

Armed Forces Covenant Community Conference Programme

Covenant expansion, strengthening delivery across government and nationwide

When: Tuesday 23 and Wednesday 24 June 2026

Where: Portsmouth Guildhall, Guildhall Square, Hampshire, PO1 2AB

Day One: Tuesday 23 June	
08:30-09:15	<p>Delegate Arrivals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please register and collect your name badge • Tea, coffee and pastries available • Early networking with fellow delegates • Explore a wide range of information stalls • Online registration for remote delegates available
09:15-09:20	<p>Formal Opening of the Conference <i>Nigel Atkinson Esq, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire</i></p>
09:20-09:30	<p>Setting the Scene: An introduction to the Covenant Conference 2026 <i>Briony Simpson, Deputy Head Armed Forces Covenant, Ministry of Defence</i></p>
09:30-09:50	<p>Message from the new Armed Forces Commissioner <i>Polly Miller-Perkins CBE</i></p>
09:50-10:35	<p>Ministerial Keynote and Q&A <i>Calvin Bailey MP, Minister for Veterans and People</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keynote address: Ministerial priorities and future direction • Chaired Q&A: Open conversation with delegates
10:35-11:00	<p>Morning Refreshment Break</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tea and coffee available
11:00-11:35	<p>VALOUR in Action: Latest Updates and Learnings from the Pilots <i>Neil Thomas OBE, Head of VALOUR, Ministry of Defence and Ian Millen, Chief Executive, Veterans Outreach Support, and Craig Nicholson, VALOUR field officer North East England</i></p>
11:35-12:00	<p>Update on the Covenant Duty Expansion and the Armed Forces Bill <i>Ministry of Defence Team</i></p>
12:00-13:00	<p>Lunch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buffet lunch served • An opportunity to network with delegates • Explore a wide range of information stalls
13:00-13:50	<p>Covenant in Action: Case studies showing how public bodies are supporting the Armed Forces community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HMRC (<i>David Stockton</i>) • Wavell School, Hampshire (<i>Oliver Clifford-Franklin</i>)

13:50-14:25	Reframing the narrative for a changing Covenant landscape – an update from ‘Forces in Mind Trust’ <i>Caroline Cooke, Head of Policy - Forces in Mind Trust</i>
14:25-15:00	Dynamic Covenant delivery in Wales <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Government (Peter Kellam, Head of the Armed Forces team) • With Armed Forces Liaison Officers (Finola Pickwell and Andy Jones)
15:00-15:20	Afternoon Refreshment Break <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tea and coffee available
15:20-15:50	Cyber and Specialist Operations Command <i>Command Warrant Officer Ann Thomas, Ministry of Defence</i>
15:50-16:20	Effective Covenant Delivery in Northern Ireland <i>David Johnstone, Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner</i>
16:20-16:30	Conference Reflections and Close of Day One <i>Armed Forces People Support, Ministry of Defence</i>
16:30-18:30	Networking - an opportunity to keep the conversation going <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All delegates welcome • An informal opportunity to reflect, share ideas and build connections • Food buffet and refreshments

Day Two: Wednesday 24 June	
08:30-09:10	Delegate Arrivals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tea, coffee, and pastries available • Information stalls open • Online registration for remote delegates
09:10-09:15	Formal Opening of Day Two <i>The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth</i>
09:15-09:25	Focus for the day <i>Armed Forces People Support, Ministry of Defence</i>
09:25-11:15	Interactive Breakout Sessions Before the conference, you will have the opportunity to choose one of four facilitated sessions designed for participation and discussion: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lessons on Covenant delivery from Local Authorities <i>(Emma Thompson, East Riding Council and Canon Peter Bruinvels, Surrey Council)</i> 2. Data on the Armed Forces community and why it matters <i>(Ann Griffiths, Head of Policy and Research, Royal British Legion and Dr Tammy Cheng, Deputy Head of Data and Analytics, Office for Veterans’ Affairs)</i>

	<p>3. Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant expansion (<i>Sophie Rackham, Armed Forces Covenant Team and Nicholas Harper, Dorset Council</i>)</p> <p>4. Charity sector insights on what makes for good practice in Covenant delivery (<i>Louise Briggs, COBSEO</i>)</p>
11:15-11:35	<p>Morning Refreshment Break</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tea and coffee available
11:35-12:00	<p>Personal Perspective: 2025 Women in Defence Award Winner shares her experiences of life in the Royal Navy <i>Petty Officer Naval Nurse Abigail Wright, Royal Navy</i></p>
12:00-12:05	<p>Conference Reflections <i>Armed Forces People Support, Ministry of Defence</i></p>
12:05-12:30	<p>Interactive Quiz: A lively, engaging session exploring challenges affecting Armed Forces families - with audience participation <i>Armed Forces Families Federations, Rebecca Lovell (Naval Families Federation, Rachel Smith (Army Families Federation), Vanessa Plumley MBE RAF Families Federation</i></p>
12:30-13:30	<p>Farewell Lunch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buffet lunch served • Final networking opportunity before departure