



THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT ANNUAL REPORT 2016

Summary





A message from the Defence Secretary

The need for an Armed Forces Covenant is ever more relevant today, and this Government is clear that its delivery remains a key priority.

We have a duty across society, to recognise the dedication and sacrifice of our Armed Forces, by ensuring that our Service personnel, Veterans, and their families are treated fairly, and are not disadvantaged as a result of their service. Each year we publish an Annual Report to Parliament outlining what we have done to uphold the commitments in the Covenant. Our key achievements from this year have been taken from the full report and highlighted in this document.

Real progress has been made in addressing the unique challenges brought by Service life, in the areas of education; healthcare; accommodation, support for families, and getting fair access to commercial goods and services. We recognise more remains to be done, and this document also outlines our targets for the coming year, as we further embed the Armed Forces Covenant.

Michael Fuller

Education

What we have done?

- Allocated around **£22M** in **Service Pupil Premium** payments this year to support the pastoral needs of over **73,000** Service pupils in state schools in England.

- **Allocated £6million** from the **MOD Education Support Fund (ESF)** to fund projects in 471 Schools with over 25,000 children from Service families across the UK.



- Identified a total of **40 projects** for funding and **completed work on 19 projects** in the £20 million childcare infrastructure improvement programme.
- **Changed the rules for student funding**, so that Service personnel and their families can access **student funding for distance learning** course while posted overseas.
- **Provided £77,000 of funding to the University of Winchester** to establish a national research alliance to examine Service children's progression into Higher Education.
- **Raised the profile of children from Service families** by holding a series of events across the UK.
- The Welsh Government has enabled Service leavers across Wales to gain further educational qualifications and pursue another career through its **Further and Higher Education Commitment Scheme**.

- The Scottish Government has supported the **Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES) National Transitions Officer (NTO)** in their work to support the children of service families.

Commercial goods and services

What has been achieved?

- More than 1300 organisations have signed the **Armed Forces Covenant**, pledging specific support for the Armed Forces community such as help with transition from Service to civilian life through work placement opportunities and training courses.



- The **four largest mobile phone providers** committed to allow service personnel and their families to **suspend their phone contracts** when they are posted overseas.
- **47 of the UK's largest banks and building societies** committed to allow Service personnel and their families, who rent out their homes when they are relocated, to avoid having to switch to buy-to-let mortgages.
- **86% of the UK's motor insurance industry** committed to **waive cancellation fees and preserve no claims discounts** for up to three years for Service personnel and their families posted overseas.

- Lenders have **improved access to Junior ISA** accounts for dependants of Crown servants based overseas.
- Extended the **credit union** service to those in receipt of an Armed Forces pension.
- **The Defence Discount Service** now has 348,000 registered members and over 5,800 companies signed up.

Healthcare

What have we done?

- **Completed all of the recommendations** contained in the 2012 Care Quality Commission review of the Defence Medical Services.
- Developed a new **Integrated Personal Care for Veterans system (IPC4V)** to help the most seriously injured Service personnel and Veterans transition into civilian life.
- NHS England **launched a new Veterans Trauma Network in November 2016**. The new network aims to provide an additional level of support for trauma-recovering Veterans and transitioning Service personnel, so that their specific and life-long healthcare needs are met efficiently.
- Health Education England **launched a new e-learning programme** to help increase understanding for GPs and other frontline staff providing health services for the Armed Forces population.



- NHS England **launched a national engagement exercise to seek the views and experiences of the people that access Veteran's mental health services.**
- The Welsh Government provided annual **funding of £585,000 to Veterans NHS Wales** to improve support and treatment for veterans suffering from mental health issues.
- The Welsh Government **invested £650,000 to support improvements in psychological therapies** such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapies for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.
- NHS Scotland established a total of **19 Armed Forces Champions** across its key areas.
- The Scottish Government allocated a further **£200,000 for Veterans First Point (V1P) Lothian**, a one stop shop for veterans and their families seeking support on a range of issues, including mental and physical wellbeing.

Accommodation

What have we done?

- Introduced a **new charging system** for Service Family Accommodation, as part of the New Employment Model Programme.
- Since April 2016, we have only allocated Service Family Accommodation in the UK which meets the **Government's Decent Homes Standard.**
- **Allocated £68million in 2016/17**, on improving and upgrading Service Family Accommodation in the UK.

- Extended the **Forces Help to Buy** Scheme until 2018, an initiative which has already seen £136 million committed, benefiting over 9000 people.

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



- The Welsh Government launched its **Housing Referral Pathway for ex-Serving personnel and their families** outlining the housing support veterans are entitled to and how to access this support.
- The Welsh Government has supported the development of **Ty Dwr housing scheme**, providing high quality and affordable housing for veterans in Wales.
- The Scottish Government allocated **£80 million to its Open Market Shared Equity Scheme to help 2000 first time buyers**, including Service personnel.
- The Scottish Government awarded **£1.3 million of grant funding to the Scottish Veterans Garden City Association (SVGCA)**, which provides and maintains houses for disabled ex-service personnel.

What else have we done?

For Families

- Launched a new **UK Armed Forces Families' Strategy** to review and improve the support we provide to families. An **Action Plan** to support the Strategy was developed in September 2016 in conjunction with the single Services and the Families Federations.



- To support the new **UK Armed Forces Families' Strategy** we have committed £4 million over the next two years to fund projects which provide support for the families of Service personnel at times of crisis or distress.
- Introduced a new **Class 3 National Insurance credit** designed to help Armed Forces spouses and civil partners who accompanied their Service partner on postings outside the UK to protect their future State Pension.
- The Welsh Government has published its **Welcome to Wales document**, outlining the support and services available in Wales for Serving personnel and their families.

For Veterans

- Allocated **£2 million to fund a 24/7 Veterans Gateway** in 2017. The gateway will provide a single point of contact for veterans seeking support and advice via one telephone number and a fully transactional website.

- Continue to ensure that **Veterans receive priority treatment** (subject to the clinical needs of others) in respect of NHS secondary healthcare relating to a condition resulting from their service in the Armed Forces.



- **Established a new Veterans Complex Prosthetic Assessment Clinic (CPAC)** at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC), Headley Court, which will assist veterans with amputation related medical issues.
- The Scottish Government provided an additional £120,000 of grant funding, from the **Scottish Veterans Fund** to support projects specifically designed to help and support Veterans across Scotland.
- The Welsh Government has refreshed its Package of Support, outlining the wealth of support available in Wales and signposts to organisations that can provide further information.

For Reserves

- Issued **improved guidance on Reserves' welfare and reviewed our existing guidance on post operational stress management**. This will ensure even greater parity of treatment between



Regulars and Reserves and will better enable Reserves and their families to get support when they need it.

- **Improved access to funded training and development courses** for Reserve personnel to bring them more in line with their colleagues in the regular Armed Forces.
- Recruited an extra **2,260** reservists.

Funding the covenant

- Spent **£10 million in 2015-16** on projects to support:
 - Community integration
 - Coordination and delivery of support to the Armed Forces community
 - Ex-service personnel in the criminal justice system.
- Committed to spend another **£10 million in 2016-17** on projects to support:
 - Families in stress
 - Coordination and delivery of support to the Armed Forces community
 - Ex-service personnel in the criminal justice system.

Communicating the covenant

- **Launched new and improved branding** for the Armed Forces Covenant.

- **Launched a new Armed Forces Covenant website** which has had **55,415 visits**, 42% of which have come from social media content. www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk



- **Introduced Covenant Champions across the Armed Forces** who act as a focal point to co-ordinate Covenant work and help to deliver the Covenant message direct to our personnel and their families.
- **It is now a requirement for all grant holders** to publicise their award, **use the Armed Forces Covenant logo** on promotional material and report back on press and media coverage.
- **Royal Mail issued a special postmark** to commemorate the Armed Forces Covenant.

What are our targets for the coming year?

The full report includes the unedited comments of key Service Charities and the Service Families Federations. This helps to hold the Government to account and identify the areas where more needs to be done. Key priorities for next year include:

- We will continue to work closely with CarillionAmey to ensure the contract to manage and maintain SFA is implemented correctly. We readily acknowledge the initial implementation of the contract did not go as planned, and will continue to work with key stakeholders to ensure recent improvements in performance are sustained and improved upon.
- NHS England will begin to deliver new **contracted Veterans mental health services**.
- We will **improve the information available to parents** and assist them through the schools admission process if they require it.
- We will work with partners to **create a research network for all research relating to children from Service families**.
- We will work with devolved administrations and local authorities **to ease the transition for Service personnel returning to the UK from Germany**.
- We will **continue to strengthen partnerships with education Departments, local authorities of main Armed Forces areas**, professional bodies and networks to promote the needs of children from Service families.
- We **will complete an additional 50,000 apprenticeships by 2020**.



- DCLG, will remove the age restriction for eligibility for starter homes for injured Service personnel and bereaved spouses by spring 2017.
- **A Veterans' Gateway** will be launched to provide a single point of contact via one telephone number and a fully transactional website for Veterans to access support and advice.
- From 2017 war pensions given to injured Veterans in England **will no longer be counted as income** towards care such as nursing and home-help.
- From August 2017 Armed Forces personnel and their families will be able to access student **funding for distance learning course while posted abroad**.
- We will publish a formal policy on the **availability and affordability of childcare experienced by Service personnel**, and options for improvement.
- We will work with lenders to **ensure Reservists have their previous year's pay taken into account** when applying for a mortgage.

- We will run a pilot of the **new British Forces Post Office address format** for Service personnel and their families when based overseas.
- We will work with broadband providers to ensure the Armed Forces community do **not have to pay cancellation fees** when they are posted overseas.

Find out more

The full report includes contributions from the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Governments on the Covenant commitments they have delivered. You can also find out more about their work by visiting their websites. To find out more about the Armed Forces Covenant and what it means to you visit:

www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk

If you think you aren't getting fair access to goods and services because you are a member of the Armed Forces, we want to hear about it. Contact either your Service Families Federation or the MOD Covenant team by emailing: **Covenant-mailbox@mod.uk**

You can find the NHS choices, Armed Forces Community healthcare pages here: **<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Militaryhealthcare/Pages/Militaryhealthcare.aspx>**

To find out whether Forces Help to Buy could help you visit: **<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/forces-help-to-buy>**

For online support with making informed financial decisions visit the moneyforce website: **<http://www.moneyforce.org.uk/>**

Other useful links

Veterans UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk>

The Royal British Legion:

<http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/>

SSAFA:

<https://www.ssafa.org.uk/>

The War Widows Association:

<http://www.warwidows.org.uk/>

The Confederation of Service Charities:

<https://www.cobseo.org.uk/>

The Navy Families Federation:

<http://nff.org.uk/>

The Army Families Federation:

<http://www.aff.org.uk/>

The RAF Families Federation:

<http://www.raf-ff.org.uk/>

