



1. Home (<https://www.gov.uk/>)
2. Armed Forces Covenant: 2015 to 2020 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-covenant-2015-to-2020>)

1. Ministry
of Defence (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence>)

Policy paper

Armed Forces Covenant

Updated 3 June 2016

Contents

1. What the Armed Forces Covenant is
2. How it is supported
3. Future actions
4. Legislation



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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-covenant-2015-to-2020/armed-forces-covenant>

1. What the Armed Forces Covenant is

The Armed Forces Covenant is an agreement between the armed forces community, the nation and the government. It encapsulates the moral obligation to those who serve, have served, their families and the bereaved.

The covenant's twin underlying principles are that members of the armed forces community should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services; and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given the most such as the injured or the bereaved.

2. How it is supported

2.1 The Covenant Fund

In June 2013, the Chancellor announced that £10 million per annum would be allocated in perpetuity from financial year 2015/16, to ensure the continued achievement of the government's Armed Forces Covenant commitments. The Covenant Fund (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covenant-fund>) is completely new and is not a replacement for any previous grant schemes or funds. Funding priorities are set annually by the Covenant Reference Group.

The fund is run by a standalone grant team drawing on experience from inside and outside of the MOD.

2.2 Other funding

Since 2011 over £170 million has been allocated to support covenant commitments including:

- £30 million for the Community Covenant Grant Scheme
- a £35 million fund which focused on mental health and injured personnel
- a total of £21 million for key World War 1 and 2 commemorations, veterans with service related hearing problems, and to help set up a third care home for Ghurkha veterans in Nepal
- £20 million to improve the infrastructure for service childcare support
- a £40 million Veterans Accommodation Fund
- a £25 million aged Veterans Fund

2.3 The covenant in communities

The covenant for communities (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-community-covenant>) supports the armed forces covenant. It is a voluntary, non-binding commitment by local councils to support members of the armed forces community in their area.

The aim is to embed and sustain activity, to ensure that members of the armed forces community receive the support they need in their local communities in recognition of their dedication and sacrifice; nurture public understanding and awareness of the issues affecting the armed forces community; and encourage activities, which help to integrate the armed forces community into local life.

Find information on communities that have signed their own covenant pledges

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-community-covenant/armed-forces-community-covenant#community-covenants-by-region>) near you.

2.4 The covenant in businesses

The covenant is a written and publicised voluntary pledge from businesses and other organisations who wish to demonstrate their support for the armed forces community.

The covenant can be signed by a business or other organisations of any size, and from any industry whether they are an employer of a member of the armed forces community or simply wish to acknowledge publically their support for the armed forces.

Over 900 companies and organisations have signed a covenant these include major names such as Asda, Vodafone, Virgin Media, Royal Mail, RBS and Lloyds banking group.

Recognising the armed forces community unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. You can see a list of companies and organisations (<https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/get-involved/who-has-signed-the-covenant/>) that have written and signed their own covenant pledge.

2.5 The covenant and the charitable and welfare sector

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) identifies and addresses genuine areas of disadvantage with major stakeholders; these include the Naval (<http://www.nff.org.uk>), Army (<http://www.aff.org.uk>) and RAF (<http://www.raf-ff.org.uk>) Families Federations, the charitable sector and regional service advice/welfare centres.

The 3 single services Families Federations, the Confederation of Service Charities (<http://www.cobseo.org.uk>) (COBSEO), Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Families Association (<http://www.ssafa.org.uk>) (SSAFA), the War Widows Association (<http://www.warwidows.org.uk>) of Great Britain (WWA) and the Royal British Legion (<http://www.britishlegion.org.uk>) (RBL) are also members of the Covenant Reference Group.

You can also find further advice at the links provided below:

The Veterans UK (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk>) administers the armed forces pension schemes and compensation payments for those injured or bereaved through service.

The Army HIVES (<http://www.army.mod.uk/hives>) is an information network available to all members of the service community. It serves both married and single personnel, together with their families, dependants and civilians employed by the services.

3. Future actions

We are working on the following issues:

- improving awareness and understanding about the Armed Forces Covenant
- continuing to address comparative disadvantage wherever it occurs
- working with local authorities to help them spread best practice, share information and achieve their covenant commitments
- managing from 2015, a new £10 million per annum covenant fund for the continued achievement of covenant commitments, announced by the Chancellor in 2013
- strengthening the Veterans support network
- working with other government departments, the Devolved Administrations, and other policy leads to provide a series of commitments in the key areas of health, education and housing that have been published in recent annual reports

Visit our activities and achievements (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-covenant-activities-and-achievements>) page to find out what we're currently working on and what projects have been completed.

4. Legislation

- Armed Forces Act 2011 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/18/contents>)