



ARMED FORCES COVENANT COMMUNITY CONFERENCE
NEWCASTLE - SEPTEMBER 2023

Armed Forces Covenant Community Conference Programme
Thursday 14 September 2023

08.45 – 10.00	Registration and visits to display stands
10.00 – 10.10	Jenna Clare, Joint Head of Armed Forces Covenant Team Introduction
10.10 – 10.45	Rt Hon Andrew Murrison MP, Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families. Keynote speech and Q & A
10.45 – 11.05	Update from Ministry of Defence Covenant Team
11.05 – 11.25	Refreshment break, display stand viewing
11.25 – 12.35	Insights on how Disadvantage impacts Armed Forces community. Speaker 1: Jo Luhman, Veteran, Head Teacher, and Carer Speaker 2: Caroline Paige & Craig Jones MBE, 'Fighting with Pride' Speaker 3: Ali Brown OBE, A Female Veteran's Perspective Speaker 4: Mo Torau, Commonwealth Soldier experience Each individual presentation will be followed a short Q & A.
12.35 – 13.40	Lunch and display stand viewing
13.40 – 13.55	Tom Stewart, Ministry of Defence Update on Veterans cards
13.55 – 14.05	Major Nick Champion, Ministry of Defence Update on Haythornthwaite – a review of Armed Forces Incentivisation
14.05 – 14.55	Breakout sessions, overall theme of 'Preventing Disadvantage' Seminar 1: Housing Seminar 2: Education Seminar 3: Health Seminar 4: Reflections on a year of the Covenant legal Duty Seminar 5: Forces in Mind Trust's session will focus on the nature of contemporary disadvantage, drawing on research evidence. Seminar 6: Office for Veterans' Affairs on 'Veterans Strategy Action Plan 2.0 - a vehicle to prevent disadvantage'
14.55 – 15.15	Refreshment break
15.15 – 15.45	Sharing feedback from Breakout sessions
15.45 – 15.55	Major Dianne Atkinson-Browning, A serving Army Officer and Carer's story
15.55 – 16.00	Thanks , and wrap up for the day, James Greenrod, Deputy Director, Armed Forces People Support, Ministry of Defence



THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT

- The [Armed Forces Covenant](#) is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly and are not disadvantaged in accessing public or commercial services due to their military service. It also allows for special provision when appropriate for those who have sacrificed the most, such as the bereaved and injured.
- The Covenant applies throughout the UK and is delivered across all sectors of society. As such, its implementation is shaped by local and regional factors and jurisdictions to optimise local support.
- In central Government, MOD is the lead department for the Covenant. As many of the levers for supporting the Armed Forces community sit in other Government Departments, the Devolved Administrations and Local Authorities, MOD works closely with them and with other organisations in the public, charitable and private sectors to deliver the Covenant.
- Since 2011, when it was established in its current form, the Covenant has led to many activities and initiatives which have contributed to improvements in the lives of Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families. Thousands of organisations, including every local authority in Great Britain, have made pledges to support the Armed Forces community.
- Covenant delivery is also supported by the £10M per year Armed Forces Covenant Fund, which supports charitable and community projects supporting the Armed Forces community across the UK.
- Hundreds of predominantly private sector organisations hold the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award for pledging, demonstrating and advocating support to the Armed Forces community and aligning their values with the Covenant. Hundreds of other organisations hold a silver or bronze award.
- The Armed Forces Act 2006 requires the Secretary of State to report to Parliament on the implementation of the Covenant every year, covering the effects of membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces in the fields of healthcare, education, housing, and inquests.

THE COVENANT LEGAL DUTY

- The Covenant has been further strengthened in law to better prevent disadvantage faced by the Armed Forces community. The amended Armed Forces Act 2006 now places a legal obligation on certain public bodies to have due regard to the Covenant principles when exercising functions in the areas of housing, healthcare, and education. This new Duty came into force in November 2022.
- To ensure the Covenant Duty can flex to adapt to the needs of the Armed Forces community in the future as and when they arise, the Secretary of State has the power to widen its scope to add additional bodies and functions, where there is evidence and support to suggest it would be beneficial.



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- Information about the Legal Duty is available in the [Covenant Legal Duty toolkit](#). This includes a link to the Statutory Guidance, which the bodies in scope must have regard to, and other supporting information and resources, such as training tools and online advice. The guidance provides examples of good practice, and useful information to help bodies in scope to understand the Covenant principles, the Covenant Duty, and the Armed Forces community.
- The Government has committed to reviewing the Duty after its implementation. This includes consideration of whether the Duty's scope should be extended to include central government, and a report on this review will be published in the 2023 Covenant Annual Report. An evaluation of the impact of the new Duty will also be conducted.

AIMS OF THE DUTY

- The Covenant has led to many good initiatives in support of the Armed Forces community. However, some members of the Armed Forces community still face disadvantage when accessing public services. This is often caused by a lack of awareness about the Covenant and the unique nature of service life.
- The aim of new Duty is to increase awareness of the Covenant among service deliverers and policy makers, and to build their understanding of how the unique nature of Service life can affect Service people's ability to access key public services. This will therefore help improve overall delivery of public services to the Armed Forces community.

HOW THE DUTY WORKS

- The focus of the Duty is on local and regional service provision, covering those aspects of public housing, education and healthcare services that are most likely to affect serving and former members of the Armed Forces and their families.
- This reflects three of the areas covered by existing Covenant legislation, and these three strands of policy also comprise the foundation of successful lives and are commonly raised areas of concern by members of the Armed Forces community.
- The Duty does not mandate specific public service delivery outcomes or advantageous treatment of the Armed Forces community. It is designed to ensure that the relevant decision-makers consider the issues facing the Armed Forces community in these key areas that impact upon their day-to-day lives.
- While there is no new enforcement mechanism, supporting information and advice aimed at the Armed Forces community publicises existing complaints procedures and, where relevant, the appropriate Ombudsman's office. Where any issue cannot be otherwise resolved, enforcement of compliance is by way of judicial review, in accordance with standard public law principles.



THE OFFICE FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) is a part of the Cabinet Office, which sits at the heart of government. Work supporting veterans is the responsibility of the whole of government, and this central position for the OVA enables us to co-ordinate functions that work to ensure the best support for veterans and their families.

THE STRATEGY FOR OUR VETERANS

The OVA is committed to delivering the Strategy for Our Veterans. Their priorities include:

- Transforming services for veterans and their families to ensure they work better for those who need them, and ensuring a high standard of support across the UK.
- Recognising the contribution all veterans have made and addressing the historic disadvantage that some have experienced
- Ensuring better data for understanding and supporting the veteran community.

We aim to deliver on these priorities via the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan 2022-24 and its second iteration, which will run up until 2028, as well as through being responsive to emerging issues and opportunities.

USEFUL LINKS

The 10 things to know deskguide publication:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1165535/2023-04-25-Deskguide-10-Things-to-Know-About-a-Veteran-1.pdf

The OVA booklet will provide further information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/about-ova-booklet>



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THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT TEAM

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