



Interest

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, including the bereaved, are treated fairly.

www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk



Armed Forces Covenant Workshop

MOD

Sophie Rackham

SSgt James McCafferty

Dorset Council

Nicholas Harper



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Why this matters

- The legal duty only makes a difference if it is applied confidently
- “Due regard” might feel difficult to interpret in real decisions
- Disadvantage linked to service life may not always be obvious



Objective

To understand the **legal duty** in practice, including the requirement to offer special provision where appropriate.

And,

To recognise when to take action to identify and reduce disadvantage by making realistic improvements to support or services.



Legal Duty Extension

What does this mean?

From 2027, Ministerial Departments, Devolved Governments and Local Public delivery bodies must have due regard to the Covenant principles when making decisions within 12 key policy areas.



Instructions

- You will be split into groups.
- Each group will discuss the same case study using 5 discussion questions provided.
- When time is up, we will invite groups to share their reflections to the room.
- We will then move to the next case study and repeat the process.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Discussion prompts

Is this person at risk of Covenant disadvantage, and why?

Could special provision be the right response in this situation?

What additional information or evidence would you need before deciding how to respond?

What practical barriers might prevent you from removing disadvantage or offering special provision?

How could you overcome the barriers you identified?



Case study 1 – Employment

A Service partner (civilian spouse) works for the local authority as a banded administrator in a team that supports sensitive casework and requires the handling of private and confidential information.

Their serving partner is being re-posted in 10 weeks.

The employee requests a 12-month remote-working arrangement and says that repeated moves have disrupted their career.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 1 – Employment

Disadvantage

Likely risk: relocation may disrupt a Service partner's employment and career progression.

Special provision

No special provision, this is about removing disadvantage.

Need to know

If there is a civilian comparator, role duties, confidentiality requirements, secure IT options, posting details, alternatives and prior impacts.

Barriers

Sensitive casework, data security, team cover, policy consistency, manager confidence and perceived precedent.

How to overcome barriers

Use a structured due-regard checklist; get IT/IG advice; trial remote or hybrid working with review points; record reasons.



PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 2 – Health and social care

An NHS service has a long waiting list for a non-urgent procedure because there are not enough staff nationally. The service usually prioritises people based on clinical need.

A veteran asks to be moved up the list. They say their condition is linked to their Service and affects their ability to work.

Staff are not sure whether the veterans' priority treatment policy applies, or whether a clinician has decided the condition is linked to Service.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 2 – Health and social care

Disadvantage

Service alone is not enough; a national waiting list affects comparable civilians too.

Special provision

Possible only if policy and clinical judgement support priority for a Service-linked condition.

Need to know

Clinical need, evidence of Service link, waiting-list policy, veteran pathway and impact on work.

Barriers

Confusion about “queue jumping”, limited evidence, capacity pressure and unclear staff guidance.

How to overcome barriers

Apply the veteran pathway consistently: clinician checks Service link and clinical priority, explains evidence needed and records why priority is or is not justified.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 3 – Social security benefits

An injured veteran applies for a disability-related benefit soon after leaving the Armed Forces.

They have treatment appointments and fatigue. They are not confident using online systems or understanding what evidence they need.

The service says extra evidence must be sent within 14 days and sends messages through an online account.

The veteran does not see the message in time and misses the deadline. They ask for late evidence to be accepted.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 3 – Social security benefits

Disadvantage

Potential access disadvantage if Service injury, fatigue or transition made the process harder.

Special provision

Flexible support may be justified for an injured veteran, but the outcome is not automatic.

Need to know

Service/injury link, treatment timetable, why the message was missed and what evidence is outstanding.

Barriers

Short deadlines, online-only communication, rigid workflow, fraud controls and limited staff confidence.

How to overcome barriers

Use manual review for late evidence, allow alternative contact methods, signpost support, escalate where lawful and record the Service context.



Case study 4 – Health and social care

A dependant relative receives a package of non-residential adult social care support. In their previous local authority area, they paid a small weekly contribution following a financial assessment.

They are required to move to a new area for family reasons linked to Service.

The new authority carries out a fresh assessment before confirming the package, causing a delay in support and some deterioration in wellbeing.

The authority also explains that its charging policy differs from the previous area, so the weekly contribution may be higher.

The authority must decide whether any action is needed to reduce delay and whether charging differences raises a Covenant issue.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 4 – Health and social care

Disadvantage

Separate the issues: delay after a Service-linked move may be disadvantage; local charging may not be.

Special provision

No special provision, this is about removing disadvantage.

Need to know

Previous assessment/care plan, risks, move reason, financial assessment and local charging rules.

Barriers

Different local policies, information sharing, resource pressure, legal duties and uncertainty on comparators or what is classed as a covenant disadvantage.

How to overcome barriers

Plan transfers early; accept previous care evidence temporarily; put interim support in place where risk requires it; explain charging separately.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 5 – Social security benefits

A UK Government department is looking at ways to tighten an eligibility rule and improve fraud checks for a national benefits scheme.

One proposal would ask applicants to give two recent UK-based proofs, such as address or residency and employment history, and attend an in-person appointment within 10 working days.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 5 – Social security benefits

Disadvantage

Potential policy-level disadvantage: standard proof, address and appointment rules may not fit Service life.

Special provision

No special provision, this is about removing disadvantage.

Need to know

Which cohorts are affected, fraud risk, legal constraints, proof options, digital access and appointment needs.

Barriers

Fraud-control pressure, automated rules, lack of data, consistency concerns and short implementation timescales.

How to overcome barriers

Add a Covenant impact test to policy design; allow alternative evidence, remote or extended appointments, manual review, staff guidance and monitoring.



PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 6 – Health and social care

An injured veteran has recently been medically discharged. They have a mobility impairment and chronic pain.

They are moving into a privately rented ground-floor flat. They need equipment and small adaptations, such as grab rails and a ramp threshold, to live safely and avoid going into hospital.

The local adult social care team says non-urgent assessments are taking 8–10 weeks because of demand. Equipment referrals are prioritised based on risk.

The veteran's advocate asks for the case to be prioritised under the Covenant.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 6 – Health and social care

Disadvantage

Potential disadvantage and risk: recent medical discharge, Service injury and delayed safe living support.

Special provision

May be justified for an injured veteran, subject to risk, eligibility and competing urgent needs.

Need to know

OT/clinical risk, discharge evidence, Service link, hospital risk, tenancy and adaptation consent.

Barriers

Demand, waiting lists, equipment stock, funding route, landlord consent and fear of unfair prioritisation.

How to overcome barriers

Escalate triage; provide interim equipment or adaptations; fast-track assessment where risk and Service injury justify it; coordinate NHS, housing and partners.



Case study 7 – Education and training

A Service family is bereaved after the death of a Service person. Soon afterwards, the family moves to be closer to support. They say the move is linked to the Service parent's death.

The child joins a new secondary school mid-year and has exams soon. The new school uses different exam boards from the previous school.

The surviving parent asks for flexibility with the timetable.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 7 – Education and training

Disadvantage

Potential Service-child disadvantage: bereavement, Service-linked move, exam disruption and wellbeing impact.

Special provision

May be justified for a bereaved Service family, but only within school and exam-board powers.

Need to know

Previous school records, exam boards, timetable constraints, bereavement needs and support already in place.

Barriers

Exam rules, different specifications, late records, pastoral capacity and uncertainty over responsibilities.

How to overcome barriers

Appoint a named lead; contact previous school and exam boards quickly; use timetable flexibility, catch-up and pastoral support within rules.



Case study 8 – Immigration and citizenship

A non-UK Service partner is living overseas with their serving partner because of a posting.

The family plans to return to the UK within three months. The partner needs to renew their immigration permission and apply for settlement so they can start a job soon after returning.

The process requires a biometrics appointment and supporting documents. The appointment is in the UK. It is unclear whether the family can meet the document requirements from overseas within the required timescales.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 8 – Immigration and citizenship

Disadvantage

Potential access disadvantage: overseas posting may make documents, biometrics and timing harder.

Special provision

No special provision; special provision may apply only for those sacrificing the most.

Need to know

Immigration route, expiry dates, posting evidence, document gaps, appointment options and work start date.

Barriers

Rigid rules, UK biometrics, document access, travel costs, time limits and staff unfamiliarity with postings.

How to overcome barriers

Escalate early; clarify acceptable evidence; explore overseas or priority appointments/extensions where available; give the family a clear timetable.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 9 – Social security benefits

A reservist is mobilised for several months and then returns to civilian life.

The household also moves because of their partner's posting. The partner loses their job because of the move.

They apply for Universal Credit and a local welfare support payment while their income is reduced.

They have a unit letter confirming the move date, but bank statements still show their old address. They also have limited email access while overseas for training.

Their application is flagged because the address history does not match. The team must decide whether to keep the fraud flag.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 9 – Social security benefits

Disadvantage

Potential access disadvantage: mobilisation, relocation and training can create record mismatches.

Special provision

No special provision.

Need to know

Mobilisation/posting dates, unit letter, address history, income need and communication limits.

Barriers

Automated fraud flags, mismatched records, limited evidence, public-funds risk and staff uncertainty.

How to overcome barriers

Manual review; accept Service evidence where lawful; adapt contact methods; consider urgent support and record why any fraud flag is changed or retained.



Case study 10 – Transport

A family member living in Service accommodation applies for a local concessionary travel pass.

The scheme asks for two standard proofs of address. The applicant does not have utility bills or a council tax bill in their own name because MOD manages these payments on behalf of the family.

The application is refused.

The authority must decide whether this is a disadvantage linked to Service and whether it should accept other evidence.



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.

Case study 10 – Transport

Disadvantage

Likely disadvantage: Service accommodation can prevent standard proof of address.

Special provision

No special provision.

Need to know

Scheme rules, residency, Service accommodation evidence and acceptable MOD/unit confirmation.

Barriers

Fraud prevention, inflexible forms, staff scripts, IT limits and lack of awareness.

How to overcome barriers

Review the refusal; accept MOD/unit evidence; publish alternative proof options; train staff and add a manual override route.



Objective

To understand the **legal duty** in practice, including the requirement to offer special provision where appropriate.

And,

To recognise when to take action to identify and reduce disadvantage by making realistic improvements to support or services.