

# News story: Defence Secretary announces Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Board

Co-chaired by Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon and First Secretary of State Damian Green, and reporting to the Prime Minister, the board underlines the Government's enduring commitment to the Armed Forces community.

Meeting biannually, the Board will drive forward the existing Armed Forces Covenant commitments community across all Government departments responsible for delivery, with a specific focus on the priority areas of healthcare, including mental health. Housing, education, and employment opportunities are also other areas which will be covered.

In addition, the Defence Secretary and the First Secretary of State will meet separately with leading Service charities and the single Service Family Federations to discuss the Covenant on an annual basis. This will ensure the views of the wider Armed Forces Community are represented in government decisions.

Government initiatives delivered to date through the Armed Forces Covenant include:

- The Forces Help to Buy scheme (MOD), which has allowed thousands of Armed Forces personnel and their families to borrow up to half their salary to get on the housing ladder.
- The Armed Forces Covenant Fund, which provides £10M per annum to support mutually beneficial projects and programmes being delivered by organisations across the UK in partnership with the Armed Forces Community.
- The Job Centre Plus Armed Forces Champions (DWP) helps current and former members of the Armed Forces and their families access Jobcentre Plus services
- The Transition, Intervention, and Liaison (TIL) veterans' mental health service (NHS) acts as a front door to a range of mental health services across the health and care system for veterans.
- The Service Pupil Premium (DfE), which is paid to schools to engage with service children to mitigate any adverse impact of family mobility and parental deployment.

The Board will also seek to maximise the potential of the Armed Forces Community through mutually beneficial partnerships with businesses, as well as with local communities throughout the UK.