

Reframing the narrative of transition for a changing landscape

Ministry of Defence Covenant Conference 2026



Rethinking transition

- Transition is changing
- Disadvantage is becoming more complex
- Armed Forces Covenant is more important than ever



FiMT's priorities

What we need to understand



The unique impact of Service life on families



The changing nature and needs of the Armed Forces community

What needs to be done better



Empower the system and individual



Increase collaboration



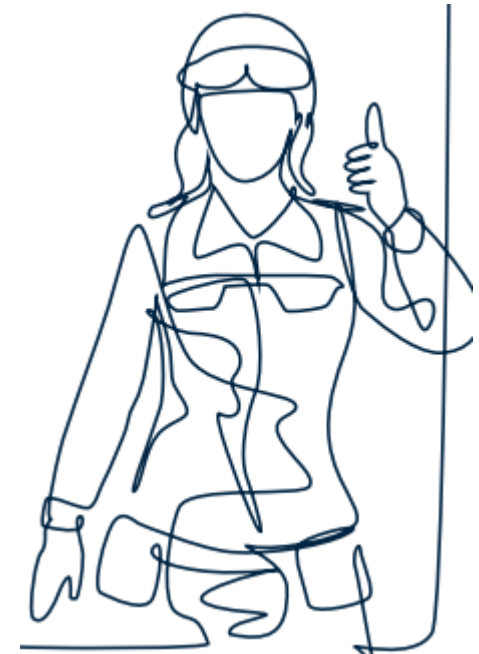
Improve awareness of Armed Forces in mainstream services



Take account of the unique conditions and impact on health and wellbeing



The changing nature of transition and disadvantage

- The external environment for transition is becoming increasingly complex, with Service leavers and family members exposed to a greater number of pressures and stressors
- Future transition policy and support will need to adapt to the potential for military careers to be less linear and more interspersed with civilian or Reserve employment
- Areas of future focus should include prevention, early intervention and partnership working
- Transition should be viewed as an investment in people, helping to ensure that Service leavers and families can thrive throughout and after service



Our Community, Our Covenant and Beyond

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Our Community, Our Covenant and beyond

Examining local realities and progress achieved in Armed Forces Covenant delivery

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Local approaches to Armed Forces Covenant delivery and wider support for the Armed Forces Community

Armed Forces Covenant Toolkit
Updated edition (2025)



Shared Intelligence
FiMT
Forces in mind Trust
COMMUNITY FUND
ARMED FORCES COVENANT

What progress is being achieved?

- The external environment for Covenant implementation is **highly dynamic**, which has presented challenges and opportunities
- Covenant delivery has seen **marked advancements** in some areas
- Some **challenges and barriers** still exist

Evidencing 'progress' can be difficult, due to:



Differing
interpretations



Data availability and
quality



Differentiation
difficulties



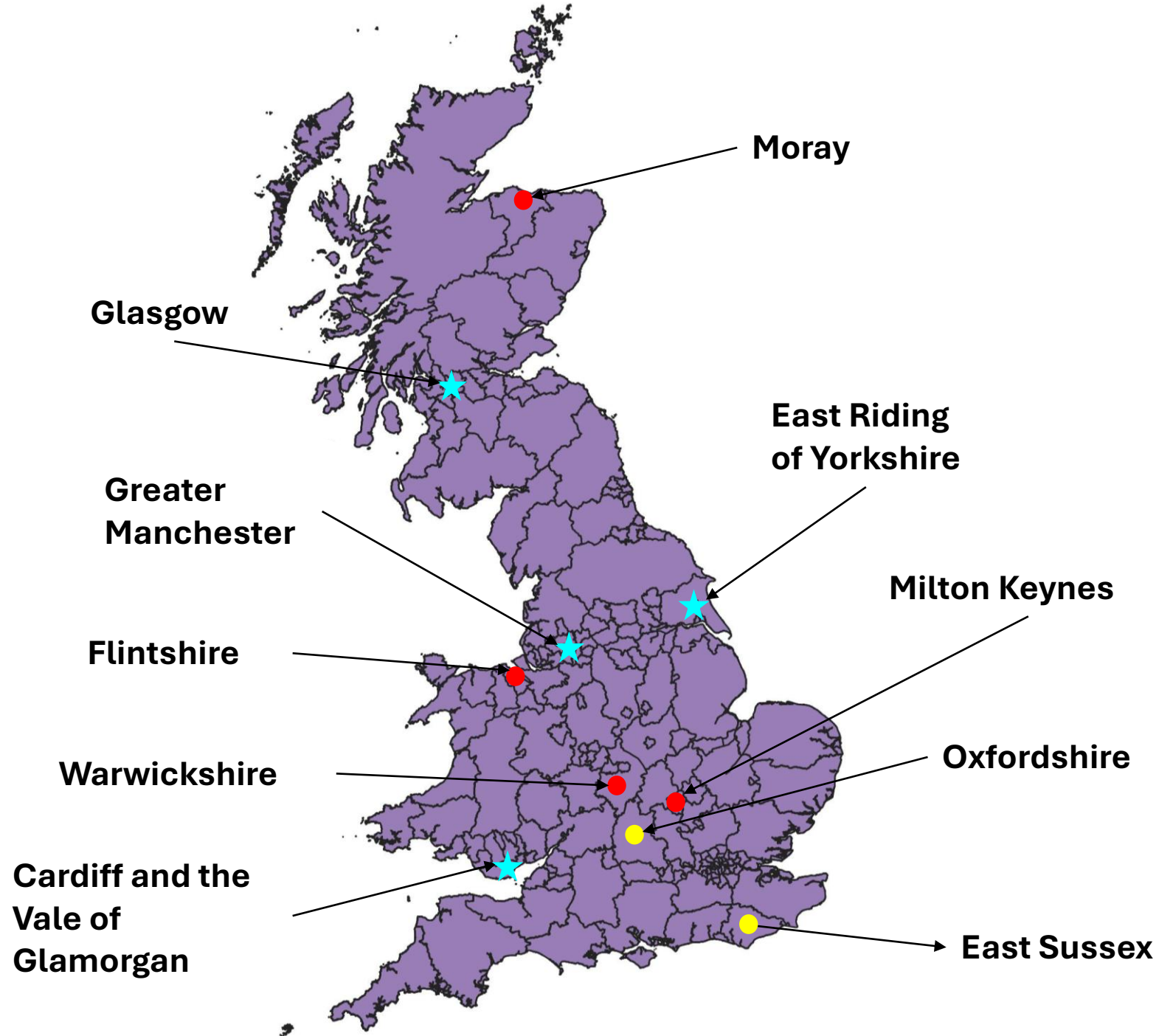
The Covenant being non-
prescriptive by design

How is the Covenant being delivered?

Researchers conducted visits to local authority areas, alongside a survey and interviews with other local authorities and stakeholders.

KEY:

- Local authority area visit (x1)
- ★ Local authority area visit (x2)
- Virtual engagement



How does Covenant delivery differ across local authority structures?



Single-tier: Manage Covenant delivery within their own boundaries and coordinating with local partners across the public, private, and voluntary sectors.



Two-tier: Divide responsibilities between county and district councils, with counties taking a strategic, coordinating role and districts focusing on operational delivery.



Clusters: Coordinating Covenant activity regionally across multiple councils.



Combined authorities: Bring multiple councils together under a formal regional entity, enabling coordinated strategic oversight across wider areas.

How is Covenant delivery being shaped by the external environment?

- The introduction of the Covenant Duty
- The expansion of the Duty
- VALOUR
- Devolution
- Local and national elections
- COVID-19, cost-of-living crisis and shifting public awareness

How is the Covenant delivered?

- There is **no one-size-fits-all approach**. However, there are various approaches through which local authorities and partners work. These often mirror the OCOC 'core infrastructure':



The appointment of
key individuals



Collaboration
mechanisms



Communication



Vision and
commitment

- Whilst significant progress has been made, challenges remain in building awareness of and identifying the Armed Forces community and communicating and signposting to services
- Barriers include resource constraints, competing priorities, high staff turnover and access to quality data



What does good practice look like?



While there is variation in delivery, **partnerships and collaboration** are pivotal to achieving the aims of the Covenant.



The Covenant should not be delivered in silos but **linked into the wider system** supporting the Armed Forces community.



Good practice examples include:

- Peer to peer learning and support delivery, fostering good practice.
- Positive Covenant communications to foster buy in
- Flagship partner selection
- Gateway organisations or Armed Forces Hubs



Good practice must reflect **local context** – what works best for each area and its priorities.



Overview of progress

- New duty is helping to **legitimise prioritisation** of the Covenant
- The AF Covenant is **providing a shared language** that makes coordination of partnerships easier – provides a recognisable framework across bodies
- Enabling the creation of **specialist roles** including on bases e.g. Oxfordshire Military Champions
- **Improving referrals and access** to services e.g. ‘one-stop shop’ Hubs such as Glasgow’s Helping Heroes
- **Mainstreaming the Covenant** into core council strategy e.g. East Riding’s Rough Sleeping Strategy
- **Improving identification and targeting of need** – declaring veteran status/asking the question



Recommendations



Continue to **raise awareness and improve understanding of the Covenant** among relevant service providers, the Armed Forces Community, and the wider public



Ensure there are tangible and measurable outcomes guiding **planning, monitoring and evaluation** of Covenant-related activities



Actively engage in **partnership working** and explore opportunities to further strengthen local partnerships



Identify opportunities for how Covenant delivery can be further **mainstreamed and enabled** across the local, regional and national level



Effective delivery of the Covenant and wider support to the Armed Forces Community should be embedded in **robust data, research and analysis**

Further engagement with local authorities

Key takeaways:

- Many councils are **using the OCOC Toolkit to develop Covenant action plans and undertake gap analysis**
- **Desire to raise profile** of the Covenant and Armed Forces community across council teams
- **Individuals are key** to successful Covenant delivery. However, Armed Forces champions and leads are often limited due to the Armed Forces being just one part of their role
- **Mixed views on how local government reorganisation** could impact delivery of the Covenant from disruptions and possible loss of local support to opportunities such as pooling resources and scaling up good practice