armed Forces in Transition (IPC4V) has existed to support service leavers with complex and enduring physical, neurological or mental

health conditions attributable to their service. IPC4V is used as a framework to support serving personnel as they leave the service and ensure their care continues to meet their needs as they transition to civilian life. IPC4V is designed to deliver personalised, co-ordinated care and support across health, social care and third sector organisations to meet the health and wellbeing needs of service leavers on the programme and align with the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.

The review will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the IPC4V pathway for veterans to determine how effectively it delivers personalised, co-ordinated care and support across health, social care and third sector organisations. This will ensure it meets the complex and diverse needs of veterans and aligns with the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant. The review will focus on the health and wellbeing needs and support available to veterans on transition from service having been medically discharged. It will focus on those beneficiaries of the IPC4V programme and those due to transition on a medical discharge during the period of the review.

Veterans

Healthcare services for veterans in England

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 2025, over 99% of primary care networks in England had at least one Royal College of General Practitioners-accredited veteran practice.

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

Op RESTORE

Op RESTORE works with a network of over 25 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, to address their continuing physical health injuries and related medical problems attributed to their time in the Armed Forces.

Op RESTORE supports veterans to access a range of wellbeing support to ensure they are ‘waiting well’ while they are being assessed for treatment. This is provided both in house and in conjunction with Op RESTORE’s military charity partners.

Since its initial establishment as the Veteran Trauma Network and now as Op RESTORE, the service has received over 1,350 referrals, with over 350 referrals in 2024/2025, and a further 170 in the first four months of 2025/2026.

Op RESTORE are now offering support to GPs through advice and guidance on treatment and referral pathways for veterans with physical health conditions.

In 2024/2025 there were 130 requests for advice and guidance, with a further 54 received in the first four months of 2025/2026

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 and all prisons in England are now covered by these services.

Since Op NOVA started in 2023, the service has received over 2,500 referrals for support for veterans in contact with the justice system, with 1,397 referrals received in 2024/2025.

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.

The service has now been operational for two full years and has received over 15,000 referrals, with 7,504 referrals in 2024/2025, with a further 2,313 till the end of July.

Importantly, unlike many other services, Op COURAGE accepts self-referral, empowering patients to take control of their care needs. Over one third of all referrals were made directly by veterans.

In addition to the service provided by Op COURAGE, veterans are able to access NHS talking therapies services.

In 2024/2025, 14,515 veterans entered NHS talking therapies treatment.

Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance⁷

100% of NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts in England have now achieved veteran aware accreditation and have joined the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance.

Accreditation of providers of NHS commissioned services is only part of the support that NHS England offers to veterans with a number of bespoke services in place.

In addition to the bespoke services, NHS England has commissioned a national training and education programme, which was announced in May 2025. The programme will educate NHS staff on the needs of the wider Armed Forces community and how the NHS can best support this patient group.

The programme, which was soft launched in October for NHS staff, with a further launch expected for external stakeholders in 2025, will offer a mix of face to face, and virtual training tailored to staff groups.⁸

Veterans Friendly Framework

The Veterans Friendly Framework (VFF), which is delivered through the Royal Star and Garter, Royal British Legion, and the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance, is a pilot accreditation scheme which aims to assist care homes better support veterans and their families. The evaluation of the VFF was part-funded by the government and concluded in summer 2025, a report from which will be published in due course.

Veterans' Mobility Fund

As of July 2025, 204 awards had been made to eligible veterans from the grant funding available.

The Veterans' Mobility Fund, delivered by Help for Heroes and Blesma, is in its second year of administering specialist support not usually available through the NHS, such as sports equipment and higher spec equipment, to veterans with physical disabilities resulting from illness or injury sustained during service.

Healthcare services for veterans in Wales

Veterans Trauma Network (VTN) Wales

During the reporting period October 2024 to September 2026, the VTN in Wales has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of referrals, with a notable rise in self-referrals.

⁷ The Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) is a group of NHS providers, including acute, mental health, community and ambulance trusts, that have agreed to a model of the best care for, and support to, the Armed Forces community.

⁸ NHS Veteran Aware, National Armed Forces Healthcare Training and Education Programme Launch video, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpkpxMGhQDc>

This growth reflects increasing awareness of the service and the need among veterans with complex health needs.

Work has continued to strengthen education and awareness around the service, including how to make referrals. Information about the VTN is now being embedded within the Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) Veteran Friendly GP Accreditation Scheme, ensuring greater visibility among healthcare providers and enhancing the referral process for veterans.

In addition, the VTN has begun to explore its role within the wider transition pathway for service leavers. This work will inform a forthcoming policy, with a review scheduled for release by the end of the financial year. The aim is to provide greater clarity on where the VTN sits within transition support and how it can best contribute to improved outcomes for service personnel moving into civilian life.

The VTN remains committed to supporting veterans with complex physical health problems by co-ordinating care across Wales, with due regard to mental and social health needs. Continued collaboration with partners, health boards, and veteran support services will be crucial in maintaining progress and ensuring that the VTN can respond effectively to the evolving needs of veterans.

Prosthetics support

The Welsh Government Armed Forces Prosthetics Forum brings together key partners involved in supporting ex-forces personnel with prosthetics across Wales. These include the Artificial Limb and Appliance Services (ALAS), Blesma, and the NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee. The forum has worked together to monitor support for veterans across Wales, helped promote awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant duty and the Veterans' Mobility Fund.

In November 2024, the First Minister Eluned Morgan visited the ALAS centre at Morriston Hospital, engaging with veterans and staff and hearing about the collaborative work with Blesma to support the needs of ex-Armed Forces patients.

During 2024 to 2025, spending on prosthetic support via the veterans' policy in Wales totalled £234,367 with 34 veteran patients registered across the artificial limb centres in Cardiff, Swansea and Wrexham.

From April to August 2025, a further £49,195 of equipment was provided to support injured veterans with prosthetics.

Veteran friendly GP accreditation – Wales

As at the end of September 2025, 57 GP practices were accredited, which represents 15% of all practices in Wales; an increase from 11% this time last year.

In partnership with Welsh Government, HEIW continues to roll out the Armed Forces ‘veteran friendly’ GP practice accreditation scheme across Wales.

During 2025, 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. Work is continuing by local health board champions, GPs, HEIW, the NHS and Welsh Government to raise awareness and support of the scheme.

Healthcare services for veterans in Scotland

General practice recognition scheme

Launched in November 2023, the scheme supports GP practices to improve awareness of specific health and wellbeing needs of veterans and service families. Training is delivered through TURAS learn, NHS Education for Scotland’s national online learning platform, which provides healthcare professionals with access to specialist training and professional development.

By mid-2025, 32 GP practices had registered for the scheme, and 173 healthcare professionals had completed the training.

The course is available to both primary and secondary care teams and is designed to help practitioners identify and respond more effectively to the health and impacts of military life.

Mental Health Advisory Group

In December 2024, the then Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport gave approval for the model for delivery for the veterans’ mental health pathway. The model envisages a national framework, which outlines the elements of support, care and treatment that should be available to all veterans regardless of where they live in Scotland.

The national framework document was approved by the Mental Health Advisory Group in June 2025; it aims to ensure that the approach is clearly articulated and easily understood.

The Mental Health Advisory Group, with input from the operational working group, the stakeholder network, and Veterans Link Scotland, will support the development of the service standards documents with a view to launching the pathway in 2026.

Veterans In-Service Injury Network

The Veterans In-Service Injury Network (VISIN), supported by £50,000 of investment from the Scottish Government, was launched by the veterans’ minister on 26 August 2025 after a soft launch in April 2025. The creation of VISIN will support veterans in receiving reviews of injuries and conditions arising as a result of their service. It will fulfil recommendations first made by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner in 2018. 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.

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

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

The MOD runs two main active compensation schemes – AFCS and War Pension Scheme (WPS). Both the WPS and AFCS are no-fault schemes. The WPS provides compensation in respect of illness, injury or death which was caused by service before 6 April 2005, whilst the AFCS pays compensation for in respect of illness, injury or death which was caused by service on or after 6 April 2005.

Conducted every five years, the Quinquennial Review ensures the AFCS remains fit for purpose, 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.

MOD published its response in March 2024, agreeing to take forward 48 of the 67 recommendations. A number of these have already been implemented, and our aim is that all those which have been accepted will be implemented within 18-24 months, which began in August 2025.

Chapter 2: Education



Introduction

Education is central to the wellbeing and long-term prospects of service families and personnel. This chapter explores the progress made in supporting service children's educational continuity, from early years through to higher education. It also covers the development of apprenticeships and further learning opportunities for service personnel to strengthen career pathways during and after service.

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.

At a glance

- £26 million Service Pupil Premium supporting 76,000 pupils.
- £3.2 million Armed Forces Families Fund investment in 56 education projects.
- 23,000 service personnel engaged in apprenticeships across all ranks.
- New MOD/DfE joint guidance embedding Covenant duties in local education planning.

Educational outcomes for service children

The DfE has provided updated statistics that show how service pupils and non-service, non-free school meals (FSM) pupils in state schools in England perform across key measures of academic attainment.⁹ The statistics show that:

- the proportion of service pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics (combined) at the end of primary school is slightly lower than that of non-service, non-FSM pupils – though the number of percentage points difference is lower than in the two preceding years (Annex A, Table 2a)
- for the third consecutive year, the proportion of service children gaining grades 9 to 4 in GCSE English and maths is slightly lower than the proportion of non-service, non-FSM children gaining these grades; and the proportion is lower for grades 9 to 5 in GCSE English and maths (Annex A, Table 3a)
- there remains a disparity between service pupils and non-service, non-FSM pupils in relation to the English Baccalaureate measure – the proportion of service pupils entered

⁹ Service children are compared with non-service, non-FSM children to ensure that the comparison is fair in terms of level of family income.

for the GCSEs that contribute to this measure continues to fall slightly year on year while that of non-service, non-FSM pupils is on an upward trajectory, and a lower percentage of those entered achieved a grade 4 or higher in all pillars (Annex A, Table 3b)

- the average Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores for service pupils are slightly lower than for non-service, non-FSM pupils (Annex A, Table 3c)

To help schools improve outcomes for service pupils as a group, in April 2025 the DfE and MOD published joint guidance for schools, local authorities and academies on supporting service pupils and making more effective use of the Service Pupil Premium. DfE and MOD are also analysing service pupil progress and attainment data further, at regional and local authority levels, to develop a better understanding of the academic performance gap between service and non-service, non-FSM pupils – and we will consider in due course what initiatives might be appropriate to address this issue.

The proportion of service pupils in state-funded schools in England who attend a school rated as Outstanding or Good by Ofsted is close to that of non-service, non-FSM children, although service pupils are less likely to attend a school rated as Outstanding (Annex A, Table 5). As in the previous year, the proportions of service pupils in England in both years 1 to 6 and years 7 to 11 who move school at times outside of the normal admissions round are much lower than they were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic – though these remain slightly ahead of the proportions of non-service, non-FSM pupils (Annex A, Tables 4a and 4b).

Supporting service children's education

The Armed Forces Families Fund

The Armed Forces Families Fund is administered by the AFCFT on behalf of the MOD and comprises of several key funding programmes. These include the Service Pupil Support programme and the Early Years programme. Over the course of the last 12 months the programmes have supported the following.

- **Service Pupil Support programme**

The aim of the Service Pupil Support programme is to provide additional funding to educational providers to ensure the needs of service pupils are met through effective interventions to support their journey along their educational pathway.

In the latest funding round, just over £2.5 million was awarded to 34 projects across the UK, dedicated to helping service pupils thrive.

These initiatives are transforming the way schools support children from Armed Forces families by breaking down barriers to:

- identifying additional needs

- improving access to vital services
- empowering professionals through targeted development

This ensures every service child has the chance to reach their full potential.

- **Early Years programme**

The Early Years programme is designed to help Armed Forces families access good quality early childhood education and childcare provision close to where they live or serve. The programme is aimed to address specific needs that early childhood educators have identified, and for the financial year 2024/2025 funded projects contributed to one of three outcomes:

- increased capacity at the setting to allow more service children to attend
- providing better learning environments for children
- providing appropriate training and development of staff to support service children

For the financial year 2024/2025, the AF3 Early Years programme funded 22 projects across England and Scotland, totalling almost £700,000.

Service Pupil Premium in England

The DfE continues to allocate additional funding to state-funded schools in England with service children among their pupils, in the form of the Service Pupil Premium. This funding is intended to help schools 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 £350 per eligible pupil annually, and more than £26 million will be paid to schools in the financial year 2025/2026, benefitting more than 76,000 pupils. In order to help strengthen school accountability for use of their wider pupil premium funding, the DfE requires schools to complete and publish a template setting out their overall 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.

DfE/MOD joint guidance

In April 2025, the MOD and the DfE published non-statutory guidance for schools, local authorities and multi-academy trusts on how best to support service pupils, in the context of

the need for these bodies to observe the Armed Forces Covenant ‘due regard’ duty when planning and delivering key statutory education functions.¹⁰

The guidance highlights the challenges that service pupils can face in education as a result of their parent or carer’s decision to serve their country, such as having to move schools frequently and experiencing periods of family separation and explains existing government policies in support of service pupils (for example, around school admissions). It also includes advice on how the needs of this pupil group might be addressed effectively, and in particular, offers suggestions and examples of ways in which the Service Pupil Premium can be used in practice.

MOD Local Authority Partnership

In Feb 2025, MODLAP developed and distributed a special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) advisory note, which provided advice and information to English local authority SEND teams on what actions (through a SEND lens) they should take to comply with the Armed Forces Covenant statutory duties. This was distributed to all 153 Directors of Children’s Services in England.¹¹ It is too early to tell regarding the impact of the MODLAP advisory note, although we will be exploring any signs of impact as we move into early 2026, allowing approximately 12 months for the guidance to embed.

There are no present plans to extend the concept of the advisory note beyond England, due to the devolved nature of education and the fact that the rest of the UK take different approaches to supporting service children.

UK education systems transitions

Cross-UK activity has been undertaken during 2024/2025 to deliver targeted resources to improve service pupils’ transitions between UK education systems. The MOD continues to work with stakeholders across the MOD, devolved governments and the third sector to explore how the challenges sometimes associated with school transition can be supported further. This work will provide a set of resources to support educators improve service children’s transition experiences as they move between the four nations of the UK and aims to be completed in early 2026.

The Service Children’s Progression Alliance

The MOD continues to provide core funding for the SCiP Alliance. Through its UK-wide community and targeted research and development projects, the SCiP Alliance equips practitioners, policymakers, researchers and funders to translate evidence into better practice and to improve the impact of their collective resources. This year, the SCiP Alliance, supported by Forces in Mind Trust and a partnership between the University of Winchester and King’s College London, launched an impact centre to improve evaluation and data use across the

¹⁰ DfE, Service Pupils in Schools: Non-statutory guidance, 2025, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/service-pupils-in-schools-non-statutory-guidance/service-pupils-in-schools-non-statutory-guidance>

¹¹ MOD Local Authority Partnership (MODLAP): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mod-local-authority-partnership-modlap>

sector. The centre works with organisations to generate robust evidence and inform policy decisions for effective investment in service children's support. A UK-wide consultation in 2026 will further identify sector needs for evidence-led action.

Research in higher education has revealed both strong practices and unique challenges faced by service children, prompting the development of an evidence-based university toolkit.

The established Thriving Lives Toolkit extended its reach by almost 25% to schools supporting over 25,000 service children across the UK.

A new webinar series connected schools with effective practices and support resources. The SCiP Alliance's network of 12 hubs continued to share good practice and improve targeted support, while the SCiP Alliance Funders' Forum, led by Greenwich Hospital, grew to include all major funders in the sector and developed plans to enhance equity and impact of funding for service children.

Higher education

In November 2024, UCAS released its inaugural fair access snapshot, presenting data on higher education applications submitted by students from armed forces families. As part of the 2023 admissions cycle, UCAS added seven new questions to the application form, allowing applicants to highlight a broader range of personal circumstances and support needs, including those from military backgrounds.¹²

Destinations of service children after Key Stage 4 and 5

The DfE has provided updated statistics on the destinations of service pupils and non-service, non-FSM pupils in state-funded schools in England after Key Stage 4 and 5. The statistics show that:

- the proportion of service pupils in England going on to any sustained education or employment after Key Stage 4 is nearly the same as the proportion of non-service, non-FSM pupils in England (96% and 95% respectively) (Annex A, Table 6a)
- the proportion of service pupils in England going on to any sustained education or employment after Key Stage 5 (88%) is nearly the same as the proportion of non-service, non-FSM pupils in England (87%) (Annex A, Table 6b) – though service pupils are slightly more likely than non-service, non-FSM pupils to go into sustained employment (32% and 26% respectively); we therefore currently assess that service children in England are at least as likely to continue in sustained education or employment after Key Stage 4 and 5 as non-service, non-FSM pupils in England

¹² UCAS, UCAS Fair Access Snapshot: Students From UK Armed Forces Families, available at: <https://www.ucas.com/sites/default/files/uk-armed-forces-families-snapshot.pdf>

Apprenticeships

This year, defence was delighted to announced that, once again, the Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force all placed in the top five apprenticeship employers in the UK. (ranking 1, 2 and 5 respectively).

The apprenticeship employer rankings, published by Sunday Times Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers 2025, included 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 80 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.

Education across devolved governments

Welsh Government – service children

Welsh Government have provided £270,000 to support the work of Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru this year.

The funding, via the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), enables schools to identify and support the needs of children who have parents or carers in the military and those children of veterans who have left the Armed Forces.

Welsh Government are working with partners to broaden the definition of a service child, so that more children are able to benefit from support. Officials are currently working with stakeholders to consider a new definition, and progress is expected in 2026.

Supporting service children in education Cymru

A project of the WLGA funded by the Welsh Government (£270,000 in 2025 to 2026) continues to enhance awareness and understanding among teachers of the unique needs experienced by service children. The SSCE Cymru 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 Cymru helps guide local authorities and schools in meeting any potential disadvantage using a range of mechanisms, such as information and advice to a grant funding stream for small scale projects, introduced for the academic year 2023 to 2024. Successful applications have been awarded £1,000 or £3,000 to deliver a project related to supporting their service children.¹³

In 2024 to 2025, 68 grants totalling £130,000 were awarded for projects in 17 local authorities in Wales. This scheme continues in the academic year 2025 to 2026.

The SSCE Cymru website acts as a resource hub for schools, local authorities and others with an interest in identifying and supporting service children. In early 2025, SSCE Cymru launched a series of new service children digital stories and school good practice films, featuring service children and schools from across Wales.

The successful Armed Forces Friendly Schools Cymru status continues and at the end of the 2024 to 2025 academic year, 43 schools had achieved the accreditation – 32 achieving bronze, 5 reaching silver, and 6 awarded gold status.

¹³ Supporting Service Children in Education in Wales Fund GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES, available at: [ssce-wf-good-practice-examples-e.pdf](#)

Chapter 3: Housing and accommodation



Introduction

Decent housing underpins the wellbeing and stability of service families and is critical to operational effectiveness. This chapter outlines investment in service family accommodation (SFA), progress in tackling issues such as damp and mould, initiatives to widen home ownership, and measures to reduce homelessness among veterans. It also reflects on overseas housing pilots and new policies aimed at improving consistency across the UK and abroad.

At a glance

- 36,000 service homes returned to public ownership.
- £1.5 billion of additional funding over the next five years, to deliver longer term and enduring improvements to UK SFA housing.
- Long-term opportunity identified to build over 100,000 homes on surplus defence land, improving opportunities for homeownership and creating jobs across the country.
- The three-year £20 million Veterans' Capital Housing Fund has continued to award grants across the UK. As of 30 September 2025, the project has awarded 34 grants totalling £8.3 million in funding.

Single Living Accommodation

A strategic review of SLA has been commissioned to address issues affecting single and unaccompanied service personnel, and is expected to report in 2026. The review will examine key areas such as accommodation standards, governance, lived experiences (including those of women), and broader aspects like condition, allocation, and value for money. With 56% of service personnel living in SLA, the review aims to ensure it supports service life and operational effectiveness, recognising its unique role compared to family housing.

Service Families Accommodation

Investment to further improve the standard of SFA

In the financial year (FY) 2024/2025, circa £445 million was spent on maintaining and improving SFA.

This has been used to deliver:

- new bathrooms
- kitchens

- windows
- doors
- roof replacements
- external wall insulation
- new boilers

Additionally, long-term empty properties have been refurbished and works to address damp and mould in SFA have been delivered.

In FY 2025/2026, an additional £50 million is being invested to raise the minimum standard of 1,000 properties across the UK defence estate.

The MOD has begun the process of transformative change to military housing following the landmark deal which brought circa 36,000 military homes back into public ownership.

The Secretary of State has commissioned a Defence Housing Review to produce a new housing strategy that will set out plans for a generational renewal of forces housing, helping to renew the nation's contract with those who serve. The Defence Housing Strategy is being delivered by an independent review panel and was published by the government in November 2025.

On 31 May 2025, the Defence Secretary, Rt Hon John Healey MP, announced £1.5 billion of additional funding over the next five years, to deliver longer term and enduring improvements to UK SFA housing.

The investment was confirmed as part of the government's SDR, which sets a path for the next decade to transform defence, helping to support recruitment, retention and morale.

Investment of the additional £1.5 billion will be guided by the recommendations of the forthcoming Defence Housing Strategy. Improvements are expected to include a programme of works to ensure homes meet or exceed government energy efficiency targets, reducing running costs for families and tackling damp and mould problems across the estate. In addition to delivering repairs and maintenance to existing SFA, it will seek to regenerate the estate through a ten-year programme of renewal and development.

Maintenance of service accommodation

The results of the 2025 tri-service Families Continuous Annual Survey (FAMCAS) show a steady increase of satisfaction with the provision of accommodation services from 2024. The survey, which captures information on the attitudes and experiences of service families, includes the following results.

-
- Over half of service families (51%) are satisfied with the overall standard of SFA/SSFA, an increase from 47% in 2024.
 - Satisfaction with the response rate for repairs is now 36% for 2025, an increase of 10 percentage points from the 26% reported in 2024.
 - Satisfaction with the quality of repairs has also increased to 33%, an increase from 26% in 2024.

While service families are starting to experience the improvements that MOD and its suppliers are making in the delivery of accommodation services, there is still room for further improvement.

In addition to the above, Opinion Research Services (ORS) continue to conduct monthly surveys on behalf of the department. Telephone surveys capture responses from circa 750 families per month to determine levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with UK SFA. These surveys provide an enhanced understanding of the views and experiences of families living in UK SFA.

In July 2025 the report identified that over seven in ten (73%) service personnel and their families were satisfied with the service provided by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation and its contractors.

A new ORS survey was launched in July 2025 to better align with the wider housing sector through the adoption of tenant satisfaction measures. The results of the new ORS survey will be published quarterly, and will be able to be benchmarked against the wider housing sector.

Overseas accommodation

Overseas accommodation follows the same process as the UK with SLA and SFA provided to personnel who are entitled or eligible.

Overseas accommodation policies have been, and continue to be, adapted to reflect the country or regional restrictions to the accommodation offer matters including local laws, housing markets and treaty arrangements. JSP 464 Volume 5 provides country-specific details and highlights where, when necessary, policies differ from the UK accommodation offer.

Overseas long-term relationship pilots

Since January 2024, overseas accommodation pilots have been available in British Forces Cyprus (BFC), the Falkland Islands, Canada (BATUS), and selected Defence Global Network SFA sites. These allow personnel in long term-relationships to serve accompanied, potentially creating recruitment and retention benefits.

The pilot has been taken up by 114 families as of August 2025.

Pilot uptake has increased over the last year, rising from the 44 families previously advised in August 2024, with more expected, including the first families in the Falkland Islands and Canada.

The pilot has enabled these families to live together, whereas previously they would have been separated, with the partner and children often staying behind in the UK, or the couple deciding to marry to gain entitlement to housing together overseas and supporting allowances. Defence is collecting data throughout the duration of the pilot, including with service personnel on the pilot, to evaluate its impact and inform future accommodation policy.

Home ownership

The MOD's 2025 AFCAS found that overall, less than half of personnel (46%) own their own home. Officers are considerably more likely to own their home (72%) than other ranks (39%).

For other ranks, this represents a decline from the peak of 46% in 2020, with the level of home ownership back in line with the level of reported in 2016. Army personnel are still less likely than their counterparts in the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force to own their own home, with ownership among Army personnel at 37% compared to 60% in the Royal Navy and 54% in the Royal Air Force.

According to FAMCAS, the top four reasons for not owning a home are:

- cannot afford to buy a suitable home (51%)
- living in service accommodation is better suited to their family (44%)
- want to be able to move with their spouse when they are posted (29%)
- do not want to buy a home where they are currently located (22%)

Reasons for non-homeownership differ by rank group. Affordability is the top reason for other rank families (53%) whereas it is in third place for officer families (39%). The proportion of families selecting affordability as a reason for non-homeownership has fallen from 61% in 2024 to 51% this year. This is back in line with levels reported between 2020 to 2022 but lower than all levels prior to this.

Home ownership offers long-term benefits for service personnel – providing financial stability and supporting transition to civilian life – and for defence, by potentially reducing demand for subsidised accommodation.

The SDR has reaffirmed defence's commitment to improving the lived experience of service personnel, with homeownership recognised as a key enabler of stability and transition. In response, defence is exploring further ways to support home ownership, including housing schemes, ways that the Forces Help to Buy scheme could be enhanced, as well as non-financial support such as reducing the frequency with which people must move to new locations if that is their preference.

- **Forces first housing scheme**

Announced in September 2025, the Defence Secretary has identified the long-term opportunity to build over 100,000 homes on surplus defence land, improving opportunities for homeownership and creating jobs across the country. The approach will apply to a proportion of new homes on selected surplus defence sites, agreed between MOD, the local authority and the developer based on demand and site viability. This will include improving SFA through MOD acquisition of high-quality new build properties developed on surplus defence sites, where these are needed.

This ensures military families benefit directly from the construction taking place on former military land, creating investment and improvement.

- **Forces Help to Buy scheme**

As of May 2025, Forces Help to Buy has provided over £516 million in loans to 32,847 applicants.

Awareness of the scheme remains high, with 83% of personnel reporting that they know at least a little about it, and 35% stating they know a lot. However, 13% of personnel have heard of it but know nothing about it, while 4% have never heard of it.

Council tax

In March 2025, Chief of Defence People, Vice Admiral Phil Hally, wrote to all English local councils highlighting inconsistencies in how the 50% council tax discount is applied to empty but furnished homes, i.e. second homes owned by Armed Forces personnel when they reside in SFA elsewhere in the UK. The letter emphasised the importance of such policies in supporting the Armed Forces community and upholding the Armed Forces Covenant.

Since this, the MOD has been made aware, through working with supporting organisations, that this continues to be an issue raised to them by service families, as well as service families being charged premium council tax on vacant properties whilst serving overseas.

While it is for local authorities to decide at what level they set their council tax, housing is one of the building blocks of successful lives and can be a pressure point for the Armed Forces community. The MOD will continue to work with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and local government on behalf of service personnel to encourage approaches that reflect an understanding of the unique circumstances faced by service families and recognise the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Social and affordable housing

The government has committed to the biggest increase of social and affordable housing in a generation.

The three-year £20 million Veterans' Capital Housing Fund has continued to award grants across the UK.

These grants support refurbishment, including extensions, of rental accommodation that will offer high quality housing to veterans in need, as well as funding the delivery of new build housing projects for veterans.

As of 30 September 2025, the project has awarded 34 grants totalling £8.3 million in funding.

Projects funded this year have funded supported accommodation for female veterans, transitional accommodation for veterans with complex needs, and improved energy efficiency and the accessibility of homes for veterans with disabilities.

Homelessness

Key findings from the Veterans' Survey 2022 were reported on in the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2024. Further detailed analysis was released in this reporting period, focusing on the small proportion of veterans who had said that they were homeless, rough sleeping or living in a refuge for domestic abuse. This analysis showed:

- just over 1 in 10 (10.8%) veterans that were homeless or rough sleeping said they had received government support, such as from Veterans UK or local councils
- just over 1 in 20 (5.7%) veterans that were homeless or rough sleeping said they had received support from charities, such as Citizens Advice, Shelter or SPACES, to help with housing

In November 2024, the Prime Minister announced a further £3.5 million to extend the Reducing Veteran Homelessness programme, including Op FORTITUDE, until March 2026. Grants awarded under this funding support veterans experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness and/or rough sleeping.

Under this new round of funding, the Reducing Veteran Homelessness programme expects to provide specialist wraparound support (such as counselling and life skills training) to more than 1,200 veterans across over 1000 supported housing units. Op FORTITUDE, a UK-wide referral pathway to support veterans with their housing, has continued supporting veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness across the UK.

As of 30 September 2025, Op FORTITUDE has taken over 4,000 referrals and supported over 950 veterans into housing.

On 18 December 2024, regulations came into force to exempt all former members of the regular armed forces from any local connection tests applied by local authorities in England. The regulations removed the five-year limit and ensured that no veterans of the regular Armed Forces will need to meet a local connection test for social housing, regardless of when they last served.

Homelessness in Wales

The Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Bill was introduced on 19 May 2025 and is aimed at achieving the systematic transformation necessary to address the needs and circumstances of all those experiencing homelessness in Wales, including members of the Armed Forces community.

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.

Alongside the Bill, the Welsh Government plans to review the national housing pathway for ex-service personnel and seek ways to ensure that it is consistently applied across local authorities.

Homelessness in Scotland

The Scottish government continues to support Housing Options Scotland which includes the Military Matters project amongst its services. Military Matters focuses on housing issues affecting people serving in the armed forces in Scotland, UK service personnel transitioning into civilian life in Scotland and veterans. The service offers help to find the right home in the right place.

In 2024 to 2025 the project received a total of 189 new referrals. In quarter one of 2025 to 2026, Military Matters received 43 new referrals (up to 20 June).

Local authority housing strategies are refreshed around every five years and are subject to a robust peer review process by Scottish Government and an external peer reviewer from a local authority.

The review process includes feedback to ensure that the needs of the Armed Forces community have been considered.

Case study

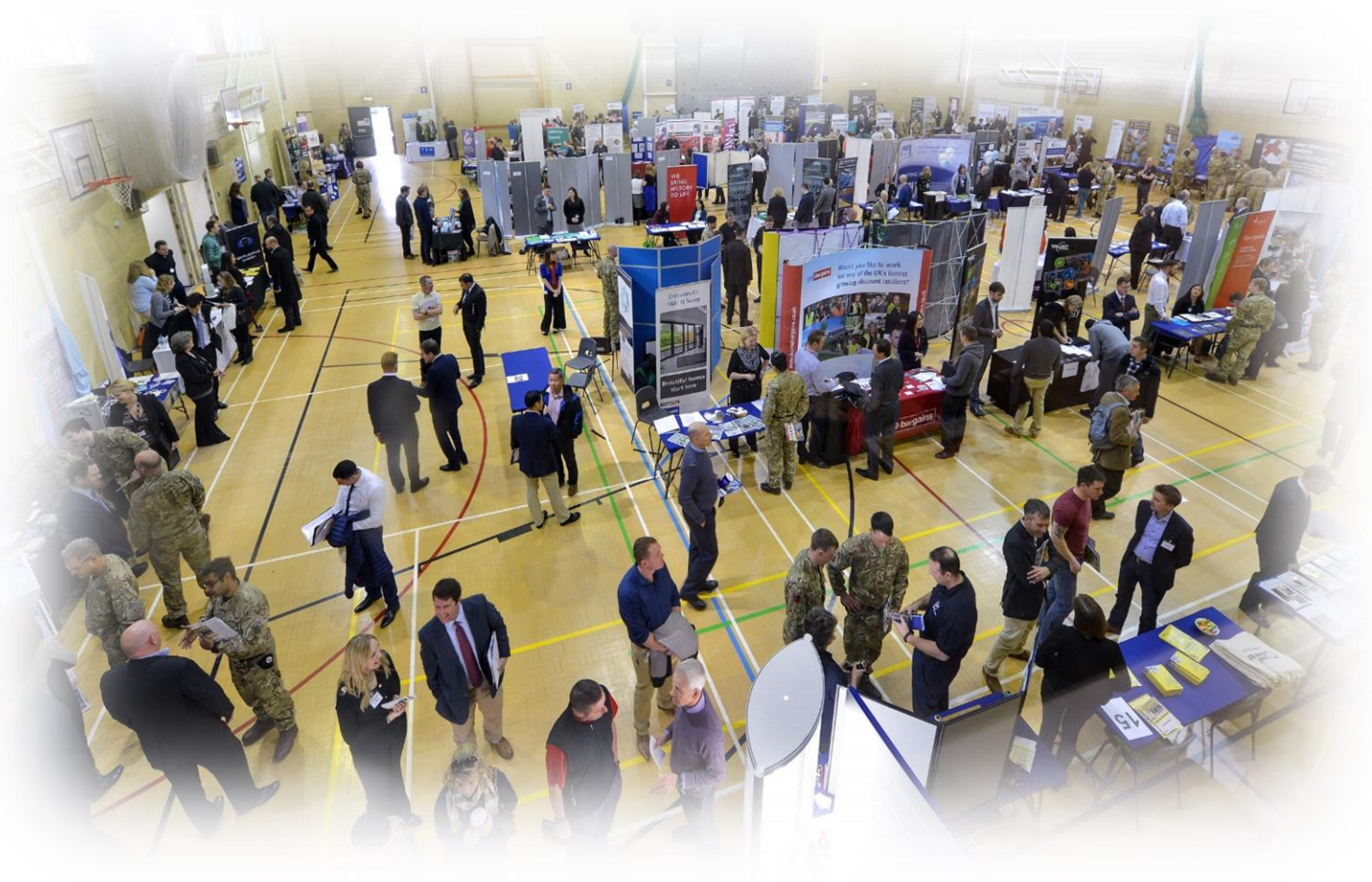
As an example of this, the draft Local Housing Strategy prepared by City of Edinburgh Council covering the period 2025 to 2030 states that the council has a policy that if ex-service personnel have left the UK regular Armed Forces within the last three years, their application for a local authority house may be backdated to the date they entered the Armed Forces.

Work is underway with key stakeholders including four of the five Housing Options Hubs, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO), the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), and Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum (GWSF) to discuss the best approach to progressing

the recommendations in the veterans homelessness prevention pathway relating to local authorities and social landlords.

Officials have had initial discussions with the chair of the Veterans Scotland Housing Group on prioritisation of the key recommendations from the pathway.

Chapter 4: Transition and employment



Introduction

Stable and fulfilling employment is key to financial security, wellbeing, and successful transition from military to civilian life. This chapter sets out how defence and government partners are working to support the Armed Forces community into work. It highlights childcare and family policy reforms, resettlement services, employer engagement, and national schemes that recognise Armed Forces talent.

At a glance

- 81% of service spouses in employment within the UK (UK average: 78%).
- Overseas childcare reforms benefit 900 families and 2,000 children, saving £5 million annually.
- Unified Veterans Services integrates transition and welfare casework, ensuring more cohesive welfare case management.
- Defence ranks among the UK's top five apprenticeship employers.

Service families

In 2025, FAMCAS reports that just over four in five service spouses are employed (81%). This is above the UK employment rate. However, this figure drops sharply to less than half (44%) of spouses living overseas. Defence continues to focus on employment opportunities, supported by the AFCFT, for those who wish to find or continue with their current employment. This includes looking at IRW arrangements as well as identifying and seeking to mitigate other barriers to employment, including restrictions on the right to work imposed by host nations, limited availability of suitable roles, and challenges in accessing reliable childcare.

Armed Forces Families Strategy

One of the ways that we seek to recognise the role of families is through our Armed Forces Families Strategy. The strategy has the dual focus: to inspire partnership working across the UK, honouring the enduring pledge of the Armed Forces Covenant, and to provide direction to policy makers, the single services and public service providers to empower Armed Forces families to live rich and fulfilling lives alongside their loved ones.

Within the strategy is a workstream that is dedicated to 'supporting partners', and while the workstream has recently taken a more holistic view of what we mean by support, there remains a keen focus on enabling opportunities to promote partner employment. The workstream has a 'supporting partners fund' which is administered on behalf of defence by the AFCFT. In May of this year, £800,000 worth of grants were issued from the fund, supporting 15 projects.¹⁴ Current and previous projects have been from both within the UK and in several areas

¹⁴ Further details are included within Chapter 6: Direct support for the Armed Forces community, under 'The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust'.

overseas where families are present. These include the Forces Employment Charity for a project supporting spouses and partners into tech careers across the UK, RAF Valley People and Community Support Development project, the submariners' families programme in HMNB Clyde, and the Global Support Unit/National Support Element looking at supporting those in Northern Italy.

Employment support

Wraparound Childcare Overseas (WACO)

MOD remains committed to enabling access to appropriate, enriching and safe childcare for the children of service families.

In January 2025, the defence WAC scheme was expanded to include overseas locations. Families assigned to locations within the European economic area and Switzerland, and those that use a defence children services school or setting for before and after school childcare.

The schemes offers eligible working families in the UK and in these overseas locations the ability to claim back the costs of up to 20 hours per week, per child, of before and after school childcare for up to 39 weeks per year.

Almost 12,500 service children have been registered for the scheme by 9,000 service personnel, and over £38 million has been claimed since the defence WAC scheme first launched in September 2022.

WAC is an enabler for dual working families to be able to pursue careers while minimising the impact that service life can sometimes have around drop off and pick up times for children.

Early Years funded childcare overseas expansion.

In those overseas locations where Service personnel and their children have no statutory entitlement to access host nation childcare provision, or where host nation provision does not match the offer in England, Defence mirrors, as far as is reasonably practicable, the statutory provision that would be available if the family was assigned to England.

In September 2025, Defence expanded the Early Years childcare funding overseas to match the offer available in England. Eligible working families are able to access defence-funded childcare for 30 hours per week, per child, for 38 weeks of the year, for children aged 9 months to school starting age.

The Early Years childcare overseas funding benefits 900 service families (2,000 children) across the world, a combined saving for these families of £5 million per year.

Defence continues to work on improving our policies to make them more family friendly and recognising the diverse nature of our families. In this way we aim to have a more inclusive approach that can help promote family wellbeing, and enhance operational effectiveness and the longevity of the serviceperson's career.

UK childcare parity

In the UK, the childcare offer is directed by the devolved governments, which means that dependent on your location and personal family circumstances, your entitlement may differ. When shaping policy, defence strives to prevent significant disparities and maintain balanced incentives for service. The MOD are reviewing the childcare offer for service families within the UK, taking into account the complexities of working with devolved governments and other government partners, as well as potential tax, legal and policy implications. Options to achieve childcare parity for working families are under development.

Enhancements to the international remote working policy

The IRW temporary concessions (TC) section of the Flexible Working Policy currently supports MOD families by allowing MOD civil servants to request to accompany their posted MOD civil servant/Armed Forces partner overseas (partners are defined as spouses, civil partners and unmarried cohabiting partners). If supported by the business, the IRW TC criteria is satisfied, and the host country permits IRW, this flexibility allows the accompanying MOD partner to continue working in their existing UK-based role while accompanying their posted MOD partner for the duration of their overseas tenure, in preference to taking an unpaid career break.

This policy supports family income, associated pension arrangements and the career of accompanying staff. It also prevents business churn and maintains business outcomes, reduces recruitment action and associated costs, and crucially supports the spirit of the Armed Forces Covenant. In October 2025, it was announced that the current arrangement has now been extended to further enhance MOD's family-friendly policies by including staff in other government departments (OGDs).

The approvals process has also been updated to include a final step to either notify the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), or to seek their approval if IRW TC requests relate to certain countries.

Support for service leavers

Veterans' services

On 1 April 2025, Defence Business Services restructured its welfare support services by merging the Defence Transition Service and the Veterans Welfare Service into a unified entity: Veterans' Services. This integration has created more cohesive welfare case management, delivering support at local, regional and national levels. Key improvements include:

- simplified access, with over 100% of all new referrals being processed through a single 'front door'
- improved continuity of care, with client satisfaction surveys reporting a significant rise in confidence levels
- more consistent, personalised support, with over 95% of caseworker follow-up rates being completed well within their priority timings (P1: 48hrs / P2: five working days)

This initial data indicates that the Veterans' Services are becoming more consistent and personalised in the support they can offer service leavers, veterans, and their families, since the organisational changes.

Looking ahead, Veterans' Services will focus on improving access to support for complex cases through integration with the VALOUR system, enabling better co-ordination across departments and agencies. Future developments will also include tailored support plans and proactive outreach to engage harder-to-reach veterans. These reforms reinforce the Armed Forces Covenant, ensuring fair treatment and targeted assistance for those with additional needs, while aligning with the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) VALOUR intent to build a data-driven, co-ordinated, and veteran-centred system of care.

However, several challenges remain. These include ensuring digital inclusion where required for veterans with limited access to online services, maintaining consistent service quality across regions, and managing increasing demand with finite resources. To address these, Veterans' Services is exploring solutions, such as expanding career management presence into more community-based access points, investing in staff training to ensure consistent standards, and leveraging data analytics to better anticipate and respond to emerging needs. Continued collaboration with third sector organisations and local authorities will also be key to sustaining a responsive and resilient welfare support system.

Service Leavers Adjustments Passport

The MOD and the DWP launched the Service Leavers Adjustments Passport in June 2023. It is hosted by DWP on GOV.UK, as well as being signposted to service leavers by Defence Transition Services (DTS), the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), Veterans' Services, and the third sector. The Service Leavers Adjustments Passport follows the success of the Health Adjustment Passport, enabling service leavers to communicate any reasonable adjustments or specific requirements they may have to employers in a way which empowers them and is confidential to the individual. The Service Leavers Adjustments Passport pilots have shown that the passport can support the user by providing:

- a clear gateway of adjustment support, and raising the visibility of support available for each stage of the transitions journey
- the user with an up-to-date transferable record of their adjustments to support the adjustments journey
- a communication tool to empower the user to have more structured discussions with employers
- raised visibility of in-work support with the user and their employer
- help to build the confidence of the user and providing assurance that support is available if they need it to progress in work
- support with the user's access to work applications by reducing the need for an assessment if the needs are known

Advance into Justice

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) originally developed Advance into Justice as a fast-track scheme for service personnel leaving the Armed Forces to become prison officers. The scheme was expanded to include a wider range of roles across His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and for all those who have served in the Armed Forces, as well including spouses and legal partners of service personnel.

HMPPS activity hubs

HMPPS activity hubs at HMP Risley and HMP Holme House continue to provide safe and supportive spaces for former service personnel in custody, which complement existing resettlement arrangements. Those veterans who volunteer to locate onto these wings are able to access individually tailored packages of support. These are respectively provided by Ingeus and Achieve who work collaboratively with Op NOVA and other third sector organisations, including military charities.

Resettlement

Resettlement services for regular and full-time service leavers are delivered through the CTP, the official MOD provider of Armed Forces resettlement support regardless of time served.

From 1 October 2024, delivery of the CTP contract transitioned to Reed in Partnership Ltd, a public services provider within the Reed Group, the UK's largest family-owned recruitment company. The new contract introduced a digital-first solution, enabling service leavers to book training and events, search for jobs, and access a wide range of resources and support. Designed with adaptability in mind, the platform is built to evolve alongside emerging technologies throughout the duration of the contract. Feedback from users has been overwhelmingly positive, and CTP remains committed to continuous improvement by actively responding to user input. Performance monitoring currently shows 100% delivery against contractual service standards, reflecting the platform's reliability and effectiveness.

Resettlement in Scotland

Recognising Scotland's geographical diversity, the CTP ensures comprehensive coverage through face-to-face support at key locations including Rosyth, Faslane, Leuchars, Kinloss and Lossiemouth. To further improve accessibility, especially for those in remote areas or overseas, the CTP routinely delivers virtual transition workshops, vocational training, and employment events.

Monthly drop-in resettlement clinics have proven highly effective, extending CTP support beyond the regional resettlement centre HMS Caledonia in Rosyth. These clinics are now regularly held at Kinloss, Lossiemouth, Fort George, Leuchars and Condor, in collaboration with first line career managers and second line education and resettlement teams.

The Scottish Employment Fair returned to Murrayfield Stadium on 18 April 2024, attracting over 90 exhibitors and nearly 400 service leavers. Additionally, the North of Scotland Employment Fair held at Elgin was well received by both service leavers and regional employers.

A memorandum of understanding between the MOD, CTP and Skills Development Scotland provides a collaborative framework for knowledge sharing and professional development. This ensures service leavers are fully informed of their MOD entitlements and additional resources available in Scotland. These efforts align with recommendations from the Scottish Veterans Commissioner and foster stronger employment and community integration.

Resettlement in Wales

In Wales, the CTP delivers career transition workshops at Chepstow with increased attendance thanks to close collaboration with HQ 160th (Welsh) Brigade. This partnership has significantly enhanced engagement and delivery.

Employer engagement across Wales remains robust. The annual CTP employment fair in Cardiff continues to grow in scale and impact.

Resettlement in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland presents a unique resettlement landscape shaped by its employment law, historical context, and security environment. The integrated approach consolidates all three core service pillar components of CTP services: transition, training and employment, within a single resettlement centre, offering a seamless experience for service leavers.

The CTP Devolved Nation Guides, including the Northern Ireland edition, provide tailored information and expert insights to support service leavers throughout their resettlement journey.

Veterans in employment

The MOD publishes annual statistics on the employment outcomes of ex-service personnel.¹⁵ The most recent report, covering 2023/2024 and published on 13 February 2025, found that employment outcomes for service leavers remains consistently strong.

88% of service leavers who engaged with the MOD's CTP and responded to the six-month follow up survey were in employment.

A further 5% were unemployed, and the remainder were classified as economically inactive. This refers to further education, retirement and travelling, all classed as positive outcomes.

The slight 1% change from the previous year falls well within expected variation and likely reflects broader labour market conditions at the time. Notably, this employment rate exceeds that of the UK general population, which stood at 75% during the same period. Even after adjusting for gender differences between the veteran and general populations, veterans

¹⁵ MOD, Career Transition Partnership Annual Statistics 2023 to 2024 Bulletin, 2025, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67a6115a6006e4154dc498a1/Career_Transition_Partnership_ex-service_personnel_employment_outcomes_financial_year_2023-24.pdf

maintained a higher employment rate, underscoring the effectiveness of the MOD resettlement support and the resilience of the veteran workforce.

Op ASCEND

In February 2025, the government announced Op ASCEND. This programme, delivered by the Forces Employment Charity, is designed to connect veterans who are more than two years post-service, and their families.

Op ASCEND has already equipped over 3,000 veterans and family members with the tools needed to make their next career move and engaged more than 300 employers.

Op ASCEND also works directly with employers to support the recruitment, retention and career progression of veteran talent. It connects veterans with employers providing clear, accessible career pathways into roles in strategic sectors. These sectors include energy and renewables, cyber and digital (including AI), and finance and professional services.

Op ASCEND provides veterans with services including:

- CV writing and interview prep
- advice on entering new sectors such as energy, data and digital
- telecommunications and construction
- tips on how to navigate recruitment schemes run by veteran-friendly employers
- access to employment fairs
- advice on retraining or setting up a business

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.¹⁶ It enables veterans to overcome the barriers they may encounter when applying to civilian roles by enabling those who meet the minimum essential criteria to progress to the next stage of the application process, while ensuring that appointments continue to be made based on merit.

Since launch in 2020/2021, almost 4,300 veterans (as of September 2025) have secured job offers through the initiative.

¹⁶ Details of the scheme can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hm-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-march-2024/hm-prison-and-probation-service-workforce-quarterly-march-2024> and statics can be downloaded at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68248de4ab96d4ed0b262eed/GPtW_Mar-25.ods

Ministry of Justice

The MOJ were one of the first departments to participate in the now Civil Service-wide scheme: Great Place to Work for Veterans.

This year, between October 2024 and March 2025, 97 individuals were successfully recruited through the campaign.

While vacancies across all grades continue to be advertised externally, there has been a downturn in external recruitment activity due to some workforce restructuring which has inevitably led to a lower number of hires. Applications were down by just over 10% from the 2023/2024 financial year to the 2024/2025 financial year.

Going forward into employment

As of September 2025, more than 300 veterans and military spouses and partners have been recruited into the Civil Service via the initiative.

‘Going forward into employment’ is a ‘life chances’ initiative offering people from a wide range of backgrounds, including veterans and their partners or spouses, the opportunity to secure and enter into employment in 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.

Veterans industry engagement programme

Delivered by Mission Community, this programme, funded by the government, works 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.

Step Into Health

The NHS Step Into Health scheme, which has now been running for over 10 years, has recruited over 2,963 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.

174 healthcare organisations have currently pledged to ‘Step Into Health’.

HMPPS staff networks

The work to develop staff networks in probation has continued, and at the start of 2025 approval was granted to formalise and create one HMPPS staff network for the veterans communities employed within HMPPS, including reservists and their families. HMPPS are currently in the scoping phase of this and developing clear lines of governance and integration with the established MOJ and Civil Service networks. In the interim, the individual regional networks continue to develop and will form part of the formalised network when launched at the end of the year.

As well as recruiting and supporting staff who are veterans, a small number of veterans also end up in prisons and on probation. HMPPS has developed a guide for staff who support former service personnel in custody, which has been funded by OVA. The information is specifically for staff working in prisons and has already received positive feedback from the draft version during testing.

The next step in the coming year will be to add further information specifically for probation colleagues to assist in services in the community, with an aim to provide this to probation staff early 2026.

Veterans in Custody Support Officers roles

HMPPS continues to support those in custody through Veterans in Custody Support Officers (VICSOs), operating in the majority of prisons, many of whom have previously served in the armed forces.

The VICSOs work to raise awareness among former service personnel offenders of the help and support available to both them and their families while they serve their sentences in prison and prepare for release.

This year has seen an increase in engagement across prisons and probation areas, particularly due to the continued dedicated annual VICSOs forums. These have been instrumental in providing staff with ongoing updates and initiatives available to former service personnel across the criminal justice system.

Armed Forces champions in the Jobcentre Plus network

The DWP remains committed to provide vital access to benefit and employment support to members of the Armed Forces community. The DWP has established a national network of Armed Forces champions and Armed Forces leads who provide a personalised and tailored service to this community.

This network continues to build on its historical results by tackling the barriers to employment, generating specialist knowledge of the interaction between Armed Forces and the state benefit system.

In 2025/2026, the DWP will continue to deploy dedicated, full time Armed Forces champions across the 35 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 the Armed Forces community across the country.

Armed Forces Covenant promotion among national employers

The DWP Strategic Relationship Team (SRT) continues to actively encourage national employers and partner organisations within its network to formally commit to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Through strategic collaboration with key stakeholders such as employers, local authorities, trade associations and third sector organisations, SRT continue to promote the Armed Forces Covenant and Covenant principles, enhancing awareness. SRT can identify barriers to inclusion, promote best practices with stakeholders and across Jobcentre Plus sites, and advocate the Covenant's commitment to fairness and respect.

In addition, SRT and Armed Forces champion leads have worked in partnership with X-Forces to promote self-employment among service leavers, veterans, reservists and family members. The SRT have co-ordinated Armed Forces involvement in support of national large-scale redundancies which offer the transition from redundancy to a career in the military, including those who have served previously.

Supporting veterans into specific employment sectors

The DWP's SRT have actively encouraged employers operating in the logistics industry to target service leavers as part of a campaign to attract this cohort into the workplace.

The SRT have again taken the lead in chairing a monthly meeting of DWP Armed Forces leads and district champions. These meetings have included presentations from Defence Relationship Management and a variety of employers and partners who wish to support service leavers, veterans and their families. Across government the team have engaged with the MOJ, in particular the New Futures Network, on employment opportunities for veterans who have served custodial sentences. In addition, the SRT, alongside Armed Forces champion leads, continue to work in partnerships with X-Forces Enterprise CIC to encourage self-employment opportunities for service leavers, veterans reservists and family members, and are building on their working relationship with Careers Transition Partnership to assist the redeployment of service leavers and veterans (especially those medically discharged), reservists and family members.

Universal Credit identifier

DWP has continued its work to identify Universal Credit claimants who are members of the Armed Forces community. Coverage continues to improve over time, and by August 2025 data was held on the Armed Forces status of approximately 82% of the Universal Credit caseload in Great Britain, an increase of 6% reported last year.¹⁷ Of those, 4,700 claimants had a status

¹⁷ Data is not collected on the Armed Forces status of Universal Credit claimants in Northern Ireland. Armed Forces status is self-reported by claimants and is not verified by the MOD. A claimant's status can be recorded as 'currently serving', 'served in the past', 'not served' 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.

recorded as 'currently serving' and 83,000 had a status of 'served in the past'. Compared to the 2024 Covenant Annual Report, the number of claimants with a recorded status of 'currently serving' or 'served in the past' has increased.¹⁸ This does not necessarily mean the overall number 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 data is collected means the claimants for whom data is held are not representative of the Universal Credit caseload as a whole.¹⁹ 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.

¹⁸ 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 one percent. Figures may be subject to retrospective changes as more up-to-date data becomes available or if methodological improvements are made.

¹⁹ 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.

Chapter 5: Inquests and judicial engagement

Introduction

This chapter provides an update on the activity of the Defence Inquests Unit (DIU) during the reporting period, and related matters.

The Defence Inquests Unit

The 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 74 inquests (26 of which concern the death of a veteran) being concluded between 1 October 2024 and 30 September 2025.

Inquests are yet to be held into 46 military, veteran and MOD or contractor civilian deaths that occurred between 1 October 2024 and 30 September 2025.

During the reporting period, the Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit confirmed to the DIU that they had concluded investigations into three service personnel deaths. In all three 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).

The DIU are tracking two deaths which may lead to a fatal accident inquiry.

Safety-related fatalities among the Armed Forces

The MOD publishes independent Defence Safety Authority annual assurance reports to assess that defence policy for health, safety and environmental protection is being adequately promoted and implemented.²⁰

Further health and safety statistics, covering both military and civilian personnel, can be found in the MOD's annual health and safety statistics report.²¹

²⁰ Defence Safety Authority annual assurance reports available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dsa-annual-assurance-reports>

²¹ MOD, Defence health and safety statistics: index', 2025, available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/defence-health-and-safety-statistics-index>

Chapter 6: Direct support for the Armed Forces community



Introduction

The Armed Forces Covenant is delivered through a combination of direct government support, wider community and employer engagement, and statutory obligations. This next section of the report is therefore structured into three interconnected chapters. Chapter 6 outlines the services and programmes that provide direct support to current service personnel, veterans and their families, including the bereaved. Chapter 7 highlights how employers, local authorities, and community organisations play their part in upholding the Covenant through pledges and workplace engagement. Chapter 8 explains how the Covenant Legal Duty ensures these commitments are embedded in law. Together, these chapters provide a full picture of how the Covenant is put into practice across society.

Direct support is the foundation of the Covenant in practice. This chapter highlights the services and programmes that provide tangible help to the Armed Forces community. From the launch of the VALOUR programmes to the work of the AFCFT, it sets out how government and its partners are reducing disadvantage, strengthening resilience, and responding to emerging needs across the Armed Forces community.

At a glance

- Launch of VALOUR uniting central and local veteran support.
- Over £13.5 million distributed through the AFCFT.
- Over 300,000 beneficiaries reached across mental health, family and inclusion programmes.
- Delivery of a new Veterans' Strategy.

VALOUR

The new VALOUR programme, announced in May 2025, will offer veterans across the UK easier access to the essential care and support available to them. VALOUR will improve the coordination of services at a national, regional, and local level, and is overseen by the OVA within the MOD.

There will be three components to VALOUR.

1. VALOUR HQ, sitting within the OVA, will use data and feedback to inform policy and service design.
2. VALOUR recognised support centres, supported by VALOUR development funding. These will form a network across the UK to facilitate veterans' access to multiple services.
3. A network of regional field officers, who will bring together stakeholders across local government, statutory services, and the third sector.

Together, these three components will contribute to a more coordinated experience for those veterans who are seeking support.

Veterans' Strategy

The MOD have published a new Veterans' Strategy that sets out this government's vision for the remarkable men and women that have served in this country's Armed Forces.

Through this new strategy and working closely with the wide range of stakeholders across the UK that deliver for veterans, we will ensure all veterans' service are celebrated, their potential to make further contributions is realised and, for those that need it, that the right support is available to them.

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust

The AFCFT is a charity and non-departmental public body awarding grants across the UK to projects serving the armed forces community. These grants directly support the Covenant's aim to reduce disadvantage and provide special consideration for those who have given most.

Since the Trust started its work in 2018, it has distributed more than £60 million in Armed Forces Covenant Fund grants to projects across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It has also managed more than £100 million from other funds on behalf of government departments all in service of the Covenant.



16 grant programmes delivered on behalf of



Office for
Veterans' Affairs

HM Treasury

Ministry
of Defence



945
applications
for funding
assessed



£32M+
awarded in grants



Supporting around
419,000
beneficiaries

Achieving...

Opening
up **choices**
for serving
women

Reduced isolation
and the impact of
loneliness

Appropriate
**training and
development**
of staff to
support
Service
children

**Better learning
environments**
for service
children

Identify and
**address known and
unknown gaps** in
service provision

**Veterans' isolation
reduced** and
quality of life
improved

Addressing
**mental health
wellbeing**, help-
seeking, and
stigma within the
armed forces
community

New forms of
personalised
and
**targeted
support**

**Improved
access** to
support

**Collaborative
partnerships** between
armed forces
organisations and
specialist non-armed
forces organisations.

**Effective,
preventative and
educational
measures** regarding
domestic abuse
within armed forces
communities

The Covenant Fund in action

This reporting year saw the first grants made under the Trust's new three-year Covenant Fund framework.

From 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025, the Covenant Fund awarded £13,856,843 in grants to projects reaching an estimated 301,416 beneficiaries across the UK.

The top three outcomes targeted by those awards (by spend) were:

- to address mental health wellbeing, help-seeking, and stigma within the Armed Forces community
- improve access to support for families, through information, advice and guidance
- acknowledge and understand veterans' experiences, enabling them to positively progress on their recovery journey

Expanding on success

- **Op NOVA**

Offering tailored support to veterans in the justice system, the Trust made awards to the Forces Employment Charity to extend this work in Wales and Scotland.

- **LGBT+ financial recognition scheme**

With the launch of the Financial Recognition scheme for those affected by the ban on LGBT+ Armed Forces personnel between 1967 and 2000, the Trust provided grant support to the Royal British Legion and Fighting With Pride on behalf of the MOD, to bolster the work they are doing to help veterans applying to the scheme.

Stronger families

Two Covenant Fund programmes this year focused on the issues of separation and mobility – with the two often going hand in hand. Both can lead to isolation, and both can mean upheaval for the whole family; but both can also bring opportunities, with the right support.

These projects focus on building families' resilience and confidence to handle feelings of disconnection when they're separated.

- **Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC)**

Consultation and research with the submariner community in Helensburgh, conducted in collaboration with Greenwich Hospital and the RNRMC, saw the Trust fund a ground-breaking place-based project there this year.

This project responds to experiences of separation with a particular focus on extended absences with little-to-no communication and limited support.

A grant of £368,500 went to RNRMC to support these families by improving community engagement, mental health support, and social connectivity.

A dedicated team will co-ordinate partnerships to deliver tailored services and strengthen long-term resilience for families in the region.

- **Serving Families Overseas programme**

Mobility challenges can become even more difficult for families who are posted overseas. This programme has focused on supporting these families within this cohort. Funding projects in countries such as Spain, Belgium, Italy and Cyprus. The initiatives range from language integration and relationship workshops to activities that foster a sense of community, all aimed at building resilience during times of change.

The Trust has awarded a grant of £500,000 to the Army Families Federation to work with the Naval Families Federation and RAF Families Federation, to conduct in-depth research to identify and address hidden needs within the overseas community.

The Families Federations will focus on early engagement with families, ensuring clearer information is available prior to and on return from an overseas posting, and they will oversee the creation of an employment hub.

- **The Fulfilling Futures projects**

This includes, but is not limited to, targeted programmes providing support for:

- female veterans living with the effects of sexual trauma
- LGBT+ veterans
- recovery work for veterans with physical injuries

Family focus projects

Family focus projects – supporting those who are wounded, injured or sick and their families – are heavily informed by their beneficiaries who co-design activities where relevant. This work is exploratory; it will pilot new solutions to tackling the issues families face and build upon proven work. It's vital that this funding leads to improved access to support, and that families feel their needs are being recognised and feel more resilient in a caring role.

Ministerial department funds

Currently serving families

The AFCFT has continued to deliver grants on behalf of MOD's Armed Forces Families Fund, which is made up of three dedicated programmes:

- access to childcare and early years support
- education for service children
- employment and wellbeing for partners and spouses

During the reporting period, more than £4 million was awarded in grants to projects supporting children and partners through the funds.

On behalf of MOD, the Trust commissioned Alma Economics to begin work on an independent evaluation of the Service Pupil Support programme, to understand whether it has met its aims, delivered value for money, and whether it should be continued, adapted or discontinued by the department. This year, the team completed work to design evaluation methodologies, working with schools taking part in the programme and parents of pupils being supported to design processes for tracking progress against each of the programme's planned outcomes.

Veterans

This year, grant-making on the department's behalf focused on supporting veterans experiencing homelessness, unemployment and mobility challenges.

- **The Veterans' Capital Housing Fund**

£9,719,446 was awarded to support the government's aim of reducing veteran homelessness and to end rough sleeping.

This included a major cash injection allowing Veteran Housing Scotland to deliver a significant refurbishment programme to improve and extend 52 properties within their portfolio. The organisation estimates 59 veterans and 65 family members will benefit, not just from the housing itself, but also from the wraparound support that comes alongside.

- **The Veterans' Mobility Fund**

The Veterans' Mobility Fund saw unprecedented demand in its first year of operation, helping 150 veterans with specialised equipment and a further 350 veterans with warm handovers to other sources of support.

- **The Veterans Career Development Fund and Op ASCEND projects**

These projects continued their delivery of qualifications and training to enable veterans and their families to enter stable, long-term employment, and to create career pathways and industry engagement opportunities for veterans. A commission to evaluate the impact of the partnership for MOD was awarded to Alma Economics.

- **HM Treasury's Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund**

More than £7.5 million in portfolio grants have been awarded in all regions of the UK as part of the Thrive Together programme community.

This builds on the enormous success of the earlier Veterans' Places, Pathways and People (VPPP) programme. Final evaluation of the VPPP programme, published this year, reflected on its reach: an estimated 54,000 people across the Armed Forces community benefited from the support of these innovative networks, which grew from 88 funded organisations to 541 organisations and agencies all engaged in supporting the wellbeing of vulnerable veterans and their families.

Learning and research

Learning on loss

Led by Alma Economics, this landmark study shaped the goals of a major portfolio grant programme aiming to transform the landscape of bereavement support for loved ones in the Armed Forces community. Working with focus groups, charities, consultation submissions and reviewing existing research, the research team took a deep dive into current gaps, challenges and opportunities to improve help to grieving spouses and partners, children, wider family and friends. There were some familiar themes: the need to map the help which is available; the importance of building partnerships between those providing it; the need to expand support to both children and adults; and the need to broaden the range of help available. The findings make clear the scope for this programme to make a difference to those whose lives have been shattered by bereavement.

Seascapes

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) worked with the Trust to complete this first-of-its-kind study into the unique experiences of those in the submariner community, when it comes to coping with separation and isolation. Designed to inform a unique pilot programme focused on place – working with the Navy, charities and wider community in Helensburgh, Scotland – the research highlighted the opportunities for collaborative working to offer more tailored mental health and peer support, specific help with reintegration and the complexities of long deployments, and work to help partners and spouses enhance their careers.

Hospital headlines

The University of Chester published its evaluation of the Trust's £2 million programme with NHS England, which based an Armed Forces advocate for veterans in acute hospitals across 16 NHS Trusts. It found that the roles raised awareness of the needs of veterans among

hospital teams and improved their experiences in hospital. The programme's success has subsequently seen roles embedded permanently and exploration of the model by other Trusts, while recommendations on best practice are being traded and applied. Among them, ways to identify veterans easily within the hospital setting, ensuring the role's remit extends into the community, and the potential impacts of an Armed Forces advocate's role for timely discharge home for patients.

This year also saw publication of the University of Chester's evaluation of the Veterans Adviceline for Statutory Professionals, the Northern Ireland-based element of this programme. The helpline aimed to signpost organisations and welfare services to the best point of contact to support veterans and their families and was used by veterans, statutory and non-statutory organisations alike – with all evaluation respondents stating they were happy with the support they received, and 79% that the line had a positive impact on their wellbeing.

The bereaved community

Defence acknowledges that those who experience the death of a partner or close relation serving in the Armed Forces have specific needs that differ from those of the veteran community.

The bereaved community represents a distinct group within the wider Armed Forces community. This year, efforts have continued to raise awareness of defence's bereaved families and the support available.

The Defence Bereaved Families Group

The DBFG is comprised of representatives from the Single Services Widows' Associations, service charities supporting the bereaved, and external organisations dedicated to improving the living experience of those who have experienced bereavement. It is co-chaired on a rotational basis by the Chair of one of the Single Services Widows' Associations and the Assistant Head of the Armed Forces People Support, Welfare Support Team. The DBFG serves as a forum to raise and address issues affecting bereaved families through the lived experience of members, with actionable outcomes pursued where possible by those responsible for policy and service delivery.

In 2025, two DBFG meetings have taken place. The first was hosted at the Royal British Legion's London office, while the second was recently held at SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity headquarters, also in London. Both meetings welcomed a range of representatives, including those from the AFCFT and British Forces Broadcasting Services, among others. This diverse participation fosters broader discussions and highlights ongoing efforts within the MOD and across external organisations to improve the recognition, support, and overall experience of the bereaved community.

The Purple Book

The Purple Book, a resource developed by MOD, is a key component of the Purple Pack, which is distributed by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC). As the MOD's

primary delivery agent, JCCC is responsible for notifying next of kin and emergency contacts when a service person becomes ill, is injured, or dies while in military service, whether in the UK or overseas. After delivering the notification, JCCC provides the Purple Pack to the next of kin or nominated individual. The Purple Book is specifically designed to offer guidance on military milestones and includes contact details for support agencies and networks, ensuring bereaved families have access to additional assistance during the grieving process.

After a comprehensive redesign and rewrite in early 2025 to ensure accessibility and to adopt a more compassionate tone, the MOD have recently conducted a further review to maintain the accuracy and relevance of the information provided. Incorporating feedback from members of the bereaved community, the MOD collaborated closely with the DBFG, service charities and the single services throughout this process to ensure the content is accurate, relevant, and uses appropriate language.

Time to Reflect 2025

Time to Reflect is an annual event funded by the Royal British Legion, designed to introduce members of DBFG-affiliated charities to the National Memorial Arboretum and its various spaces for reflection and remembrance. The event is dedicated to those who have died in service, regardless of the cause, with the core message that their sacrifice is recognised and their families are not forgotten.

In May of this year, the DBFG hosted the fourth annual Time to Reflect event, with approximately 140 attendees registered.

The positive feedback the DBFG received highlights the event's value and its importance to the bereaved community.

Focus on exploring policy change

The MOD remains committed to ensuring the bereaved are included and considered in policy decisions and adaptations. Over the past year, informed by feedback from the bereaved community and their lived experiences, the MOD has actively worked to consider positive and inclusive changes in several key areas, including:

- introducing a bereavement support section within the new MOD Families Hub information portal on Discover My Benefits
- collaborating with the Department for Transport to explore the possibility of extending the service personnel and veterans' free travel offer for remembrance parades during remembrance weekend to include the bereaved
- reviewing the Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme
- working with the DBFG to examine the continuity of education allowance
- ensuring specific areas of bereavement support, previously overlooked, are now included in visiting officer reports

These efforts reflect the MOD's ongoing dedication to addressing the needs of the bereaved community.

Ministerial change

Following the recent cabinet reshuffle, the former Minister for Veterans and People, Al Carns, deeply moved by the resilience and advocacy of the DBFG, wrote to its members to reaffirm his commitment to supporting the bereaved community in his new role as Minister for the Armed Forces. Similarly, Louise Sandher-Jones, the newly appointed Minister for Veterans and People, has also written to the DBFG, offering her reassurance and expressing her dedication to working alongside bereaved families to ensure they receive the understanding, respect, and support they deserve.

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust

The AFCFT has allocated a £1.8 million single portfolio grant to drive long-term, transformational improvements in non-statutory support for bereaved military families over a four-year period.

The MOD is working closely with the Trust to support the delivery of significant enhancements in accessible support for the bereaved. Key priority areas include:

- strengthening collaboration between organisations supporting the bereaved
- expanding access to holistic support packages that integrate peer-led and professional assistance
- simplifying pathways for maintaining connections to the military community, where desired
- ensuring equitable and inclusive support, regardless of the circumstances of the bereavement

Chapter 7: Community partnerships and workplace engagement



Introduction

The Armed Forces Covenant is a central tool for defence to strengthen ties between the Armed Forces community and wider society, encouraging organisations to offer support. It embodies the shared understanding and appreciation between the Armed Forces and the public, recognising their sacrifices.

This approach aligns with the SDR, which aims to deepen the relationship between defence and society. By promoting greater understanding and support through the Covenant, defence advances a more resilient and inclusive national security framework, ensuring the Armed Forces community's contributions are acknowledged throughout society.

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 DWP and other government departments.

Armed Forces Covenant signatories

Defence Relationship Management (DRM) continues to enable employers' support for defence across the United Kingdom by emphasising to organisations of all sizes across all sectors the practicability and the efficacy of signing the Armed Forces Covenant.

A significant milestone was reached in May 2025 when the 13,000th organisation signed the Covenant.

The continued growth of these mutually beneficial partnerships demonstrates the high levels of commitment employers make to support the Armed Forces community.

First signing the Armed Forces Covenant and forging a relationship via DRM with defence gives employers the unique opportunity to earn nationally recognised awards through the defence ERS. This hugely successful scheme, launched in 2014, provides for bronze, silver and gold awards for employers that advocate, pledge and demonstrate support for Defence People priorities. The ERS builds on the values organisations espouse via the Armed Forces Covenant, codifying and rewarding support.

202 new gold ERS awards were given to employers in 2025 for going above and beyond in supporting defence to renew the nation's contract with those who serve or have served.

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 to drive greater awareness and support for these essential initiatives.

The Armed Forces Covenant has experienced notable expansion, reaching a total of 13,711 signatories by 30 September 2025. At the same date, the ERS had awarded 1,211 gold, 1,482 silver, and 5,650 bronze accolades to organisations demonstrating outstanding support for defence personnel.

Figure 1 – Total number of Armed Forces Covenant signings since 2011 (to Sept 2025)



Figure 2 – Total number of Armed Forces Covenant signings by ownership (public, non-profit, private).

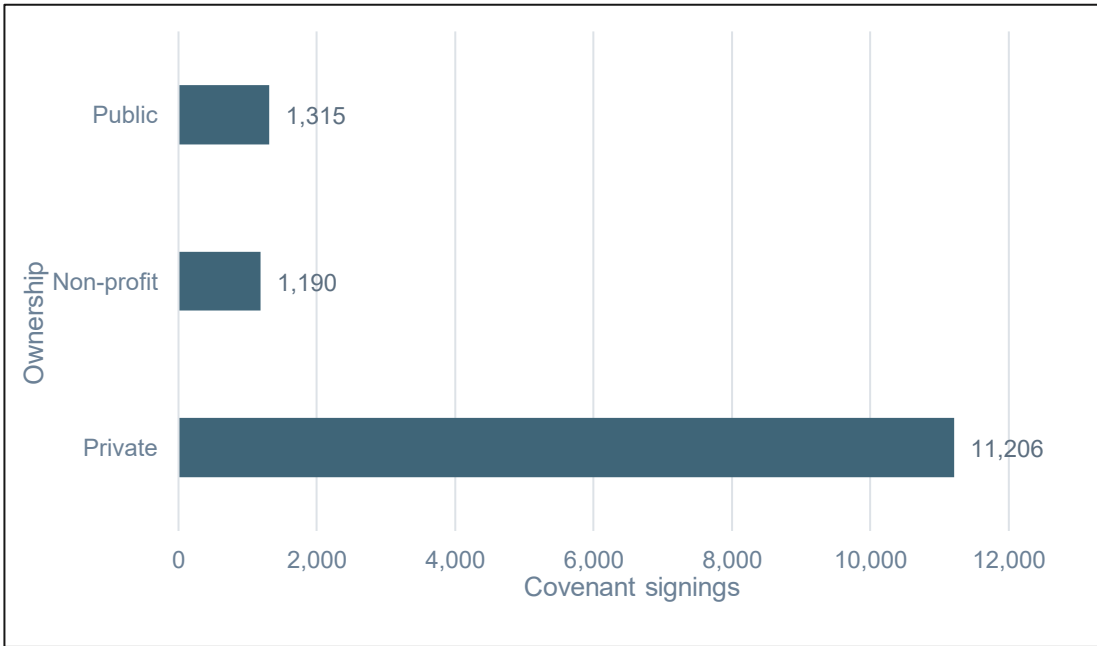
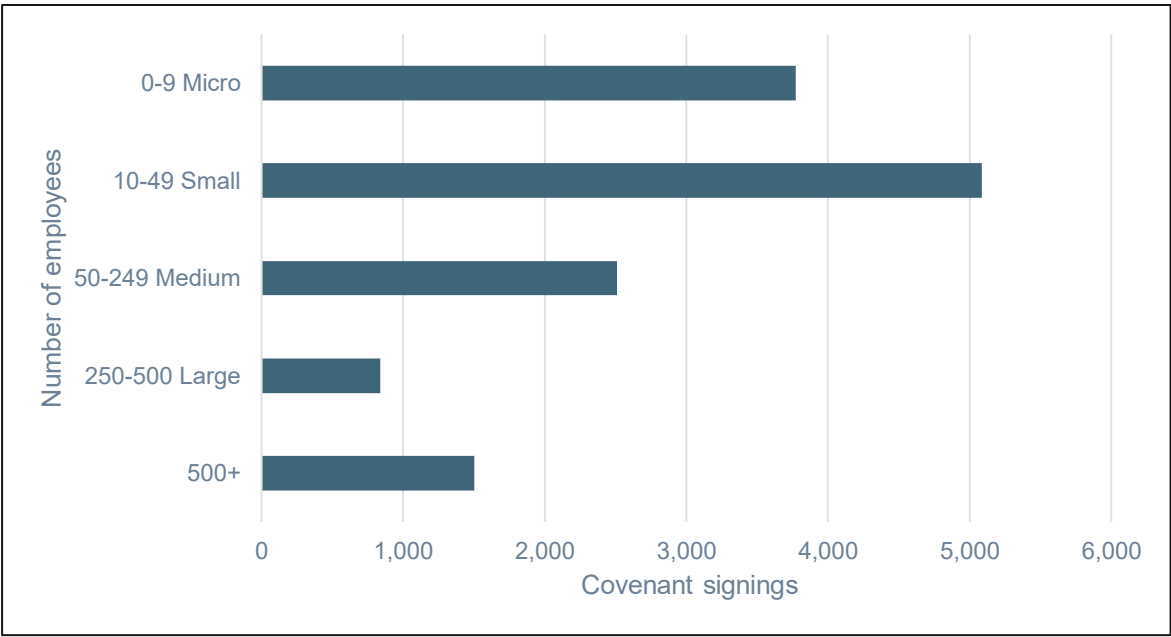


Figure 3 – Total number of Armed Forces Covenant signings by number of employees in the organisation



Armed Forces Covenant digitisation

In addition to the launch of an Armed Forces Covenant specialist finder, set to replace the existing searchable index of businesses who have signed the Covenant, DRM is creating a simpler way for UK-based employers to sign the Covenant online. Both of these updates are set to go live by the end of 2025.

Employer awareness and attitudes monitor results

Defence employer attitudes monitor

The Employer Attitudes Monitor (EAM) is an independent research series that has been conducted since 2014. It functions as a source of evidence to inform policy on reserves and other Defence People policy areas. The EAM 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 sectors, sizes and UK regions. The EAM is now biennial and results for EAM 2025 will be published in March 2026 and will, therefore, be included in next year’s report.

Activities benefiting the Armed Forces community

A large range of events and activities facilitated, organised and hosted by DRM take place nationwide every year to increase awareness and support for the Armed Forces community. DRM organises in-person signing events; examples in 2025 include Associated British Ports, Aston Martin Lagonda Ltd and Mars UK. Other highlights include Armed Forces Week, which includes Reserve Forces Day, where several Armed Forces Covenant holders used DRM’s digital toolkit to promote employers’ activity nationwide.

How employers effectively deliver benefits to the Armed Forces community

The effectiveness of activities delivered by Armed Forces Covenant signatories that do the most to benefit the Armed Forces community is recorded and measured. This analysis is used to inform good practice guidance and enables the MOD to promote and share these practices among Covenant signatories. The most effective activities recorded during the reporting period continue to be having bespoke HR policies, especially positive recruitment aimed at the Armed Forces community, and flexible or remote working for partners and spouses. Highly effective is support for defence charities and supply chain advocacy (promulgating the benefits of signing the Covenant among suppliers).

Engagement facilitates bespoke pledges which, in addition to leave for reservists and cadet force adult volunteers, can include the provision of an internal network for members of the Armed Forces communities, guaranteed interview schemes for service leavers and veterans, and the provision of a programme/policy for military spouses, partners or family members.

The Armed Forces Covenant annual conference

This year's Covenant conference was a sellout success, with over 250 delegates attending in person and further 200 joining virtually.

The Covenant annual conference builds and strengthens the MOD's cross-UK Covenant network, liaising with local authorities, devolved governments, and other relevant bodies to promote and share good practice in delivery of the Covenant.

The 2025 Covenant conference was held on the 2 and 3 of July at Ibrox Stadium in Glasgow, marking a milestone in the evolution of Covenant delivery across the UK.

110 questions were submitted via our SLIDO platform, highlighting the strong engagement and interest from participants. Significantly, this was the first time the conference was held within a devolved nation, encouraging in-person participation from a broader range of organisations.

Plenary sessions focused on a wide range of topics, including:

- Armed Forces demographics and needs
- delivery insights from Greater Manchester
- developments in service children's services
- new findings from the Our Community, Our Covenant report
- overviews of VALOUR and a new NHS Covenant training team
- an explanation of the current and extended Covenant Legal Duty

Day two featured three targeted breakout sessions aimed at gathering insights from those directly involved in Covenant delivery. Expert facilitation was led by the Royal British Legion, Forces in Mind Trust, Shared Intelligence, and RAND Europe to name a few. Demonstrating the cross collaboration that has taken place between government departments and community organizations, these events highlight the collective effort to support the Armed Forces community.

Covenant engagement

Over the past year, Covenant engagement activity has been dynamic and wide-ranging, reflecting a concerted effort across government and its partners to strengthen support for the Armed Forces community. Key moments have included formal conferences, targeted stakeholder events, and the establishment of cross-government panels, all contributing to an evolving and responsive approach to meeting the needs of those currently serving, veterans and their families – including the bereaved. This engagement has been critical in helping shape the new covenant legislation.

Armed Forces Covenant awareness

Awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant has remained stable since 2022, with over half of personnel (53%) knowing at least a little about it. However, over a quarter of personnel (27%) have never heard of it. Officers are considerably more likely to know at least a little about the Armed Forces Covenant (84%) compared to other ranks (45%). To address these awareness gaps and support the Armed Forces community, the Covenant team has made a concerted effort to improve communications. As part of these efforts, the team has developed a Covenant Legal Duty toolkit. The toolkit explains the practical implications for the Armed Forces community and outlines the key policies to be included.

Overall, while the proportions of personnel feeling advantaged or disadvantaged about aspects of life as a service person compared to the general public remain relatively unchanged this year, these communication improvements and resources are intended to drive greater understanding and more consistent support across the Armed Forces community. For example, just under half of personnel (48%) report feeling disadvantaged about family life compared to the general public, highlighting the ongoing importance of targeted awareness and support initiatives.

Public value

The proportion of personnel that agree ‘members of the Armed Forces are valued by society’ continues to fall in 2025, to 26%. The level of agreement has fallen 13% since 2021 and has almost halved since this question was first asked in 2013.

However, the question does not suggest, nor allow for personnel to explain what it means to be valued by society and what this looks like.

Veterans Commissioners

Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner

David Johnstone was appointed the second Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner (NIVC) in January 2025. David Johnstone and his office (NIVCO) promote awareness of the needs of veterans resident in Northern Ireland on a range of key issues including health, housing, employment and Northern Ireland legacy. Engagement is also ongoing with key personnel in the different health trusts and with the Northern Ireland Health Minister to ensure each trust has a veterans champion. The government has provided funding to ensure veterans champions can continue and will provide holistic oversight, direction and governance. The NIVC continues to regularly collaborate with the other Veterans Commissioners across the UK on common issues and regularly represents the interests of veterans in Northern Ireland to UK government officials and ministers.

Wales Veterans Commissioner

The Veterans Commissioner for Wales, James Phillips, engages 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 Minister for Veterans and People. The Commissioner continues to highlight health and housing as key areas for improvement and has shared his evidence-based views with the Welsh Government given the devolved nature of these and many of the services veterans access. The UK and Welsh governments have continued to work closely with the Veterans Commissioner for Wales during the year.

Scottish Veterans Commissioner

In May 2025, the Scottish Government announced an extension until September 2026 to the term of office of the current Scottish Veterans Commissioner, Susie Hamilton. The Commissioner continues to engage with veterans and the wider veterans sector to understand their challenges, champion the community and improve outcomes for veterans. In October 2024, the Commissioner published a report on veterans and the law, and in June 2025 the Commissioner published a report on veterans and finance, both providing valuable insight and a series of recommendations that have been accepted by the Scottish Government. In September 2025, the commissioner published her fourth Annual Progress Report assessing Scottish Government progress against previous Commissioner recommendations. Overall, the report shows that progress towards delivery continues. The Commissioner has also supported the UK government by providing advice and guidance to the Minister and officials.

Chapter 8: The Covenant Legal Duty



The Covenant Legal Duty

In June 2025, the Prime Minister unveiled new plans ensuring that, for the first time, every government department will be required to give ‘due regard’ to the Armed Forces Covenant when shaping policies and making decisions, taking into account the distinct experiences and needs of the Armed Forces community.

This delivers on a manifesto promise and is part of the government’s commitment to renew the nation’s contract with those who serve and have served, their families and the bereaved.

The extension of the Legal Duty will encompass all UK government departments and devolved governments, building on the current policy areas of housing, education and healthcare.

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| • Housing | • Education | • Healthcare |
| • Social care | • Childcare | • Personal taxation |
| • Social security benefits | • Criminal justice | • Immigration |
| • Citizenship | • Pensions | • Transport |
| • Armed Forces compensation | • Employment | |

It is the MOD’s ambition to include these statutory changes in the next Armed Forces Bill.

What will change?

The Covenant Legal Duty will remain as a duty of due regard to Covenant principles. However, this transformative measure ensures that currently serving personnel, veterans and their families, including the bereaved are considered in every relevant policy decision. Giving them a meaningful voice and delivering on the government’s pledge to strengthen support for our Armed Forces communities.

What is ‘due regard’?

‘Due regard’ means actively considering the Covenant when developing, delivering and reviewing policies and decisions that may impact the Armed Forces community. It means placing appropriate weight on the Covenant principles when all relevant factors are considered.

It does not mean that any particular conclusions have to be reached, or specific public service delivery outcomes achieved.

Extending the Legal Duty will put the Armed Forces community at the very heart of government decision-making. It is an ongoing obligation, and relevant bodies should continuously review policies and decisions that may impact the Armed Forces community.²²

Defining outcomes

The Legal Duty is deliberately flexible, allowing bodies subject to this duty to make decisions on service delivery that are suitable for their local context and needs.

At its core, the duty is one of consideration: it aims to foster greater awareness of the potential disadvantages faced by the Armed Forces community. Rather than prescribing specific outcomes, the Legal Duty ensures that policy makers and decision makers approach their responsibilities in a more informed and thoughtful manner, with an understanding of the unique challenges experienced by members of the Armed Forces community.

Better support to the Armed Forces community

Relevant bodies can make big or small changes in support of removing disadvantage for the Armed Forces community. For example:

- departmental policies on employment of reservists, veterans, and in particular partners of currently serving personnel when they are re-located around the country by the Armed Forces
- review, update, or relaunch any guidance issued to other bodies to add explicit consideration of the Armed Forces
- improve understanding of Armed Forces issues within own area of policy

What support/training materials will be provided?

When the Legal Duty extension is live, the following will be updated to support the development or review of policies:

- training materials
- webinar training sessions
- downloadable resources and
- updated statutory guidance

²² In the context of the document, 'relevant bodies' refers to the organisations and entities that are subject to the Covenant Legal Duty.

The updated statutory guidance will provide comprehensive direction on the application of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty within the policy areas, outlining what is within scope, the potential disadvantages faced in each policy area, and the responsibilities of public bodies toward members of the Armed Forces community, including service partners, reservists, and veterans.

Case study

Bodies who are due to be in scope of the Legal Duty have begun to proactively engage with the Armed Forces Covenant team. Examples of this engagement include:

- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero – seeking advice on establishing a policy for families applying for energy efficiency grants, ensuring fair and supportive treatment for military families as part of the scheme
- Association of Police and Crime Commissioners – seeking advice on developing guidance to raise awareness of and encourage Police Crime Commissioners to sign up to the Armed Forces covenant alongside ensuring they feel equipped to hold their forces to account locally

Legal Duty engagement

Engagement across government, with devolved governments and third sector organisations, has been at the forefront of the development of the extended Legal Duty. Over 150 organisations were consulted when determining to which policy areas the Legal Duty could be extended and will continue to be engaged as the Legal Duty progresses. A summary of which includes:

- bilateral meetings with various departments and cross-government roundtables
- ongoing devolved governments roundtables
- engagement with the third sector has been conducted through conferences, visits, and virtual roundtables
- regular meetings including workshops and engagement activities with local authorities
- industry engagement included virtual roundtables to capture views, with FiMT facilitating, as well as providing a summative report
- the general population has been engaged through the Covenant website, allowing the public to submit nominations for additions to the Legal Duty extension
- roundtables with various ombudsman offices

The House of Commons Defence Committee

In January 2025, the House of Commons Defence Committee launched an inquiry into the Armed Forces Covenant. The inquiry examined “whether the Covenant was working, areas where serving or former personnel and their families continue to face difficulties, and considered how the Covenant might be updated or expanded in scope”.²³

The inquiry published 78 written evidence submissions from a wide range of stakeholders, including service charities, local authorities, academics, government bodies, and individuals.

Inquiry conclusion

The Defence Committee published its report in April 2025, concluding that:

“While progress has been made since the Covenant was introduced, it is still not consistently implemented and as a result our society is falling short of that commitment far too often. The upcoming Armed Forces Bill is an opportunity to renew and reinforce the nation’s promise to those who serve, but this is only part of the change that needs to occur. Understanding of the Covenant needs to be deeply embedded in our institutions and in wider society so that those who have served can be in no doubt that the Covenant is there to support them.”²⁴

Defence response²⁵

The government welcomed the scrutiny of the inquiry and to work collaboratively to address the needs of the Armed Forces community.

The government believes that enshrining the Armed Forces Covenant fully into law will help ensure the needs of the Armed Forces community are placed at the forefront of policy and decision makers’ minds.

The government will continue to explore ways to enhance support and ensure the Covenant remains a meaningful commitment. The administration remains dedicated to recognising the unique commitment that members of the Armed Forces and their families make for defence and is confident that embedding the Covenant fully into law will reinforce the government’s manifesto commitment and renew the contract with those who serve and have served.

Devolved governments

The Welsh Government are working in partnership with the MOD and devolved governments on the plans to expand the Armed Forces Covenant. On 14 July, Welsh Government held a

²³ House of Commons, Defence Committee: The Armed Forces Covenant, 2025, available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/47421/documents/246104/default/>

²⁴ House of Commons, Defence Committee: The Armed Forces Covenant, 2025, available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/47421/documents/246104/default/>

²⁵ House of Commons, Government response to The Armed Forces Covenant report, 2025, available at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/48354/documents/253121/default/>

stakeholder engagement event in Llandudno focused on the Armed Forces Covenant due regard duty and the plans to extend it via the upcoming Armed Forces Bill.

The event was attended by stakeholders including public bodies, charities and Armed Forces hubs, with detailed feedback on the current due regard duty from Betsi Cadwaladr local health Board, the North Wales Armed Forces Liaison Officer, and the Royal British Legion. The MOD Covenant team also attended and provided an update on the expansion plans.

Welsh Government will be holding another engagement event with feedback shared with the MOD Covenant team to help inform the Bill and statutory guidance.

Cross government group

The Welsh Government has established a new Armed Forces Veterans Cross Portfolio Group to support a co-ordinated approach to issues relating to the Armed Forces community in Wales. The aim of the group is to improve co-ordination across policy areas and to increase the potential to achieve better outcomes for the Armed Forces community in Wales. It is chaired by a senior civil servant and engages officials across relevant areas within Welsh Government, along with external stakeholders to provide a forum to address key issues as presented by the Armed Forces community in Wales.

The group will provide a key governance structure as the plans to expand the Covenant due regard duty are developed and implemented.

Chapter 9: Beyond the Covenant



Introduction

This section outlines matters/initiatives that are ‘beyond the Covenant’. These are not considered ‘Covenant action’. 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.

Initiatives

The HM Armed Forces Veteran Card

Since the HM Armed Forces Veteran Card was introduced, over 300,000 physical Veteran Cards have been issued.

Veteran Cards help veterans easily identify themselves as a veteran to access government and charity support, discounts and concessions, and as proof of identity in some scenarios. From May 2025, they can also be used as photographic ID to vote in elections.

This year, the government will launch the new digital Veteran Card, the first verified credential in the GOV.UK Wallet, giving veterans more options in how they access and use their Veteran Card. This also places veterans at the forefront of government innovation.

Female veterans

In May 2025, £50,000 in funding was provided to the Female Veterans' Transformation programme.

This funding aims to raise the profile of women as veterans, ensuring service providers and society are aware of their contributions, experiences and needs. The full programme of work will be available before the end of 2025.

LGBT+ Armed Forces Community Memorial

In August 2025, the LGBT+ Armed Forces Community Memorial, located at the National Memorial Arboretum, was completed. Funded by the government, the memorial was delivered by Fighting with Pride, following a fair and open grant competition. The memorial is the penultimate recommendation from the LGBT Veterans’ Independent Review to be delivered and commemorates all LGBT+ personnel who serve and who have served, including those who suffered under the pre-2000 ban. An official dedication event was held in October 2025.

Veterans’ research

OVA and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) continued to work together to publish the final pieces of research and analysis from the Veterans’ Survey 2022. These included:

- health and wellbeing of UK armed forces veterans

-
- finance and housing, UK armed forces veterans
 - employment, skills and volunteering, UK armed forces veterans
 - UK armed forces veterans who had ever been convicted of criminal offences, and had served or were serving prison sentences
 - family support analysis of UK armed forces veterans

ONS has continued to undertake research to provide regular statistics about the veteran population of England and Wales, building on the Census 2021 England and Wales data, and consulting with MOD on the methodology.

Invictus Games

The MOD is proud to work in collaboration with the Royal British Legion as the delivery partner for Invictus Team UK. In Feb 2025, 534 Invictus Games competitors – wounded, injured and sick serving members and veterans from 23 Nations, of which 62 personnel made up Team UK – showcased their resilience, determination and camaraderie through 11 adaptive sport competitions in Vancouver and Whistler in a celebration of strength, recovery and inclusion.

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 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.

Annex A: DfE statistics on service children education – England only

Table 1: Percentage of service children and non-service, non-FSM children meeting the expected standard in phonic decoding at the end of year 1.^{1,2}

		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
2024	Service children	4,980	84	14	0	2
	Non-service, non-FSM children	483,814	84	14	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: Percentage of service children and non-service, non-FSM children reaching the expected standard at the end of Key Stage 2.¹

		% of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics (combined) ²
2018	Service children	68.3
	Non-service, non-FSM children	67.5
2019	Service children	69
	Non-service, non-FSM children	68
2022 ³	Service children	61.1
	Non-service, non-FSM children	64.8
2023 ³	Service children	62.7
	Non-service, non-FSM children	66.0
2024 ³	Service children	66.0
	Non-service, non-FSM children	67.5

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.

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

Table 2b: Percentage of service children and non-service, non-FSM children working at greater depth within the expected standard at the end of Key Stage 2.¹

		% 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
2024 ⁴	Service children	8.6
	Non-service, non-FSM children	9.6

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 children at the end of Key Stage 2.¹

		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	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.

² It is not possible to calculate Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 progress measures for academic year 2023 to 2024 because there is no relevant Key Stage 1 data to calculate Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 progress measures for these cohorts, as primary tests and assessments were cancelled in academic years 2019 to 2021 due to the COVID-19 disruption.

Table 3a: Percentage of service children and non-service, non-FSM children achieving key grades in GCSE in English and mathematics.¹

		% of pupils achieving grades 9 to 4 in English and maths ²	% of pupils achieving grades 9 to 5 in English and mathematics ³
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
2024	Service children	69.6	47.1
	Non-service, non-FSM children	71.9	52.3

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: Percentage of service children and non-service, non-FSM children entering the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) and achieving key grades.¹

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
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
2024	Service children	4,954	36.4	22.4	15.1
	Non-service, non-FSM children	472,313	44.3	29.3	21.2

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 children.¹

Year	Group	Average attainment 8 score per pupil	Average progress 8 score	Lower confidence interval for progress 8	Upper confidence interval for progress 8
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
2024	Service children	47.4	0.03	-0.01	0.06
	Non-service, non-FSM children	49.5	0.14	0.14	0.15

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 moves from years 1 to 6 for service children and non-service, non-FSM children.¹

		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	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
2023/24	Service children	85.7	21.1	2.1	0.2	66.3	62.0	55.3	30.0
	Non-service, non-FSM children	93.5	6.0	0.4	0.0	69.2	62.9	58.1	52.1

Footnotes

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

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 (GDS) in writing.

³ Based on revised figures in the National Pupil Database, which may differ slightly from finalised published figures.

⁴ Percentages for moves of 3 or more are volatile, based on very small numbers of pupils and conclusions should be treated with caution.

⁵ Data is not available for 2020 and 2021 as assessments were cancelled in these years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

⁶ The number of school moves have been affected for a number of years between year 1 and year 6 by the pandemic with a high percentage of no moves since 2022/2023.

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 (revised) ⁵	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 (revised) 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
2023/24 (revised) ⁵	Service children ³	91.8	7.2	1.0	0.1	45.0	24.9	8.3	0.0
	Non-service, non-FSM children	94.6	5.0	0.4	0.0	51.5	26.4	12.8	9.2

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 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result the 2019/2020 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 or more 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 5a: Ofsted rating on quality of education of schools attended by service children and non-service, non-FSM children.¹

Region	Pupil type	Ofsted rating on quality of education ¹				
		Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Unavailable ²
England	Service children	10.8%	70.8%	16.8%	1.1%	0.5%
	Non-service, non-FSM children	16.6%	67.7%	13.6%	1.2%	1.0%

Source: National Pupil Database, Ofsted December 2024

Table 5b: Ofsted rating on behaviour and attitudes of schools attended by service children and non-service, non-FSM children.¹

Region	Pupil type	Ofsted rating on behaviour and attitudes ¹				
		Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Unavailable ²
England	Service children	18.4%	70.0%	9.6%	1.4%	0.5%
	Non-service, non-FSM children	25.6%	63.5%	8.4%	1.5%	1.0%

Source: National Pupil Database, Ofsted December 2024

Table 5c: Ofsted rating on personal development of schools attended by service children and non-service, non-FSM children.¹

Region	Pupil type	Ofsted rating on personal development ¹				
		Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Unavailable ²
England	Service children	22.3%	69.9%	6.6%	0.7%	0.5%
	Non-service, non-FSM children	29.5%	63.6%	5.4%	0.6%	1.0%

Source: National Pupil Database, Ofsted December 2024

Table 5d: Ofsted rating on effectiveness of leadership and management of schools attended by service children and non-service, non-FSM children.¹

Region	Pupil type	Ofsted rating on effectiveness of leadership and management ¹				
		Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate	Unavailable ²
England	Service children	14.8%	75.6%	8.2%	1.1%	0.3%
	Non-service, non-FSM children	20.7%	71.8%	5.8%	1.1%	0.6%

Source: National Pupil Database, Ofsted December 2024

Footnotes

¹School attended as recorded in spring census 2023/2024, Ofsted rating as of 31 December 2024 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:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/changes-to-ofsteds-statistical-reporting-of-inspection-outcomes-for-state-funded-schools-an-analysis-of-the-changes>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/maintained-schools-and-academies-inspections-and-outcomes-official-statistics>

<https://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
2019/2020 ³	Service children	3,971	95	87	4	4	4	1
	Non-service, non-FSM children	462,731	95	88	4	3	4	1
2020/2021 ⁴	Service children	4,345	96	90	3	3	3	1
	Non-service, non-FSM children	469,281	95	90	3	2	4	1
2021/2022	Service children	4,574	95	87	4	5	4	1
	Non-service, non-FSM children	463,776	95	88	4	4	4	1
2022/2023	Service children	4,691	96	87	4	5	3	1
	Non-service, non-FSM children	461,431	95	88	3	4	4	1

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/destinations-of-key-stage-4-and-5-students-2023>

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.

Table 6b: Student destinations after 16 to 18 study (A levels or other level 3 qualifications) by service child status in year 13 (time series).¹

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	2,409	91	55	5	48	3	6	30	7	2
2019/20	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
2022/23	3,063	88	51	4	46	1	5	32	9	3

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	319,079	89	58	5	51	2	7	24	8	4
2019/20	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
2022/23	355,504	87	56	3	51	1	5	26	9	4

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/destinations-of-key-stage-4-and-5-students-2023>

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 prior.
2. From 2015/2016, self-employment information from HMRC has been included. At the national level, the inclusion of this data will not impact on the employment destinations. Among colleges, there will be an expected increase of around 1% in overall employment destinations compared to the national average. Higher Education alternative provider data has also been included. This data is collected on UK

domiciled students attending non-mainstream (independent) HE institutions in England that provide designated undergraduate courses funding by the Student Loan Company (SLC). This data was collected by HESA for the first time in 2014/2015.

3. In 2017/2018 there were further changes to the 16 to 18 cohort of level 3 students. From this year, the cohort includes students who left their institutions up to two years before being deemed to have reached the end of 16 to 18 study. Development analysis has shown that this group of students is much less likely to continue in education than those who stayed in education up to the end of 16 to 18 study. Partially as a result of these changes, the overall rate of progression to education for the level 3 group has decreased.

4. For the cohort whose destination year was in 2021/2022, the way we decide when a student is at the end of 16 to 18 study changed. The makeup of the cohort from this year onwards is different to previous cohorts. It also differs to subsequent cohorts, where data will have fully transitioned from the old criteria to the new. As such, any comparison to previous and future years should be avoided for this cohort.

E03463894

978-1-5286-6023-5