

The Armed Forces Covenant Legal Duty extension



Covenant Legal Duty future



Current Legal Duty

- A legal obligation to 'have due regard' to Covenant principles:
 - Desirable to remove disadvantages arising from Service
 - Special provision can be appropriate
- It applies to certain local authorities, NHS bodies, and state-funded schools, in 3 policy areas: healthcare, education, and housing.
- In force since November 2022.

Future Legal Duty

- It will stay due regard to Covenant principles.
- Bringing UK & Devolved Ministers into scope (alongside the local bodies already in scope).
- It will cover more policy areas.

We will strengthen support for our Armed Forces communities by putting the Armed Forces Covenant fully into law

Review the current face and the... to address the... of our security... and women who serve... risk their lives for this country. We will strengthen support for our Armed Forces communities by putting the Armed Forces Covenant fully into law and establishing an independent Armed Forces Commissioner to improve service life. Labour will ensure veterans have access to the mental health, employment, and housing support and in other areas they need. We will also scrap visa fees for non-UK veterans who have served for four or more years, and their dependents.

Strengthening Britain's security requires a long-term partnership with our domestic defence industry. Labour will bring forward a defence industrial strategy aligning our security and economic priorities. We will ensure a strong defence sector and resilient supply chains,

including steel, across the whole of the UK. We will establish long-term partnerships between business and government, promote innovation, and improve resilience. We will prioritise UK businesses for defence investment and will reform procurement to reduce waste. Labour will support industry to benefit from export opportunities, in line with a robust arms export regime committed to upholding international law.

Strengthening our defences also requires stronger leadership, clearer accountability, faster delivery, less waste, and better value for money. Labour will establish a

Policy areas
Health & social care
Education & training
Housing
Employment
Childcare
Social security benefits
Pensions
Personal taxation
Criminal justice
Immigration & citizenship
Service-related compensation
Transport

Armed Forces Bill 2026



Armed Forces Bill

[AS INTRODUCED]

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BILL

TO

Continue the Armed Forces Act 2006; to amend that Act and other enactments relating to the armed forces; to make provision about the reserve forces; to make provision about visiting forces; to make provision about the Ministry of Defence Police; to make provision about the defence functions of the Oil and Pipelines Agency; to make provision about the protection of military remains; and for connected purposes.

*Presented by Secretary John Healey
supported by the Prime Minister,
Secretary David Lammy, Secretary Steve Reed,
Secretary Yvette Cooper,
Secretary Douglas Alexander, Secretary Jo Stevens,
Secretary Hilary Benn, James Murray,
Nick Thomas-Symonds, Jess Phillips and
Louise Sanders-Jones.*

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be
Printed, 15th January 2026.

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PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Armed Forces Bill

[AS INTRODUCED]

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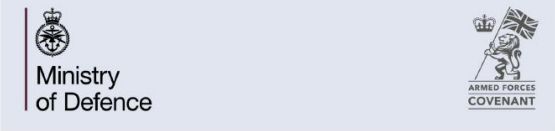
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Statutory Guidance



Statutory Guidance on the Armed Forces Covenant Legal Duty

Covering the United Kingdom

Issued under section 343AE(1) of the Armed Forces Act 2006

[[MONTH YEAR]]

GUIDANCE



The screenshot shows the Armed Forces Covenant website. At the top, there is a search bar and the site's logo with the tagline 'Proudly supporting those who serve'. A navigation menu includes links for Home, About, FAQs, Legal Duty, Conference, Case studies, Key documents, Covenant Fund Trust, and Help in a crisis. The main content area features a heading 'Review the draft Statutory Guidance and share your feedback!' dated May 19, 2026. The text explains that the Ministry of Defence is updating the Covenant Legal Duty Statutory Guidance to reflect the 'Duty extension' and invites users to provide feedback. It provides a link to the draft statutory guidance and a feedback form, noting that feedback is due until Friday 3 July 2026. A 'Did you find this useful?' button is located at the bottom of the content area. The footer contains links for 'About the Covenant', 'Accessibility Statement', 'Privacy', 'Contact us', and 'Sitemap', along with a copyright notice for 2026.

www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk

Training materials



Ministry of Defence

The Armed Forces Covenant: A guide to understanding the Armed Forces Community

Ministry of Defence

Armed Forces Covenant Legal Duty: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the Armed Forces Covenant?

The Armed Forces Covenant represents the nation's promise to treat the Armed Forces community fairly. It applies to all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, the Armed Forces Community and their families.

What are the Covenant principles?

The Covenant is based on two key principles:

- Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.
- Special provision is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have been injured or bereaved.

What is the Covenant Legal Duty?

The Covenant Legal Duty is a statutory requirement for specified bodies to have regard to the Covenant principles when exercising relevant public functions. It applies to policy areas initially introduced through the Armed Forces Act 2021, and specifically to local authorities, state-funded schools, and NHS bodies in housing, education, and healthcare services. However, the Covenant was expanded under the Armed Forces Act 2026 and now extends to all departments, Devolved Governments, and local public bodies in scope across the following areas:

- Childcare
- Pensions
- Criminal Justice
- Employment
- Transport

What is a function within this context?

Ministry of Defence

Covenant Legal Duty Analysis Template

EXAMPLE OF HOW A PUBLIC BODY MAY GIVE DUE REGARD TO THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT

template to help you record your decisions and support you to meet your legal obligation "regard" to the Covenant principles. If you are performing a Public Sector Equality Duty it would be appropriate to combine the Covenant Legal Duty Analysis with this process.

Support in filling out this template, please see the "Assessing the impact of decisions on the Armed Forces Community" guide and flowchart.

note: This is a worked example only.

Examples and examples set out in this template are intended to illustrate how a public body might give regard to the Armed Forces Covenant principles when assessing the impact of a policy or proposal. They are not mandatory, not exhaustive, and may not be appropriate in all cases.

Decision makers should apply professional judgement and consider the specific facts, evidence and context of each policy, function or decision. What constitutes appropriate mitigation or special provision will vary depending on circumstances, service pressures, statutory duties and available resources.

Mitigation may be appropriate where members of the Armed Forces Community have voice related circumstances (for example injury, illness, bereavement, mobility, or transition) that could otherwise result in disadvantage compared with the civilian population. Any mitigation should be proportionate, justified, and targeted, rather than automatically applied.

Decision makers should not seek to treat this example as a checklist.

The inclusion of a specific mitigation in this worked example does not mean it should not be considered, and the inclusion of a mitigation does not mean it will be suitable in every situation.

Decision makers should ensure that decision makers can demonstrate that they have given conscious and proper consideration to the Armed Forces Covenant principles in the context of their decision being made.

CONTACT DETAILS	
Name of proposal owner	
Department	

Ministry of Defence

Assessing the impact of decisions on the Armed Forces Community

This guide is designed to help you assess whether your decisions may impact the Armed Forces Community and determine if a "Covenant Legal Duty Analysis" is necessary. Along with the accompanying flowchart, it aims to support you in completing the "Covenant Legal Duty Analysis" template if you choose to use it, or in informing your organisation's existing approach to conducting and recording the analysis.

Stage 1 – Relevance to the Armed Forces questionnaire

This is a short exercise that involves looking at the overall proposal and deciding if it is relevant to the Armed Forces community and the Covenant Legal Duty.

There are a series of questions (these are not exhaustive) to test the relevance of the proposal to the Armed Forces Community and whether a detailed Covenant Legal Duty Analysis is required. The key question is whether the proposal is likely to be relevant to any of the areas of the Armed Forces Community. The answer may not be so obvious, and information gathered from the following questions may all feed into whether a Covenant Legal Duty analysis is required:

- Does the proposal affect members of the Armed Forces community (serving personnel, veterans, their families and the bereaved)?
- Does your proposal relate to the policy areas subject to the Legal Duty?
- Does the proposal create or exacerbate disadvantages for members of the Armed Forces community compared to the general population?
- Does the proposal relate to areas where the Armed Forces Community faces special challenges?

Any person within the Armed Forces community are likely to be affected?

- What is the scale of the impact?
- How significant is the potential impact of the decision on the Armed Forces community?

Is an Armed Forces Covenant Legal Duty analysis required?

Identify the main aims and consequences of your policy or proposal. Ensure you have read about the Covenant Legal Duty. Link to Statutory Guidance.

Yes

Does your policy or proposal have a clear obvious relevance to the Armed Forces Community and the Legal Duty?

For example, are you looking to:

- Change or reviewing a policy that will impact the Armed Forces Community
- Reduce a service or reduce it in particular areas that may impact the Armed Forces Community
- Change eligibility criteria, rules or practices
- Make changes to discretionary fees and charges or similar

No / Not sure

Stage 2 – Armed Forces Covenant Legal Duty analysis

Stage 1 – Undertake "Relevance to the Armed Forces questionnaire" – identify relevance of the proposal to the Armed Forces Community

Impact identified as: potentially / definitely... disadvantageous to the Armed Forces community. Special provision may be appropriate.

Impact identified as: positive / no impact / no potential for negative impact / special provision is not appropriate.

Record on the Covenant Legal Duty template and follow your local processes. Confirm your findings in your report.

What is the Armed Forces Covenant Legal Duty?

The legal duty requires bodies in scope to give due regard to the Covenant principles when exercising functions in the policy areas set out in the Armed Forces Act 2026.

In summary, the Covenant principles are:

- No Disadvantage: Armed Forces personnel and families should not face disadvantage compared to civilians when accessing public and commercial services.
- Special Consideration: In some cases, such as injury or bereavement, special consideration is appropriate.

Body should also, not law duty cannot and any provision is to cross the

Case study database



The screenshot shows the website's header with the logo and tagline 'Proudly supporting those who serve'. A search bar is located in the top right. The navigation menu includes 'Home', 'About', 'FAQs', 'Legal Duty', 'Conference', 'Case studies', 'Key documents', 'Covenant Fund Trust', and 'Help in a crisis'. The breadcrumb trail reads 'Home > Covenant case study database'. The main heading is 'Covenant case study database', followed by a brief description and instructions on using filters. A note states: '***This database is currently being built, to reflect the Covenant Duty extension currently progressing through Parliament.***'. Below this are two dropdown filters for 'Filter by policy area' and 'Filter by country', both set to 'All', and an 'Apply filters' button. Two case study entries are visible: 'NHS funds remaining orthodontic treatment for Service child returning to UK' with tags 'Healthcare - Accessing care' and 'England', and 'School in South Cerney sets up after-school club on military base' with tags 'Education', 'Children's wellbeing', and 'England'. Each entry has a 'Read more >' button.

- Access a range of case studies that showcase good practice.
- New filters allow you to quickly find relevant case studies.
- We will invite you to submit case studies from mid-July.
- Access here:



Case study database



School in South Cerney sets up after-school club on military base

Education - Children's wellbeing England
May 21, 2026

Service children were unable to access after-school clubs due to transport limitations to and from the military base.

What was the situation?

A school in South Cerney noticed that pupils with parents in the Armed Forces were not attending its after-school clubs. The staff realised that this was because the bus timetable between the school and the local military base did not allow these students to stay beyond the school day. These Service children were missing out on extracurricular activities such as a range of sports and social engagements.

What made this Covenant disadvantage?

Due to the Armed Forces requiring families to live on or near the military base, these Service children had more limited transport options than the civilian children. They faced more difficulty than civilian children in attending clubs, as the public transport did not allow this. Service pupils were less able to participate in after-school activities than civilian pupils, reducing their access to social engagement.

What was done to help?

The school worked with the local military base to set up an after-school club located on the base, using its facilities. It was delivered in partnership with a third-party sports provider. Spare spaces were also offered to other affected Service children from other schools.

What was the outcome?

Service children across different schools had the opportunity to access after-school activities, just like their civilian peers. Participation in extra-curricular activities increased, bringing Service children together. The club also communicated with serving parents to include other members of the Armed Forces community, improving civilian-military relationships.

- Access a range of case studies that showcase good practice.
- New filters allow you to quickly find relevant case studies.
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- Access here:



What can you do?



- By 3rd July: Review the **draft updated Statutory Guidance** and send in your feedback.
- From mid-July: Submit your **case studies** of Covenant implementation.
- Early September: Take part in the drop-in session on the **wider training materials**.
- Continue to implement the Covenant by **removing disadvantage and offering special provision** in all policy areas.
- If you work for a body that's subject to the Duty (or that will be), encourage your colleagues working in the relevant policy areas to include **explicit consideration of the Covenant** in their work.
- Find out about the latest Covenant developments by **regularly visiting our website** armedforcescovenant.gov.uk and our [latest news feed](#).

The Armed Forces Covenant Legal Duty extension

