The Welsh Government’s Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2018

Presented voluntarily to the National Assembly for Wales pursuant to Standing Order 15.2 of the Standing Orders of the National Assembly for Wales
Her Majesty’s Government

– and –

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown and their Families.

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty.

Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families.

They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

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 consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given the most such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of society:

it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution.

This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.
2018 was a significant year of commemorative events recognising and honouring our Armed Forces.

We saw the culmination of the centenary of the ending of the First World War with numerous events taking place across Wales and the UK to mark this historic occasion.

We also marked the centenary of the formation of the RAF and I am delighted that a Welshman, David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister at the time, was at the forefront of its inception.

It was said at the time that the First World War would be the war to end all wars, but sadly, as we know too well, that was not to be. The impact of the conflict, not only on the generation who fought, but also those on the home front, would last for generations to come.

They gave their lives for our todays. The Welsh Government’s Cymru’n Cofio programme ensures their stories, sacrifices and suffering are told and not forgotten.

Of course, we must remember the many conflicts that followed, where Welsh men and women served, supported by their families. We must never forget their sacrifices.

I also pay tribute to our current Serving men and women, and the valuable contribution of their families. They face numerous personal challenges due to the nature of their work defending our nations’ freedom and security; they deserve our support.

2018 also saw Wales host a very successful National Armed Forces Day which took place in Llandudno.

The Welsh Government played a part in ensuring members of the public came together to show our appreciation and gratitude for our Serving, ex-Service personnel and Reservists.

Of course, we must remember the many conflicts that followed, where Welsh men and women served, supported by their families. We must never forget their sacrifices.
There has been tremendous progress across Wales in providing services and support for our Armed Forces community, and we hope this report will be a testament to that progress.

However, there is more we can do, and more we will do to ensure our Armed Forces community receive the recognition, support and services they need.

I am pleased that the public, private and third sectors in Wales continue to promote the Armed Forces Covenant.

The huge amount of partnership work in place enforces the ethos that we should all work together to support and honour the Armed Forces community.

We have some good examples in Wales, including our Employment Pathway which provides information and advice on securing employment, and an Employers’ Toolkit, which helps employers recognise the talent and skills amongst our Armed Forces Community.

These are key examples of what can be achieved when working collaboratively for mutual benefits.

I would like to pay tribute to all the service providers and professionals across the public, private and charitable sectors in Wales who support our Armed Forces community.

As a Government we remain committed to providing services and support for this community, and we will continue to work in partnership across these sectors to ensure this community receives that support.

Julie James AM
Minister for Housing and Local Government

As a Government we remain committed to provide services and support for this community, and we will continue to work in partnership across these sectors to ensure this community receives that support.
Introduction

The Welsh Government recognises that the return to civilian life for some Service personnel and their families can be difficult for a number of reasons.

That is why when the Armed Forces Covenant was introduced in 2011 the Welsh Government signed up to its principles to provide Serving personnel, veterans and their families with the support they require, and ensure they are not disadvantaged compared to other citizens in the provision of services in recognition of the sacrifices they have made.

In response to the Armed Forces Covenant the Welsh Government published our Package of Support for the Armed Forces community which sets out the services available as well as signposting to support from other organisations.

In 2016 following progress in the delivery of additional services and support we reviewed our Package of Support and published our Welcome to Wales document for Service personnel and their families being posted to live in Wales.

To further strengthen the support we provide the Welsh Government has over the winter months been carrying out a Scoping Exercise to identify any gaps in service delivery for veterans and their families.

At the forefront of this has been the work of the Armed Forces Expert Group. Unique to Wales, it provides a collective voice and platform to identify and deliver services for this community.

A tremendous amount of progress has been made over the last few years. Working closely with the Armed Forces Expert Group we have delivered on key areas, including a Housing Pathway and Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness. This provides early assistance to veterans at risk of becoming homeless.

Recognising that Service children can face specific challenges as a result of deployment a bespoke fund was launched to provide them with additional educational support.

These are only a few examples of the progress and support we have implemented.

To further strengthen the support we provide the Welsh Government has over the winter months been carrying out a Scoping Exercise to identify any gaps in service delivery for veterans and their families.
Findings from this exercise and from the Map of Need project have recently been reported to the Armed Forces Expert Group and these findings will be reflected in future service provision.

Moving forward, in collaboration with the UK Government and the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board, we will implement the new Veterans’ Strategy, recognising delivery will look different in each part of the country.

However, in signing up to this Strategy, all parts of the UK are committed to achieving a shared Vision and Principles and the best outcomes for our Veterans.

The Welsh Government remains totally committed to providing services and support that meets the need of our Armed Forces community, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who provide services and support for this community and who have contributed to this report.

I am pleased to publish this Annual Report in collaboration with the Armed Forces Expert Group.

It sets out progress to date on the delivery of our commitments and recommendations for future areas for development.

Hannah Blythyn AM
Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government

The Welsh Government remains totally committed to providing services and support that meets the need of our Armed Forces community, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who provide services and support for this community and who have contributed to this report.
Observation

Feedback from the Armed Forces Expert Group Members

The Expert Group members welcome the co-ordination of a Government led Armed Forces community Expert Group, to ensure Wales draws together the different agencies and sectors with our Armed Forces to focus on discharging our collective Armed Forces Covenant commitments.

The Expert Group whole-heartedly welcome the introduction of an Annual Report on the Armed Forces Covenant by the Welsh Government.

This annual report will be vital in celebrating progress as well as identifying gaps in government services for the Armed Forces Community, including Armed Forces families.

This comprehensive first annual report does justice to the excellent relationship between Welsh society and the Armed Forces community including Reservists, especially the structure given to it by the Armed Forces Covenant.

It records the great progress that has been made and the work that will go forward. There is a lot of evidence within the report of positive collaborative practice between organisations who are devolved, non-devolved, and voluntary sector organisations.

In relation to Health and Well Being we welcome the Welsh Government’s commitment to the future of Veterans NHS Wales (VNHSW). VNHSW has been very successful in reducing waiting times for patients in recent years and we hope to see that trend continue.

We recognise that inconsistencies remain in the delivery of Priority NHS Treatment across Wales, and the focus that this will give to make improvements.

Members are pleased that the importance of education is raised with a commitment to changing the PLASC to recognise Service children, this is crucial in targeting the available support and resources where it is needed.

The introduction of the Supporting Service Children in Wales Fund is very welcomed. Consideration of the introduction of a Service Pupil Premium in Wales is recommended.

The Welsh Government commitment to roll out the 30 hours a week free childcare for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds to all Local Authorities has been well received, and will benefit Armed Forces spouses wishing to return to work.

Commitment by the Welsh Government to the Housing Pathway is welcomed.

There is recognition that housing remains a pressure point with shortage of one bed accommodation which many ex-Service personnel require, which needs to be addressed.

The commitment by the Welsh Government to review the Code of Guidance for Housing Allocations and Homelessness is welcomed as is the inclusion of Armed Forces service during the annual rough sleeper count, though work to share this information with third sector partners could support the developments needs to make necessary progress.
The Framework to support positive change published by the Welsh Government and HMPPS in Wales is a great example of this, as is STOMP.

There is a first-class body of policy in Wales that provides support to Serving personnel and their families, to Reservists, to Service leavers and to Veterans.

Support on returning to civilian life is an important area of focus.

The impact Armed Forces Liaison Officers (AFLO) on delivery of services is being observed and we welcome the Welsh Government’s commitment to them.

The Expert Group members welcome and endorse the Employment Pathway and Employers’ Toolkit.

The four main “asks” of the Expert Group are:

» Priority Treatment – get the knowledge and understanding of this correct across the sector (from a health but also a veterans’ perspective).

» Supporting those that have given the most including meeting the needs of wounded veterans with through life support.

» AFLOs – they are a great resource and having an impact – this needs to be seen as a spring board of better understanding of Covenant across Local Authorities – they have provided tools and knowledge and need embedding across Wales.

» To amend PLASC data.

We do have the ability to get things done in Wales and the Armed Forces Expert Group does help achieve this. We thank the Welsh Government for facilitating agencies to collectively work together to make improvements.
Executive Summary

Delivering for our Armed Forces Community

Overview
This is our first Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report. This report sets out the progress we have made in Wales in delivering services and support for our Armed Forces community, in collaboration with our key partners. There has been good progress however, we realise there is more to do, and more we will do.

Our Scoping Exercise to identify any gaps in service delivery and the Map of Need project, recently undertaken by Northumbria University to signpost quality assured services available to veterans across the UK, will help identify where we need to focus our efforts moving forward. Working in partnership with the Armed Forces Expert Group will enable us to successfully deliver services and support for our Armed Forces community.

Highlights of what we have done

Health and wellbeing
Improving mental health and well-being continues to be a priority for the Welsh Government. We have continued to provide funding of approximately £700k per annum for Veterans NHS Wales, which is a unique service in Wales to ensure veterans with mental health issues receive the support they need.

Veterans NHS Wales has led on research into Modular Motion-assisted Memory Desensitisation and Reconsolidation, which is investigating whether this ‘virtual reality’ therapy can reduce symptoms of PTSD in treatment resistant veterans. We have also provided new mental health investment in initiatives to prevent and reduce suicide.

We have published for consultation a cross-government strategy on loneliness and isolation; veterans have been included in this work. We have worked in partnership with the Royal British Legion and NHS to raise awareness of Priority Treatment for veterans who qualify for this, and continued funding free swimming for Serving and ex-Service personnel to provide them with an environment to come together to support their well-being.

Education
The Welsh Government recognises the particular challenges that can face the children of Service personnel and as a result a bespoke fund of £250k was launched in 2018 to provide educational support for these children. This enabled 27 schools across Wales to fund initiatives to support their well-being.

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 received Royal Assent in December 2018. This makes provision for a new statutory framework for supporting children, including Service children, with additional learning needs.

We have provided approximately £233k in the academic year 2017/18 through our Further and Higher Education Scheme, enabling Service leavers and veterans across Wales to benefit from Further and Higher education, improving their confidence, education and employment opportunities.

Housing
We are aware some veterans may struggle to secure housing and we published a Housing Pathway to provide information and options to address housing needs.
of Service leavers, veterans, and their families. To complement the Pathway, advice cards and leaflets for ex-Service personnel, who are sadly sleeping rough, were produced providing important information about access to housing, as well as a wide range of other services that are available.

The Welsh Government has been supportive of the partnership between, First Choice Housing and Wrexham County Borough Council in the development of Ty Ryan, a self-build scheme providing homes for veterans who participate in the build, acquiring a range of skills and qualifications in the process.

Support on returning to Civilian Life

Recognising the valuable work the Armed Forces Liaison Officers were delivering in supporting the Armed Forces community within Local Authorities across Wales, the Welsh Government has agreed to support their posts for a further two years, with a funding package of £500k.

The SToMP (Supporting the Transition of Military Personnel) project has implemented its Veterans Pathway in prisons across Wales.

The Pathway includes identification, recording and signposting stages, with ex-Service personnel, where appropriate, being transferred to HMP Parc and HMP Berwyn’s dedicated ex-Service personnel units.

Wales has benefitted by securing £2.14m from the Covenant Trust Fund for projects to support the Armed Forces community, providing an opportunity to provide additional bespoke services and support for this community.

Employment

Employment plays a pivotal role to a successful transition to civilian life and we recognise some Service leavers and veterans may require additional support to secure employment. Working with key partners during 2018, the Welsh Government published an Employment Pathway and an Employers’ Toolkit.

The former provides information and clarity on employment options available, whilst the Employers’ Toolkit provides clear guidance for employers on the added benefits of employing ex-Service personnel.

Commemoration

Wales has a proud history of military tradition and we continue to honour the past and the present.

In 2018, the Welsh Government was pleased to provide funding of £185k in support of National Armed Forces Day in Llandudno.

The Welsh Government has provided £271k to extend the Cymru’n Cofio programme until the end of March 2020 to cover Armistice commemorations and the creation of a digital legacy.

The Welsh Government also provides annual support for Armed Forces Days in Wales.
Summary of Delivery

Governance

» The Welsh Government has established a Framework for reporting and communicating good practice and issues relating to the Armed Forces community. We have also established metrics in delivery of services for veterans in mental health, substance misuse and prosthetics.

Health and Well-being

» We have continued to provide approximately £700k per annum for Veterans NHS Wales which includes research into Modular Motion-assisted Memory Desensitisation and Reconsolidation.

» We have made an additional £20m funding available to Health Boards to improve all mental health services, including those for veterans.

» We will provide an additional £500k a year to be invested in specific national and regional approaches to tackle suicide and self-harm prevention.

» Provided services and support to 308 veterans during 2016/17 to receive treatment after struggling with substance misuse.

» We have committed to fund free swimming for Serving personnel and veterans until 2021 to support their health and well-being.

» We have provided £40k for Change Step to continue their mentoring service for veterans.

» The Welsh Health Specialised Services Commission has provided £120k between 2016 and 2018 to support the Armed Forces Fast Track Pathway enabling Serving personnel to return to duty quicker.

» We have introduced and launched a newly designed electronic poster to be printed and displayed in GP surgeries to remind GPs of veterans’ Covenant healthcare priority.

» We have worked with all Local Health Board Armed Forces Champions to support and promote veterans’ healthcare.

» We have provided approximately £930K in funding from 2013 to support veterans requiring prosthetics.

Education

» We introduced the Supporting Service Children in Wales Fund in 2018/19 to support the well-being of Service children. Approximately £250k was awarded during 2018/19, which provided full or partial funding for 27 successful bids.

» The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, makes provision for a new statutory framework for supporting children, including Service children with additional learning needs (ALN).

» We have provided approximately £233k in the academic year 2017/18 through our Further and Higher Education Scheme to support Service leavers and veterans gain qualifications.

» Funding for the Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru Project for 2019.
Housing

» Published a Housing Pathway which gives information and signposting to support, and options available to ex Service personnel and their families.

» Supported Tŷ Ryan a self-build scheme targeted at veterans gaining skills and qualifications during the build. This has provided homes for veterans and their families who have been involved in the build.

» Working with the Gwent Armed Forces Liaison Officer, Local Authorities in the area have amended their housing policy to take account of time served in the Armed Forces for inclusion on housing waiting lists.

Benefits

» In 2017 we acted on the RBL Insult to Injury campaign to introduce a full disregard of all Armed Forces compensation payments when assessing social care needs.

» The Welsh Government financed a promotion campaign on the benefits of possessing a Defence Privilege Card. The card provides discounts on retail and leisure and can be used to access free swimming in Wales for veterans and Serving members of the Armed Forces.

Support on returning to Civilian Life

» We have agreed to fund Armed Forces Liaison officers across Wales for a further two years, with a funding package of £500k.

» Working with key partners during 2018, the Welsh Government published an Employment Pathway and an Employers’ Toolkit.

» The Welsh Government has fully supported the STOMP project which provides a Veterans Pathway in prisons across Wales, helping veterans access support and rehabilitation prior to, and on discharge from prison.
Governance

How we work to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant in Wales

The Welsh Government is committed to upholding the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant to ensure that no members of the Armed Forces community are disadvantaged as a result of their service, and that special consideration is given to those who have given the most, such as the injured or bereaved.

Working closely with our partners – the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Tri-Services, Local Authorities, Local Health Boards, military charities and organisations supporting the Armed Forces community – our aim is to ensure the provision of efficient and effective services that meet the varying needs of this community.

The Welsh Government implemented structures to identify key issues and take action, share information and best practice, and ensure we are hearing the collective voices of the Armed Forces community in Wales.

» The Armed Forces Expert Group is chaired by the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government supported by the Welsh Government’s Armed Forces Advocate. Meeting bi-annually its members provide a strategic voice on behalf of the Armed Forces community in Wales, considering key issues and collective methods of resolving these.

» Chaired by the Welsh Local Government Association and meeting twice yearly the Armed Forces Network considers issues of local and regional interest to the Armed Forces community. The group comprises of representatives of Local Authorities and other organisations with an interest in the Armed Forces community. Through a nominated representative, issues raised are shared with the Armed Forces Expert Group.

» Regional and Local Authority Armed Forces Fora organised regionally and at Local Authority level, these groups bring together Local Government, health, the Military, statutory agencies and Service charities to examine key issues, identify best practice, coordinate services and highlight areas for further consideration at an all-Wales level.

» Local issues are captured through Local Fora and the appointment of Armed Forces Liaison Officers (AFLO) across Wales, ensuring Covenant guidelines and services are embedded within Local Authorities. The AFLOs are also key members of the Armed Forces Network and the Regional and Local Authority Armed Forces Fora.

The Welsh Government also recognises the value in wide engagement with our partners and the Armed Forces community. Held annually, our Armed Forces Covenant Conference attracts a diverse audience from across Wales. It provides an opportunity for Local Authority and Local Health Board Armed Forces Champions, Third Sector, Ministry of Defence, the Family Federations, as well as many others with an interest in Armed Forces issues to discuss new initiatives, share good practice and consider opportunities for further collaboration.
Attendance at the all-Wales Service charities meeting enables us to share information and good practice and discuss key issues with organisations supporting veterans and their families.

Our framework for sharing good practice, gathering a Wales and UK wide perspective and engagement to identify issues is captured in the table below:

The Welsh Government Minister with responsibility for the Armed Forces community attends the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board, with a senior official attending the UK Government Armed Forces Covenant Reference Group to ensure good practice and issues relating to the Armed Forces community are shared.

We work with partners across the UK to ensure we coordinate policies but also reflect the differing situations across Wales and other parts of the UK.
Improving Data and Evidence

We recognise we do not have a coherent picture of the numbers of the Armed Forces community based in Wales, however the Royal British Legion’s Household Survey\(^1\) estimates there are approximately 385,000 members of this community living in Wales.

We have supported the Royal British Legion’s campaign for the inclusion of questions in the next UK census in 2021 on Service in the Armed Forces.

This will improve information on the size of the Armed Forces community at a local and national level, ensuring resources can be targeted appropriately.

We continue to work with Forces in Mind Trust, Public Health Wales and Universities to establish a more informed picture of the support needs of the Armed Forces community in Wales.

Engagement – Hearing from veterans and families

As part of our Scoping Exercise to identify gaps in services for veterans and families, from October 2018 to February 2019 we engaged with veterans, families and support providers to hear about their experiences and what they perceive as gaps in services and how they can be addressed.

**BACKGROUND**

With the aim of identifying gaps in public service provision for veterans and their families in Wales, we conducted an online survey and face to face focus groups around 7 key themes.

- Criminal justice system
- Housing
- Benefits and welfare system
- Education
- Transition into civvy street
- Healthcare
- Employment

**1,007**

Veterans, family members and organisations who submitted their views to our scoping exercise looking at gaps in services for veterans and families

**40**

Support groups and provider meetings we attended to collect views

**40+**

Organisations we engaged with in Wales

**250**

Veterans meet at support groups across Wales

**THE BREAKDOWN**

- **77.7%** Veterans
- **12.9%** Family member / Surviving dependent
- **9.4%** Organisations

Source: Royal British Legion's Household Survey 2016
Health and Wellbeing

Some Armed Forces personnel may return from conflict with complex healthcare needs, in particular mental health issues, which may not surface until they have left the Armed Forces. We are continuously working to ensure healthcare provision meets the needs of those who require support and services.

Improving health, mental health, well-being and preventing suicide, continue to be priorities for the Welsh Government. Our mental health strategy ‘Together for Mental Health’ is committed to continue support for Veterans NHS Wales. We will target new mental health investment in initiatives to prevent and reduce suicide rates in Wales.

The Talk to Me 2 Strategy has led to an increased focus on multiagency working to prevent suicide, with plans established in all areas of Wales.

This will be supported by an additional £500,000 a year to be invested in specific national and regional approaches to tackle suicide and self-harm prevention.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

**HEALTH & WELLBEING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Welsh Government Fund Veterans NHS Wales</strong></th>
<th><strong>£685K</strong> annually</th>
<th><strong>£927K</strong> spent since 2013 on prosthetics for injured Armed Forces veterans to receive the prosthetics they require</th>
<th><strong>£120K</strong> The amount of funding we have spent to provide specialist NHS care for Service personnel who are actively serving but are currently graded as medically not deployable from 2016-2018</th>
<th><strong>£500K</strong> invested per year to tackle suicide and self-harm prevention</th>
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<td><strong>210</strong> requests for Fast Track treatment of actively serving personnel from 2014-2019</td>
<td><strong>3,500</strong> The number of referrals VNHSW has received since 2010</td>
<td><strong>50%</strong> more Veterans will have access to expert opinions and psychological treatments after <strong>£685K</strong> funding from the Welsh Government</td>
<td><strong>308</strong> Veterans supported by substance misuse services across Wales</td>
<td><strong>114</strong> applications made to the Veterans Hearing Fund in Wales in 2018</td>
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Veterans NHS Wales

The Welsh Government provides approximately £700,000 annually to Veterans NHS Wales (VNHSW) enabling the service to deliver evidence-based treatment for service-related mental health conditions.

The service – the only fully coordinated national service in the UK – employs therapists across all Local Health Boards to deliver treatment and support to improve the mental health and wellbeing of veterans with a service related mental health problem.

The service works with partners to ensure veterans can access all the services they may need. Since it was set up in 2010, VNHSW has received over 3500 referrals to the service.

Testimony from Veterans NHS Wales patient:

I was reluctant to ask for help off anybody and thought if I just carried on, time would be a healer, but after 13 years of avoiding my PTSD symptoms it was worse than ever. I finally listened to my wife, to see a doctor, or ‘that’s it’.

I felt at ease with my therapist who targeted my issues and prioritised my immediate thoughts in order to become more stable. It was welcoming to hear that I was not alone and I didn’t have to feel so guilty having another point of view from the therapist did really help. I know my PTSD will never be healed but I am now in charge of it rather than it being in charge of me.

My veteran’s therapist saved my life and I, my wife and two little boys will always be thankful, I gave trauma focused therapy a go and it saved my life. What have you got to lose?

VNHSW, in partnership with Cardiff University, is leading research into 3MDR (Modular Motion-assisted Memory Desensitisation and Reconsolidation) Therapy, which is investigating whether ‘virtual reality’ therapy with the aid of a treadmill can reduce symptoms of PTSD in treatment-resistant military veterans. 42 veterans in Wales, with treatment-resistant PTSD are taking part.

This cutting-edge research trial will finish treating veterans during summer 2019. Results will be analysed by academics at Cardiff University.

Supporting amputee veterans

Through our investment in our health service, we have supported veterans who have lost limbs during their service, to ensure they have the prosthetics they require to help them succeed in their future lives. From April 2018 to February 2019 the Welsh Health Specialised Service Committee agreed 18 requests for War Veteran Prosthesis at an estimated cost of £118,073.

Since the introduction of the War Veteran Policy in October 2013 to date, the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee has agreed funding for 90 requests to fund prosthetic devices for war veterans, with an estimated expenditure of £926,673. This includes replacement devices, upgrades and specialist blades.

Priority Treatment

During 2017 the Welsh Government worked with the Royal British Legion to promote and raise awareness of the principle of priority treatment for veterans with health needs.
New Welsh Government guidance was issued to NHS staff in September 2017 that gave GPs, consultants, allied health professionals and administrative staff more information on the process of identifying, recording and referring veterans eligible for priority healthcare.

Colleagues within individual health boards with responsibility for the Armed Forces are working to promote awareness of the policy across the NHS and the wider community. In collaboration with NHS colleagues, we have developed a national poster for display in GP surgeries to further raise awareness of the policy and encourage veterans to self-identify so medical staff are aware of any service-related conditions. This will be promoted and developed throughout 2019/20.

**GMS forms – Identifying the Armed Forces community**

In September 2015 we amended the GMS form to include questions on military service to enable identification when registering with a GP practice.

We have also ensured the use of standard read codes for recording on health information systems. This will ensure veterans are identified and able to access priority treatment should their condition be the result of their time within the Services.

**NHS waiting lists**

In Wales, we honour the time spent on an NHS waiting list in other areas.

If a member of the Armed Forces or their immediate family is on a NHS waiting list and they are posted to another part of the country, any waiting time accrued will be carried forward with them.

All Local Health Boards in Wales are aware of this commitment and should honour it.

**Fast-track Referral Pathway**

We recognise the valuable work carried out through the MoD Fast-track Pathway in Wales. Providing secondary and specialist care, the service prioritises access to treatments for Service personnel who are Serving but are currently graded as ‘medically not deployable’.

Between August 2014 and February 2019, Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee has processed 210 requests for the Fast Track treatment of actively Serving personnel. From 2016/18 the estimated cost of this provision was £120k.

**Free swimming**

Service personnel can access free swimming at Local Authority swimming pools across Wales using their Defence Privilege Card. Launched in 2015, the Welsh Government has extended this scheme until 2021. A total of 8,977 free swims were recorded during 2017/18.

**Veterans Hearing fund**

The Veterans Hearing Fund provides support to veterans who acquired hearing loss during Service. It is open to those who have a wellbeing need that cannot be met through statutory services (such as the NHS). In 2018, 114 veterans in Wales received support through the fund.

**Substance Misuse support**

Working Together to Reduce Harm is the Welsh Government’s Substance Misuse Delivery Plan. Focussing on both mental and physical wellbeing it also considers substance misuse. In Wales, Area Planning Boards have been established in each health board area. The boards are responsible for the development and management of substance misuse services. During 2016/17 308 veterans received treatment and support across Wales.
Psychological therapies

Psychological therapies, such as cognitive behaviour therapy and mindfulness, can help those suffering from PTSD. We are committed to continuing the provision of psychological therapies in adult services and from 2018 we have provided health boards with an additional £4 million in funding. A national action plan that takes into account the cognitive behaviour therapy needs of all the population, including veterans, is being implemented across Wales.

Dentistry

The Welsh Government has provided an additional £1.3m recurrently from 2017/18 which will help create 10,000 new NHS dental places across Wales, benefitting members of the Armed Forces community.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has commissioned additional primary care dental services across North Wales, including the practice at Valley on Anglesey.

While not specifically aimed at RAF families based at Valley, the families have benefited from the additional access that the commissioning has provided.

Gambling

The Welsh Government has supported the research being undertaken by Swansea University on a UK Armed Forces Veterans’ Health & Gambling Study to investigate the attitudes towards, and experiences of gambling amongst the Armed Forces community.

We will continue to support this important work.

Metrics

We have developed metrics to provide clear data and evidence relating to the Armed forces community in Wales and our performance in meeting that need:

### Mental health

**Table 1:**
Veteran NHS Wales referrals receiving an assessment and treatment

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<tr>
<td>Number of referrals</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% referrals receive assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60-70</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% referrals receive treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30-50</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>39</td>
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Source: Veteran NHS Wales Annual Reports 2010-11 to 2017-18
www.veteranswales.co.uk/resources.html
Prosthetics
The All Wales Military Prosthetics Working Group have however calculated estimates based on BLESMA data. There is no data specifically in relation to veterans with prosthetics in Wales, however, the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen’s Association (BLESMA) collects data in relation to British service men and women with loss of limbs.

Table 2:
The number of prosthetic interventions, e.g. prosthetic panel applications, assisted by BLESMA between 2015-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of prosthetic interventions</td>
<td>191</td>
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<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimate number of veterans in Wales requiring prosthetic support</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: BLESMA Trustees’ Annual and Strategic Reports 2015 to 2017
https://blesma.org/news-media/annual-report/

Military Prosthetics Advisory Group Report 2013

Substance misuse
The number of veterans in Wales who are receiving or have received treatment for alcohol or drug misuse 2014-15 can be seen in the below table. The 2018-19 figures relate to April 2018 to February 2019 and were extracted on 27/03/2019.

Table 3:
Number of veterans in Wales receiving treatment for substance misuse between 2014-15 and 2018-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of veterans who are receiving/have received treatment for alcohol or drug misuse</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NHS Wales Informatics Service’s Information Services Division (ISD)
http://www.wales.nhs.uk/informatics

Education and Skills

The Welsh Government recognises that on return to civilian life Service leavers and veterans may want to expand and develop their skills gained during Service.

We also recognise the challenges faced by spouses seeking employment and Service children in education due to parental deployment and the emotional pressures this can cause.

We are working with the Armed Forces Families Federations and partner organisations to better understand this, and to support their needs going forward.

Education Support for Service Children

The Welsh Government is committed to equity of provision in education for all children and young people, and recognises the particular challenges that face certain groups of learners including Service children. We introduced the Supporting Service Children in Wales Fund in 2018/19 directed towards the educational support of Service children. £248,606 was awarded during 2018/19, which provided full or
partial funding for 27 successful bids from September 2018.

Following the Secretary of State for Defence’s announcement of an extension to the MoD’s Education Support Fund, 14 schools/Local Authorities have successfully secured full or partial funding totalling £200,769 in 2019.

Since 2011/12 projects supporting Service children in Wales have received over £1.5m from the Education Support fund.

The Welsh Government continues to fund the Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru Project. SSCE Cymru provides a dedicated officer to work with schools, families, Local Authorities and partner organisations across Wales to improve support for service children. SSCE Cymru also conducts and commissions research into areas of Service children’s experiences in education. Research commissioned in June 2018 explored ‘experiences of Service families with children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) in education in Wales’.

The research also examined the potential impacts of the new ALN Transformation Programme on Service children living and moving into Wales and has been considered in the context of the programme of work underway to implement to Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

Work is continuing in Wales to enable the collection of data on Service children in schools through the Pupil Level Annual School Census.

The collection of data on Service children will enable an improved understanding of their attainment levels and educational requirements to better address their needs.

Further and Higher Education Commitment scheme

Wales’ Further and Higher Education Commitment scheme pays the tuition fees of Service leavers living in Wales when they study for a first full level 3 qualification, a first undergraduate or foundation degree, or a first HNC or HND. The Welsh Government contributed a total of £232,464 in the academic financial year 2017/18 towards this scheme enabling Service leavers across Wales to benefit from further/higher education.

In addition to support for tuition fees through the Enhanced Learning Credits Scheme, there is separate financial help from the Welsh Government towards living costs for students wishing to study for their first Higher Education qualification. This is dependent on household income, and where they decide to study.

Recognition of prior learning

The Armed Forces Learning Credits Scheme helps support personal development. Standard Learning Credits (SLC) fund small-scale learning whilst Enhanced Learning Credits (ELC) are designed to provide help towards the cost of gaining further or higher education qualifications.

During service veterans may have registered for, and made use of, ELC which they can continue to claim for up to 5 years from their leaving date. Ex-Service personnel who enlisted prior to 1 April 2011 and are eligible, can claim from up to 10 years after leaving the Service.

The University of South Wales in Cardiff is an example of a Higher Education provider which will support veterans to determine the number of Higher Education credits they have accrued, and help them decide options for a new career.
Other examples of programmes designed to support the Armed Forces community are:

**Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme**
In Wales, the Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme provides children of those who have died in the service of their country a head start in life by providing a scholarship.

In financial year 2017/18, the Welsh Government contributed a total of £45,925 supporting students on this scheme.

**Service children and school admissions**
The Welsh Government recognises the early years as ‘critical stages’ in a child’s education and classifies Service children with excepted status. This means that the School Admissions Code makes provision for Service children to be admitted to an infant class mid-term, even if it means the class will breach the infant class size limit.

Places can be allocated to Service families in advance of them moving into the area, and to prioritise Service children in the school admissions process. The Code is subject to ongoing review to ensure that Service families are not being disadvantaged through the interpretation of the Code.

**Cadets programme in Wales**
The Welsh Government is working collaboratively with the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) to ensure schools are able to engage with the Cadet programme in Wales. The Cadets’ programme forms part of the broad range of services to young people in Wales and they have an important contribution to make, helping young people develop in many ways, including becoming more confident in themselves, and developing life skills. Welsh Government officials continue to engage with the MoD Youth and Cadet Council.

**Additional Learning Needs**
The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018, makes provision for a new statutory framework for supporting children, including Service children with additional learning needs (ALN). The new ALN system is expected to be implemented over a three year period from September 2020, and will make provision for children and young people who require extra support with their learning, including Service children.

Work is also underway on a new ALN Code, which will include specific guidance relating to Service children with ALN.

**Motivational Preparation College for Training**
Motivational Preparation College for Training (MPCT) is a training provider with 31 locations based around the UK.

The MCPT is focused on teaching young people between 16-19 years through the Foundation Learning Programme. With a unique programme it assists young people to develop in line with their Mission, “To engage, motivate and educate to achieve excellence for all”.

The effect has been a positive support process for their learners enabling them to progress into a chosen career of choice either in the military, further education or full time employment. The British Armed Forces have been the largest benefactor for progression.

This has resulted in 82% progression rates in Wales MPCT colleges for 2018, and 39% of learners moving in to employment, selecting the British Armed Forces as their career of choice. MPCT continued to adapt their teaching and learning to meet the diverse needs of employers.
It is recognised that having suitable affordable accommodation when leaving the Armed Services is pivotal to a successful transition.

Going forward we will continue to strive to ensure that the housing provision meets the needs of our Armed Forces community in Wales.

**Housing Pathway**

Published in 2016, the Welsh Government National Housing Pathway for ex-Service Personnel outlines the support and services available to ex-Service personnel and their families in Wales so they know what the options are available to them.

It also provides housing professionals with information on the wide range of support available to the Armed Forces community. Developed in collaboration with our partners this Pathway has been publicised to the Armed Forces community, Local Authorities and housing associations in Wales.

To further promote the Pathway we have developed advice cards along with leaflets and posters for ex-Service personnel who are sleeping rough. These publications include contact details for the Veterans’ Gateway Service - a fully bi-lingual ‘one stop shop’ for veterans and family members to access services and support in one place.

**Priority Need**

Members of the Armed Forces community are classed as priority if they are homeless when leaving the Forces. This provides an important safety net during transition.

The Welsh Government has commissioned an independent assessment of priority need in Wales to determine if amendments are required that will continue to support our aim of ensuring that veterans are able to access the support and services they need. The independent evaluation will report in April 2020.

**Rough Sleeping**

The Welsh Government has established an objective to end the need for anyone to sleep rough by ensuring appropriate and accessible accommodation is available. In 2015, an annual monitoring exercise was introduced. During the annual rough sleeper count we now ask the question if someone has served in the Armed Forces.

CASE STUDY

**Supporting veterans with accommodation needs**

Working with the Gwent Armed Forces liaison officer, Local Authorities in the area have amended their housing policy to take account of time served in the Armed Forces when it comes to housing waiting lists.

To help alleviate any disadvantage that being away serving in the Forces may have led to with regard to housing waiting lists, the Local Authorities are taking the date of when someone joined the Forces as effective date of registration on the housing waiting list.

They are applying this rule to those who are likely to be homeless upon discharge from the Forces; a veteran applying for rehousing within 3 months of discharge and, in extenuating circumstance, where a veteran applies for rehousing beyond 3 months and up to 2 years from their date of discharge and are able to demonstrate that during this time they have been unable to establish stable accommodation.
**Guidance for Local Authorities**

Within the code of guidance the Welsh Government requires Local Authorities, when considering urgent housing need, give reasonable preference to anyone who has a serious injury, medical condition, or any impairment, which they or a member of their household has sustained as a result of service in the Armed Forces.

**Homebuy –** Veterans have priority status in the Welsh Government Homebuy scheme. Widows and widowers of personnel who have been killed in Service are also eligible for the scheme. In 2015 £2m was made available to provide housing for Armed Service leavers in Wales and was allocated to Local Authorities in Wales. This has helped eight Service leavers and their families find suitable accommodation to date.

**First Choice Housing in partnership with Wrexham Local Authority** has helped provide some additional veterans housing in North Wales. Completed in Spring 2018, Wrexham’s self-build project; Tŷ Ryan, has enabled veterans to participate in the construction of their own homes, acquiring a range of skills and qualifications in the process which may aid their future employment opportunities.

Also in Wrexham, Tŷ Dewr offers 12 en-suite bedrooms in a high quality building set in a tranquil area with easy access to the town centre. Residents (and members of the community) have use of a Trim Track gymnasium built into the grounds.

With support provided for those struggling to make the transition into civilian life, facing homelessness, mental or physical ill health.

Veterans can also make use of therapeutic training at the nearby Erlas Victorian Walled Garden project.

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**Clos Parc Morgannwg**

Clos Parc Morgannwg in Cardiff consists of 35 homes made up of 18 apartments and 17 houses.

A section of Clos Parc Morgannwg was allocated as a housing cluster for veterans and their families, and they were housed as part of a joint initiative between Taff Housing Association and the Welsh Veterans Partnership (WVP).

The initiative is part of the WVP “Coming Home Project” which aims to ensure veterans and Service families have full support and help to aid smooth transition to civilian life which will allow them to prosper and lead productive lives.

The scheme was developed by the Jehu Group and completed in October 2017 with the Welsh Government providing Social Housing Grant funding of over £2.5 million, towards the cost of the scheme.

**Hafal**

Based in Denbighshire Hafal, Acute Care Tenancy Support (ACTS) is a time-limited high-intensity floating support project providing tenancy-related support for individuals who are accessing secondary care services and are at risk of losing their tenancy as a result of a relapse in their mental health, veterans are included in their client base.
### CASE STUDY

**Wales homes for veterans**

Run by the charity Alabare it provides dedicated housing provision and support to veterans in Cardiff, Pontypridd, Swansea, Carmarthen and Conwy.

Key workers work with veterans to provide tailored support, engaging with local partners, Armed Forces charities and statutory agencies to provide holistic support to meet the individual needs of the veteran.

### Haig Housing

Haig Housing provides housing assistance to ex-Service people and/or their dependants. The trust lets general needs homes at affordable rents to the ex-Service community, and provides tailored housing solutions to suit the individual needs of severely wounded and disabled veterans.

Haig Housing has homes in Cardiff and Swansea.
Benefits and Finance

The Welsh Government understands that accessing the benefits that Service leavers and veterans are entitled to can be a challenging experience, especially if there is confusion about what support is available. We are working with our key partners to ensure the process is as stress free as possible.

**ACHIEVEMENTS**

**BENEFITS & FINANCE**

- **50% REDUCTION**
  on council tax for Armed Forces personnel on second homes

- **2017**
  War Disablement Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments disregarded when assessing social care needs

- **DEFENCE PRIVILEGE CARD**
  was launched in Wales to ensure Serving personnel and Veterans are aware of the benefits on offer

- **TRANSPORT**
  659
  Blue badge issued to Veterans in Wales as of December 2018

- **FREE BUS TRAVEL**
  a concessionary bus pass entitlement for those in receipt of Armed Forces Compensation Schemes

- **50%**
  27,400 members in Wales to date

- **2017**
  17,000 card holders in Wales

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

The DWP in Wales has ensured provisions are in place for veterans, Service personnel and their families in need of advice and support.

Across Wales, Armed Forces Champions have been put in place to support members of the Armed Forces community and their families.

An Armed Forces Champion is based in each Jobcentre plus office. Working closely with the Champions an active network of Armed Forces Single Point of Contacts (SPoCs) is in place in every Jobcentre site across Wales, helping the Armed Forces community access benefits, support services, and find employment.
In Wales DWP staff are working with external partners to explore how they can support veterans with severe PTSD to access their services more easily and in more appropriate surroundings where home visits are not possible.

The DWP has actively raised awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant, both externally to employers and internally amongst staff. Employer advisers promote the Covenant and encourage employers to sign up.

In South West Wales a marketing exercise was conducted targeting every employer on their database, resulting in 8 new registrations. DWP staff in Wrexham have supported the RBLI Lifeworks course, conducting mock employment interviews for veterans on the course.

DWP employee Nicola Peacock joined the Army Cadet Force (ACF) in 2017 as an adult volunteer. She is now a Sargent, and will be attending Westbury in July 2019 to participate in Commissioned Officer assessment. Nicola has been supported by DWP to participate in training and camps, and she regularly talks to colleagues about the benefits to young people of taking part in cadet activities.

Fuel poverty – Veterans are eligible for the Energy Company Obligations Schemes to assist in cases of Fuel Poverty. The Welsh Government will be considering eligibility to the Welsh Government’s Warm Homes Programme and how veterans can be supported as part of the policy review taking place in 2019.

Transport
Veterans in receipt of benefit provided under the Armed Forces and Reserved Compensation Scheme are entitled to a blue badge. Recent regulations extended the eligibility for a badge to veterans with cognitive impairment when in receipt of the relevant benefit award.

Figures up to December 2018 indicate there were 659 Blue Badges issued to veterans in Wales. Seriously injured veterans are eligible for concessionary bus travel.

The Welsh Government extended the entitlement to a concessionary bus pass in 2011 specifically to those in receipt of Armed Forces Compensations Scheme (AFCS).

Those not in receipt of the AFCS tariffs 1-8, or aged 60 years or older, have to demonstrate to their Local Authority, which administers the scheme, that they meet the other qualifying criteria which are set out in legislation and which have applied since the scheme was introduced in 2002.

The Welsh Government introduced a 50% council tax discount for Armed Forces personnel on second homes in 2013.

**War Disablement Pension (WDP) Disregard and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme**

Since 2017 the Welsh Government guidelines have fully disregarded War Disablement Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments in the means test for social care.

As a consequence veterans affected by this change were able to retain the full value of this WDP and AFCS to help meet their daily living costs and may have, depending upon their financial circumstances, seen a reduction in their charge for their care (or their contribution or reimbursement for their direct payments) due to a higher disregard of income applied in a financial assessment.
Defence Privilege Card

A Welsh Government funded awareness campaign to promote the benefits of the Defence Privilege Card was launched in Wales, to ensure more Serving personnel and veterans were made aware of the benefits on offer. These include discounts, both online and on the high street, in retail, leisure and other venues.

To date there are 27,400 members in Wales with just over 17,000 card holders.

The Government funded Childcare Offer

Taking Wales Forward commits the Welsh Government to providing 30 hours a week of government-funded early education and childcare for working parents of three and four year olds, for up to 48 weeks of the year.

From April 2019 the scheme will be fully rolled out across all Local Authorities, and will benefit both Serving and ex-Service families.
Support on Return to Civilian Life

Aims to identify ex-Service personnel within the Criminal Justice System

Work collaboratively with the 4 police forces in Wales

Endeavour Unit allows support services to help rehabilitate veterans during their sentence and on release

HMP Parc and Berwyn

- Change Step offer peer mentoring services. Hire a Hero offer employability support
- HMP Berwyn have a similar veterans wing that follows a similar model

In 2019, Welsh Government provided 40K of funding to CAIS to continue to deliver Change Step peer mentors

Secure further funding to embed within policy areas

SToMP

Supporting the Transition of Military Personnel

Aims to identify ex-Service personnel within the Criminal Justice System

Loneliness and Social Isolation strategy

The Welsh Government is committed to developing a cross-government and cross-sector approach to tackling loneliness and isolation in Wales. Working with partners, we will ensure veterans are given access to facilities and services within their communities.

Engagement has included the public, charities sector and veterans support groups to consider research, evidence and prevention of loneliness and social isolation.

Examples of good practice in supporting this include; Woody’s Lodge, Change Step, The Royal British Legion, Valleys Veterans and the Regimental Associations.

We are also aware that the issue does not only affect older veterans and continue to work with groups including those outlined above to promote services where veterans of all ages can come together and engage.
CASE STUDY
Valleys Veterans is an independent support group in Pentre, Rhondda Cynon Taf. It is run by a former Welsh Guard and Falklands veteran.

Every week 20-40 veterans attend the group to enjoy breakfast, a raffle and to have a catch up. Providers such as Veterans UK and the Royal British Legion provide advice and support when required to veterans in attendance.

Cardiff City Veterans Project
Grant funding from the Royal British Legion has enabled Cardiff City Football Club Foundation to create a Veteran’s Project, designed to use the power of Cardiff City FC to engage with socially isolated retired and ex-Armed Forces personnel, or those at risk of becoming lonely in and around Cardiff.

Their aim is to help veterans re-build old connections, develop new relationships and help them to become more mentally and physically active.

Their project seeks to focus on these key issues and provide structure and support that allows veterans to come together, have fun and take part in a range of new activities led by their interests that target physical and mental activity.

Change Step
In 2019 the Welsh Government provided £40k to CAIS to enable them to continue to deliver Change Step’s Peer Mentoring Service, delivered by veterans for veterans.

Working in partnership with a range of support organisations, Change Step provides dedicated services for those in crisis, older veterans, and people with mental health and substance misuse needs.

Armed Forces Liaison Officers
The appointment of Armed Forces Liaison Officers across most Local Authorities in Wales, supported by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, has enabled greater local coordination of support for the Armed Forces community. Funding was due to end in 2019 with the Welsh Government continuing to support these roles for a further two years with a funding package of £500k. This will enable services and support for the ex-Serving community to be embedded in mainstream support from Local Authorities in future years.

Criminal Justice
The Welsh Government doesn’t believe ex-Serving personnel within the Criminal Justice System should be overlooked and deterred from receiving support because they have taken a ‘wrong turning’. ‘A Framework to support positive change for those at risk of offending in Wales’ (2018-2023) has been developed jointly by Welsh Government and Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service on behalf of the All Wales Criminal Justice Board.

The purpose of the framework is to improve services for those at risk of entering, or those already in, the Criminal Justice System. One priority area is to improve provision for ex-Armed Services Personnel.

A key example of partnership working is the Supporting the Transition of Military Personnel (SToMP) project.
It is a whole system approach to supporting ex-Service personnel who come into contact with the Criminal Justice System in Wales.

In the past year SToMP has implemented its ex Armed Forces Personnel (AFP) whole system pathway at the five Welsh prisons. The SToMP team worked closely with all prisons in Wales to scope their existing processes of identification, support and referrals of ex AFPs, and develop a shared, consistent approach.

The pathway includes identification, recording and signposting stages with consideration of transferring ex AFP where appropriate to HMP Parc and HMP Berwyn’s dedicated ex AFP units.

Veteran Care Committees are also encouraged to pull together key partners, both within and outside the establishment, to ensure ongoing buy-in to the Pathway. The Pathway also encourages a Veteran Liaison Officer in each prison (a role recommended by the Phillips Review) and for their attendance at quarterly covenant meetings.

SToMP has also coordinated a series of prison community days across the five prisons in Wales, funded by an Armed Forces Covenant Grant.

Activities included an assault course, a walking football match between Endeavour and Change Step, a veterans’ family day, HMP Rye Hill challenge and employment events.

**CASE STUDY**

The Endeavour Unit at HMP Parc in South Wales opened in 2015, housing ex-Service personnel with prisoners sentenced to custody for the first time. The unit provides a focus for specialist veteran support services working outside the prison to help rehabilitate prisoners during sentence and on release.

Peer mentoring services for ex-Service personnel are delivered by organisations including Change Step with employability support from Hire a Hero.

Adopting a similar model, HMP Berwyn (a category C training prison for sentenced adult and young adult men) opened in February 2017 in Wrexham, North Wales. Including a veteran wing, there is a strong focus on rehabilitation as over time the veteran prisoners are moved out of the veteran wing to aid transition into civilian life.

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4. AFP ending up in the Justice System, to look at support provided to them, and how that support could be improved.
Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust

During its first three years, the Covenant Fund has provided support to the Armed Forces community in Wales, through the provision of ambitious, large-scale projects that change the way they approach provision of services down to small grants encouraging communities to get together. The diagram below shows how Wales has benefitted from Covenant funding.

**ARMED FORCES COVENANT FUND GRANTS IN WALES: THE FIRST 3 YEARS**

**What the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust does.**

It makes grants to support the Armed Forces Community, in **FOUR** broad categories:

1. **Removing barriers to family life**
2. **Extra support after service for those that need help**
3. **Measures to integrate military and civilian communities and allow the Armed Forces community to participate as citizens**
4. **Non core healthcare services for veterans**

**£2.2M**

- **Armed Forces Covenant Local Grants** **£570K**
  - 30 grants in Wales in the first three years of the Covenant Fund, funding projects that support local projects that are needed by the Armed Forces Community, or that bring Armed Forces and civilian communities together.

- **Former Service Leavers in the Criminal Justice System** **£824K**
  - Grants to Local Authorities for projects to support needs identified through their local Covenant Partnerships.

- **Strengthening Local Delivery of the Covenant** **£810K**
  - Support for two projects that are working to help ex-Service personnel who are now in the Criminal Justice System.

**UK WIDE GRANTS**

- **Supporting Communities in Wales**

  - Our UK wide grants include **£2M** to create the Veterans Gateway and part of this is based in South Wales.

  - We have also spent **£2M** through the impact programme which has supported the Map of Need, which shows more details about the needs of Armed Forces Communities in different geographic areas.
Employment and Skills

The majority of Service leavers integrate back into community life effectively. However some, through a variety of reasons, find transition difficult and are unable to find employment.

Finding meaningful employment that recognises the skills Service personnel have gained during their time in the Armed Forces has been identified as a key factor in helping Service leavers, veterans and their families integrate back into civilian life and contribute to the communities in which they settle.

The Welsh Government, in collaboration with members of the Armed Forces Expert Group, has developed an Employment Pathway.

Employment Pathway

The Pathway outlines the employment options and services that are available to offer assistance. It aims to lessen the challenge facing Serving personnel finding new employment during transition.

Employers’ Toolkit

The Welsh Government in partnership with Business in the Community Cymru developed an Employers’ Toolkit to complement the Employment Pathway. It provides clear guidance for employers on the added benefits of employing ex-Service personnel, the toolkit will help inform recruitment processes that are accessible to veterans, ensure recruiters and managers understand how to interpret military experience and provide practical workplace experience, offering skills and conversion training.

Business Wales

Business Wales is the Welsh Government’s bilingual business support service that provides impartial, independent support and advice to people starting, running and growing a business in Wales.

It offers a single point of contact for businesses and entrepreneurs to advice and support from public, private and voluntary sectors.

Neil, former Royal Marine and personal trainer from Aberystwyth, now based in Rhondda Cynon Taf:

Business Wales for me was extremely helpful in helping me with my business idea. I had 3 meetings with a member of the team and I was met with great professionalism and enthusiasm.

They listened to my ideas and acted accordingly based on my plans. Together, Business Wales and I set small targets to achieve and they were always on hand via email or phone if I required any assistance.

They also provided me with a business plan template which was very easy to follow.

I wouldn’t be making the progressive steps I am today if I didn’t get involved with Business Wales.

Community Employability Programmes

The Welsh Government’s Community Based Employability Programme provides intensive mentoring and support to both engage and address the complex barriers to employment across all groups including ex-Service personnel ensuring opportunities for all.
Communities for Work and Communities for Work Plus

Working in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Communities for Work Plus programme is an additional service funded by the Welsh Government, and includes support for veterans and their families.

Employability Skills Programme

The Welsh Government’s Employability Skills programme aims to support unemployed adults into a job and to stay in work by improving their employability skills.

The Programme offers a high quality work placement or employer specific training which is combined with work preparation training, and essential skills provision if required.

The Programme is aimed at unemployed adults who have a reasonable chance of being ready for employment within six months, including ex-Service personnel.

Working Wales

On 1st May 2019, the Welsh Government launched Working Wales. Based on individuals’ personal circumstances and aspirations, trained advisors will identify the most suitable support for that person.

In agreement with the individual, advisors will then refer individuals to the most appropriate support; this could be careers advice and guidance, current Employment Skills Programme provision, Communities for Work or other interventions. From early 2020 Working Wales will be the single entry point of referrals on to Job Support Wales.

Job Support Wales

Job Support Wales is due to commence in early 2020. The programme will consolidate the Welsh Government’s current suite of employment support to deliver a joined-up approach to employability and skills support, designed to meet individuals’ needs.

The programme will support people of all ages, including veterans to overcome any barriers they may have, in order to achieve and maintain good quality, sustainable employment.
Commemoration

The Welsh Government is proud of our vibrant Welsh nation with its own language, heritage and cultural identity.

Wales also has a proud history of military tradition and we recognise the value the Armed Forces bring to our communities. They should not be taken for granted, and the sacrifices made by them during conflict should be honoured.

Recognising their bravery the Welsh Government fully supports Remembrance events across Wales, including providing £20,000 per annum to support Armed Forces day flagship events in North and South Wales.

National Armed Forces Day

In 2018, Conwy County Borough Council hosted National Armed Forces Day. The Welsh Government provided £185k to support this prestigious event.

The Day celebrated the Armed Forces, and provided an opportunity for the public to express their support and thanks to the wider Armed Forces community.

Just over a thousand Serving Personnel, Cadets and Veterans took part in the parade along the promenade.

The parade was watched by a number of dignitaries including Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, Rt Hon. Theresa May MP, and the First Minister of Wales the Rt Hon Carwyn Jones.

Over 100,000 onlookers gathered along the promenade to support the parade and then enjoy a range of activities and displays including a visit from HMS Somerset, a combat display, military working dogs demonstration and a flypast from the Red Arrows.

The day also saw a return of Shenkin IV, the goat from the Great Orme, for his first official parade as mascot leading the 3rd Battalion the Royal Welsh.
Cymru’n Cofio

The First World War had a profound impact on Wales. The loss of almost 40,000 men affected nearly every community and the war stimulated major changes in society, economy and politics, which accelerated in the decades ahead.

The Welsh Government’s commemorative framework programme, Cymru’n Cofio Wales Remembers 1914-1918, was designed to foster a better understanding of the war among people of all ages and backgrounds.

Events have included the unveiling of a lasting monument in the village of Langemark to Welsh soldiers who died in Flanders.

To commemorate Passchendaele a National Service of Remembrance was held on 31 July 2017 at the site of the Welsh Memorial in Flanders.

In 2018, the focus of Wales’ First World War commemoration turned to the centenary of the signing of the Armistice on 11 November 1918. A Remembrance Sunday service was held at the Welsh National War Memorial in Cardiff. Wales then joined the rest of the UK and countries farther afield in the ringing of bells to mark the centenary of the end of the war.

The day finished with a National Service of Thanksgiving at Llandaff Cathedral, where the tone was one of reflection and thanksgiving.

Cymru’n Cofio Wales Remembers 1914-1918 was awarded further funding to enable continuation of the programme up until 31 March 2020, and to include a period for evaluation and creation of a digital legacy.
What we will do – Commitments 2019/20

» Continue to fund Veterans NHS Wales to enable veterans to access treatment specifically targeting mental health issues. We will also invest in the creation of national and regional initiatives to prevent suicide and self-harm.

» Continue to fund free bus travel for injured veterans.

» Provide funding for the Armed Forces Liaison Officers for 2 years from 2019.

» Consult with the Armed Forces community on the status of veterans as part of our housing priority need consultation.

» Continue to fund free swimming for veterans and Serving personnel until 2021.

» Update the Code of Guidance for Housing Allocations and Homelessness – including consideration of support for divorced or separated spouses and civil partners of Service personnel.

» Ensure veterans, Serving personnel and families are part of ongoing work to deliver our first loneliness and social isolation strategy.

» Working with the Veteran’s Gateway, Northumbria University and the Welsh Local Government Association publicise local services, including veteran support groups and hubs, to enable the Armed Forces community access peer support and services locally.

» Continue to provide support to our Armed Forces Fora across Wales to identify emerging issues and good practice.

» Continue our engagement with Swansea University to support research into gambling in the Armed Forces community.

» Work with Business in the Community Cymru to promote the benefits of employing members of the Armed Forces community and ‘Veterans Awareness Week’.

» Work with key partners to support and promote Reservists Day.

» As part of the Cymru’n Cofio programme consider how this legacy and stories can be accessed by future generations.

» Continue to support commemorative events, including the 75 Anniversary of D Day and the S’Hertogenbosch Welsh liberation.

» Produce a report detailing the findings and recommendations from our Scoping Exercise, and work with key partners to identify the means of delivering identified issues.

» Work with the Families Federations to identify the support needs for Service families living in Wales.

» Refresh our Welcome to Wales document for Serving personnel.

» Continue to promote and support the recruitment of Reservists within Welsh Government and the wider public sector, as part of ongoing communications on Armed Forces Day and whenever the opportunity arises.

» Continue to progress the work to enable the collection of data on Service children in schools through the Pupil Level Annual School Census.

» Continue to review the Service Children’s Admission Code to ensure that service families are not being disadvantaged through the interpretation of the Code.

» Continue to review delivery of the Fast Track Referral Pathway to ensure optimum service delivery.
Closing Words

I would like to pay tribute to all members of the Armed Forces Expert Group. Without their support we would not have achieved the progress we have.

I would also like to thank not just members of the Armed Forces Expert Group but all the other organisations including Woody’s Lodge, Project 360 and Age Cymru, Business in the Community, Change Step, and many more in providing support for our veterans and their families.

The recommendations from the Scoping Exercise will form the direction in which we target our services going forward and I expect all organisations across the sector to play their part in this.

Hannah Blythyn AM
Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government