



## Armed Forces Covenant Conference Q&A

*We were deeply appreciative to receive over one hundred questions via our Slido page during the 2025 Covenant conference. The following questions have been selected based on their popularity, as indicated by upvotes, and have been combined where similar themes have emerged. We would also like to extend our gratitude to our partner organisations for their assistance in addressing these queries.*

**Q. In my experience, people working in England seem to lack understanding of the differences in Devolved Authorities Armed Forces Covenant delivery. Better communication needed?**

**A.**

- The Covenant team engages with a diverse range of stakeholders to develop policy, statutory guidance, and training materials. These include Devolved Governments, Covenant partners across Government, the Armed Forces community, local authorities including Local Government Association, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and Welsh Local Government Association and the Armed Forces Commissioners, as well as organisations within the service charity and welfare sectors. We continue to refine our products to better meet the needs of those who are impacted by the Covenant Duty.
- The legal duty is deliberately flexible and does not mandate outcomes, ensuring service providers retain their ability to honour the Covenant in the way most suited to local needs. In areas where the fields covered by the Legal Duty are devolved, this flexibility can lead to tailored approaches that reflect regional priorities and variations in delivery

**Q. What assistance/additional resources will be made available to local authorities to assist them with the introduction of the Covenant governance & coordination?**

**A.**

- As part of the extension, the Ministry of Defence will engage with those delivering the Covenant to understand what materials would be most beneficial. In response, we will provide a range of support, including tailored training materials, interactive webinar sessions, downloadable resources, and updated statutory guidance.

**Q. Due Regard a very subjective request. Are there plans to rephrase to duty to comply?**

**A.**

- The Legal Duty and the term “Due Regard” is deliberately flexible and does not mandate outcomes. This ensures service providers retain their ability to honour the Covenant in the way most suited to local needs. Imposing UK-wide minimum standards for service delivery to the Armed Forces community would not be appropriate as they could potentially disadvantage members of the local general population with more need. Departments should take similar action to that of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

**Q. There are new grant programmes and existing services addressing domestic abuse but solely focused on Serving personnel. What about veterans and their families?**

**A.**

- The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT) launched the Hidden Voices programme in July 2025. There will be two rounds of funding this financial year to apply for grants of between £3,000 and £25,000. The Trust hopes to fund accessible, bespoke mental health and wellbeing support for those with seldom heard needs in the armed forces community, including veterans and their families who have experienced domestic abuse.
- The Free from Fear programme, which recently closed for applications, is set to award grants this year ranging from £75,000 to £150,000. These grants are specifically focused on addressing domestic abuse within *servicing* Armed Forces communities, either through preventative measures or by providing support pathways for survivors. You can see what is being supported with last year’s grants here: [Free from fear in military communities : Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust](#).

**Q. Will the extended duty mitigate Scottish-assigned AF families experiencing significant financial disadvantage due to different policy on funded childcare?**

**A.**

- MOD remains committed to enabling access to appropriate, enriching, and safe childcare for the children of Service families, including those who are serving across the UK.
- We need to take care to avoid creating significant disparities between the Defence childcare offers within the UK and overseas to ensure the incentives to serve are appropriately balanced.

- One of the areas that we have looked at is the childcare offer within the UK given the differences between locations. In assessing what the options might be Defence has to recognise the potential complexities and limitations of working with the Devolved Administrations and other partners across Government, including what the tax implications for Service families might be.
- Options have been developed for how Defence might provide parity in pre-school childcare for those serving within the UK, recognising that this is likely to have tax implications for those impacted. A decision on a way forward, following this options analysis, is unlikely to take place until the Autumn.

**Q. Why is there no Veterans Commissioner for England? Surely this puts veterans in England at a disadvantage? Who provides a single focus and voice for English veterans?**

**A.**

- The Government is committed to ensuring that all veterans, regardless of where they live in the UK, receive the support and recognition they deserve.
- The OVA is responsible for coordinating veterans' services and policies across the UK, including England. It works closely with the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the NHS, local authorities, and charities to deliver support to veterans.

**Q. Do we have more up to date veteran suicide figures past the 2021 census figures**

**A.**

- The most recent veteran suicide data available is from 2021. Data is compiled by the Office for National Statistics. The ONS are currently working on the 2023 statistics, which are expected by early 2026.

**Q. How are the services provided by the many organisations providing support to our AF communities monitored?**

**A.**

- The Ministry of Defence collaborates closely with organisations to deliver the best possible outcomes for the Armed Forces Community. Additionally, through our Covenant Annual Report, we actively monitor and assess the implementation and progress of Covenant delivery.
- Defence Relationship Management (DRM) helps organisations who are employers of the Armed Forces Community to understand the value of signing the Armed Forces Covenant and to build mutually beneficial partnerships with Defence. Since 2014, an independent research series known as the Employer Awareness and Attitudes Monitor has been conducted annually.

- Where an organisation is alleged to have failed to uphold the values they have agreed to in signing the Armed Forces covenant, the MOD has policy in place to assess their continued suitability known as the 'Covenant Test'. The key question (the Covenant Test) to be answered is: "Do (or Have) the values, views, communications, or behaviour of an organisation indicate that they do not (or can no longer) uphold the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, or effectively demonstrate their support for the Armed Forces Community?". Enquiries about covenant signatories can be directed to [afcovenant@rfca.mod.uk](mailto:afcovenant@rfca.mod.uk)
- Overall, the results are very positive, demonstrating continuing progress and development in the relationship that the MOD has with employers. Results for 2024 are largely consistent with, and in some areas show improvement over, 2023.

**Q. Amputees/PIP benefit. Why does an armed forces amputee have to complete an annual review about their amputation? Can the Min secure exemption?**

**A.**

- Entitlement to PIP is assessed on the basis of the needs arising from a health condition or disability, rather than the health condition or disability itself. Individuals can be affected in different ways by the same condition and so the outcome of a PIP claim depends very much on individual circumstances.
- Award rates and their durations are set on an individual basis, based on the claimant's needs and the likelihood of those needs changing.
- Regular reviews are a key feature of the benefit and ensure that payments accurately match the current needs of claimants.
- Award durations are based on an individual's circumstances. This can vary from nine months to an on-going award, with a light touch review at the ten-year point.

**Q. How do we deter rogue companies from using the Covenant Logo as part of their marketing when they have not signed it or plan to abide by it?**

**A.**

- Enquiries or complaints about Covenant signatories can be directed to the Ministry of Defence. Organisations failing to meet their pledge may have their Covenant status reviewed. For assistance, contact [afcovenant@rfca.mod.uk](mailto:afcovenant@rfca.mod.uk).

**Q. How can local councils help with any AF leavers who require housing when there are huge local waiting lists?**

**A.**

- The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has changed social housing allocations regulations to exempt all veterans from local connection and residency tests to improve their access to social rented housing in England.
- MHCLG have also written to local authorities to explain these changes in more detail, and to remind them of existing guidance on improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces.

**Q. SDR & whole society approach - how is the majority of society (with no links or loyalty to Defence) to be engaged?**

**A.**

- The concept of a whole-society approach recognises that national security and resilience are not solely the responsibility of Defence or government institutions but require the active participation and support of the wider population. Engaging the majority of society, particularly those without direct links or loyalty to Defence, is essential to fostering a shared sense of responsibility and ensuring the success of this approach.
- Officials are currently reviewing the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant, with a particular focus on enhancing communications and raising awareness.

**Q. There is lots of research being done by 3rd, academic, private sector & local/devolved/national Government on the AFVC. But siloed. What can OVA/MOD do to pull this together?**

**A.**

- The Ministry of Defence works closely with Government departments, local authorities, charities, and industry to ensure the effective implementation and delivery of the Covenant. While significant progress has been made, we recognise that there is always more to do. We remain committed to addressing areas that require further improvement, including to the support networks available, and delivery mechanisms across all levels of Government in the UK. Moving forward, we will continue to collaborate with our stakeholders to drive progress, including advancing the extension of the Covenant Legal Duty.
- The Covenant Duty Legal Duty will extend to UK government departments and devolved governments. Officials anticipate that the extension across wider government will increase education and awareness of the unique nature of service and improve coherence and coordination when delivering the covenant.

**Q. We need data to make decisions, but it seems that there are so many funded research projects- how is FiMT coordinating this to avoid duplication?**

**A.**

- Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) is an independent charity, funded by a 20-year endowment from the National Lottery Community Fund to work to ensure that all Service personnel and their families make a successful transition to civilian life. FiMT focus on three main approaches, using their funds to create lasting changes for the Armed Forces community:
  - A) Funding research and evidence generation to better understand the issues, and to identify and share what works.
  - B) Taking a collaborative approach to convening and catalysing change, working with decision makers across the United Kingdom.
  - C) Equipping those with the power to change policy and practice with the knowledge and understanding required to improve the experiences of Service leavers and families.
- Through the above approaches, and using a Theory of Change Model based on a Theory of Change to achieve our mission, FiMT work together with stakeholders (including researchers, service providers and policy makers) to identify current research gaps and commission or award grants in those areas, focusing on those that will have most impact on policy and practice. Where possible FiMT try to avoid duplication of research. However, it is also recognised that research projects can be complementary, and it can be beneficial to pull together independent approaches to reinforce, question or extend existing research findings.
- The Centre for Evidence for the Armed Forces Community, funded by FiMT provides an accessible and authoritative evidence base exploring transition from military to civilian life to inform policy and practice affecting ex-Service personnel and their families in the UK. The Centre is run by a consortium of King's College London and RAND Europe. On the Centre's website you can find an ['ongoing research'](#) page which provides information about research currently being conducted with UK Serving and ex-Service personnel and their families. If you'd like to include your research, please contact the Centre team at [team@centreforevidence.org](mailto:team@centreforevidence.org)

**Q. How will the VALOUR pilot be monitored and evaluated in a transparent way that ensures it is genuinely a pilot?**

**A.**

- The Office for Veterans' Affairs Digital and Insight team has been working closely with the VALOUR team on the development of the pilot. Their work will inform the blueprint created by the pilot, which will guide the implementation of VALOUR across the UK.

**Q. What's your view on if/how the standards of delivery, from statutory and charity providers, within the VALOUR programme will need to be monitored and assured?**

**A.**

- Delivering high-quality service within the VALOUR recognised network is central to the VALOUR programme. Accordingly, frameworks are being established to ensure assurance and maintain consistently high service standards.

**Q. How are the valour field officers working with the covenant champions in LA's isn't this duplication of actual activity, networking creating partnerships etc**

**A.**

- VALOUR regional field officers will not replace Armed Forces Champions, Veterans' Champions or other similar posts, who operate at a more local level. They are valuable colleagues and will remain so under the new model. Regional field officers will work closely with them as VALOUR develops, supporting their work and ensuring they are linked in with Defence.

**Q. Will VALOUR include serving families, if so when is that likely to be?**

**A.**

- While VALOUR will initially focus on veterans, the service is being designed to be expanded to support the wider Armed Forces community in the future.