



Office for  
Veterans' Affairs

# VETERANS' STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2022-2024



# Veterans' Strategy Action Plan: 2022-2024

Presented to Parliament by the  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  
by Command of Her Majesty

January 2022

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# PRIME MINISTER'S FOREWORD



Every day the men and women of our Armed Forces show their courage, commitment and dedication to our country. No matter how dangerous or trying the circumstances, they have never failed us and it's vital that we do not fail them. We have an obligation to ensure that our veterans continue to thrive after leaving the services.

This government has done more in this cause than any of our predecessors. In 2019, we established the Office for Veterans' Affairs to place their voice at the heart of government. We created a new veterans railcard and we offered any business that employed veterans a National Insurance contribution holiday. Last year we launched Op COURAGE, a new mental health service for veterans in England, and we provided another £3m for mental health and £15m for Armed Forces charities.

But we are determined to go further. This Action Plan sets out the steps we will take in the next two years towards our ambition of making the United Kingdom the **best place in the world** to be a veteran by 2028. We are doing this not simply because of our moral obligation to those who have given so much. We are acting because our veterans have the skills, experience and expertise to contribute to our country long after their military service ends. This government regards our veterans as a priceless national asset and we will do everything we can to help them to succeed.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Boris Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**The Rt Hon. Boris Johnson MP**  
Prime Minister

# MINISTERIAL INTRODUCTION

The 2018 *Strategy for our Veterans* committed the government to supporting and empowering our veterans. Since 2018, we have already done more for veterans than ever before. In this Action Plan we show where we will go even further to deliver for our veterans through to 2024, including in **five focal points for success**:

## 1. Delivering a step-change in support for veterans and their families:

- We launched **Op COURAGE**, the veterans mental health service in England, receiving 4900 referrals in 2020/21. Over 100 healthcare providers, such as hospital trusts, are now accredited as 'veteran aware' and more than 100 GP surgeries are **accredited as 'veteran friendly'**. NHS England will be providing **£18m more over three years for veteran health services**, so that Op COURAGE for mental health and the Veterans Trauma Network for physical health are easier to access. We are also going further to provide the very best treatment available, with £5m new funding for innovative health projects.
- We will go further to **digitalise services**, investing **£44m in a single Veterans UK portal**, which will put all pension and compensation services online and significantly reduce the time taken to respond to veterans' enquiries starting in 2023. We will fund improvements to the **Veterans Gateway** website in 2022 so that veterans have an easy-to-use single point of contact to help them identify appropriate sources of support.
- We have changed the law to **improve veterans' access to social housing** as well as removing the local connection test to take into account frequent moves during Service. Through this measure and improved pathways of support, we will **end veteran rough sleeping** within this Parliament.
- We will work across government to explore options for the introduction of **veteran-aware training for social work teams** in every Local Authority who could further promote and support the welfare and safeguarding of veterans and their families most in need of support.
- We supported our **service charities**, adding to the £10m a year already available via the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. Since 2020, we've given: £10m in additional funding to support mental health; £6m for supporting charities through the Covid-19 pandemic; £5m to enable charities to address the impact of events in Afghanistan on veterans and their families; and £475k to support the development of a digital and data strategy for the sector.

**2. Maximising veteran employability** as the key to positive life outcomes:

- We introduced a **National Insurance contribution holiday** for employers of Service leavers, forecast to impact 15,000 Service Leavers this year, and we will further promote this scheme to businesses to encourage more businesses to employ veterans.
  - We sold over 30,000 **Veterans Railcards**, and as the economy and society reopens we will strive to put more railcards in veterans' hands, saving them and their families more money.
  - We piloted the **Great Place to Work for Veterans** guaranteed progression scheme for joining the Civil Service and we will roll it out across all Departments, alongside specific plans to get more veterans into teaching, the prison service and uniformed services.
  - We introduced new lead roles to support **50 Armed Forces Champions** into our Jobcentre Plus network, offering more targeted help to get our veterans into successful civilian employment. We will continue to optimise and improve this service and will collect data on veterans receiving Universal Credit via a new Universal Credit "marker".
- We will improve the **Enhanced Learning Credit Scheme**, making sure veterans have access to the right training opportunities, and revamp the **Career Transition Partnership** in 2023 to further improve the career resettlement service offered to veterans and their families.

**3. Listening, learning and addressing with compassion the historic hurt or disadvantage** that sections of the veteran community have experienced:

- We will deliver an **independent review into the impact of pre-2000 practices on LGBT veterans** in 2022. We will explore ways to enable veterans with convictions for service offences relating to their sexual orientation to apply to the Home Office for a disregard.
- We will commission research to understand the **lived experience of ethnic minority, female, and non-UK veterans** and how services can better meet their needs.
- We introduced a **new method for recording and reporting veteran suicide**, reporting from 2023. In the interim we are publishing next year a 10 year lookback on veteran deaths through suicide, alcohol misuse and drug abuse.

**4. Dealing with historic operations,** recognising that these continue to impact on veterans:

- We passed the **Overseas Operations (Serving Personnel and Veterans) Act**, which provides stronger protections for service personnel and veterans facing the threat of legal proceedings in relation to events which occurred on historical overseas operations.
- We published a command paper setting out the government's proposals for **addressing the legacy of Northern Ireland's past**. We are bringing forward legislation that will deliver on our commitments. We will continue to engage with veterans and families to make sure they have the support they need.

**5. Making sure veterans receive the same high standard of support, across the whole UK:**

- We are **coordinating how we collect data** with the Devolved Administrations. The Census in England and Wales and the forthcoming Census in Scotland include a standardised veterans question. Analysis of these data will provide unprecedented insight into where our veterans live and what they are doing to allow us to better address their needs.
- We will **share Service Leavers Data with the Scottish Government** to support their evidence base on veterans living in Scotland.
- **Veterans Commissioners** have been introduced to cover the UK and England, Scotland and Northern Ireland to represent the views of their veterans and ensure services in their nation are the best they can be. We will **appoint a Welsh Veterans Commissioner** in 2022 so every area of the UK is represented by a veterans commissioner.

This Action Plan will deliver a further significant shift in how we support our veteran community and provide the solid foundation on which we will continue to build over the next two years and beyond. Our work will be supercharged by a focus on research and data, giving us an even greater understanding of the veteran community and what the government needs to deliver to make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran by 2028.



**Leo Docherty** (Minister for Defence People and Veterans)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leo Docherty'.



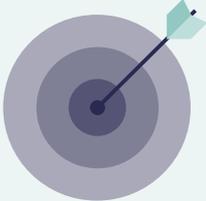
**Steve Barclay** (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Barclay'.

## THE ACTION PLAN IN NUMBERS

60+

commitments to deliver for our veterans

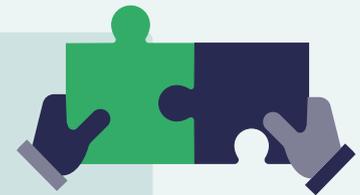


OVER **£70M** of spending on veterans in this plan alone

5

FOCAL POINTS FOR SUCCESS

- Delivering a step-change in support
- Maximising veteran employability
- Addressing historic hurt or disadvantage
- Dealing with the legacy from historic operations
- Ensuring a high standard of support across the UK



3

AREAS OF ACTION



- 1** Understanding our veteran community: work on data and research to ensure policy across government is rooted in robust evidence
- 2** Transforming services for veterans: improving services to make sure veterans and families have the support they need
- 3** Recognising our veterans' contribution to society: fully recognising all veterans' contributions to society, including those who may not historically have felt their service was recognised, and challenging negative stereotypes

1

OVERALL GOAL

Make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran by 2028

# INTRODUCTION



The 2018 *Strategy for our Veterans* set out how we will support and empower our veterans. The Strategy set high level, long term outcomes across a wide range of policy themes and cross cutting factors which will underpin success. This Action Plan sets out policy commitments we will take forward in 2022-24 to achieve these goals.



This Action Plan delivers in three areas of action:

- 1. Understanding our veteran community** – it is vital that we have a detailed understanding of our veteran population and their experiences to provide the right services and support for veterans and their families. This Action Plan will deliver this, including for those whose experiences have not been well understood in the past.
- 2. Transforming services and support for veterans** – we have seen significant progress in recent years on improving the services and support available to veterans and their families. This Action Plan sets out how we will build on that progress and continue to develop the support available to make a tangible difference to our veteran community, from bespoke healthcare to employment.
- 3. Celebrating our veterans and their contribution to society** – all veterans should feel that their service is appreciated by the nation. We will fully recognise veterans' valuable contributions to our society and economy, and challenge damaging misconceptions and stereotypes.

This Action Plan covers the actions the UK Government will take to support veterans and their families and sets out ways we will work together across the UK to achieve the same level of quality support, wherever veterans live. The Scottish and Welsh Governments have their own plans to support veterans in their nations. In Northern Ireland, due to the unique circumstances, a different approach to delivery is required. The UK Government will ensure Veterans living in NI are treated similarly to their counterparts across the UK by, for example, the establishment of the NI Veterans' Commissioner and providing further funding to the NI Veterans' Support Office.

We recognise that we cannot deliver on our ambition to make the UK the best country in the world to be a veteran alone. We have engaged on this plan and will continue to engage and collaborate on delivery with local authorities, other statutory service providers, service charities, academia and the private sector. Service charities in particular make an enormous contribution to supporting and empowering veterans and their families and we will continue to work closely with them and the private sector to increase the reach and impact of our work.

At the end of this Action Plan period in 2024 we will work across sectors to deliver a full refresh of the Strategy, setting out the progress we have made and how we will achieve our 2028 ambition to make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran.



Prime Minister Boris Johnson hosts Armed Forces Day reception



**“I’VE USED SO MANY SKILLS FROM THE ARMY IN MY CIVILIAN LIFE. PARTICULARLY TEAMWORK: TEAM IS EVERYTHING - THAT’S WHAT WE DO.”**

**Doug Ritchie**, Deputy Head of Commercial, Ministry of Defence. Formerly Royal Engineer.  
**Avro**, Assistance Dog, Hounds for Heroes.

# UNDERSTANDING OUR VETERAN COMMUNITY



We will develop a better understanding of our veteran community and their experiences. Without the right data and insights on issues or barriers affecting veterans, we cannot properly address them. A better understanding of the impact of our current policies and programmes will tell us where we need to go further. Our work will build on the range of existing academic and other research looking at the experiences of veterans and their families and we will work closely with charities and academic institutions to ensure we feed their insights into policy making. Through research and data we will seek to better understand the range of positive contributions veterans make to both society and the economy.

We will develop new **data and analysis products** and **build on existing data work** to provide us with better data and insights than ever before:

- In the 2021 Census in England and Wales the Office for National Statistics asked for the first time if respondents had previously served in the UK Armed Forces. This will allow us to publish **insights developed from the census data** across a range of topics affecting veterans and their families, from health and wellbeing to housing and employment. We will use this data on the demographics of our veteran population to better design and target future support. Using census data we can discover how many veterans are living with disabilities, the types of employment veterans are attaining after service, whether there are regional disparities in veterans' experiences, and whether veterans are disproportionately represented among those living in shelters.

- We will work to make **full use of the government's administrative datasets** to understand how veterans are interacting with public services. For example, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has committed to recording veteran status, where possible, among existing claimants of Universal Credit, as well as new claimants, which will transform our understanding of employment and finance related issues among veterans and their families.
- We will go further than we have before to listen to individual veterans' voices. The OVA will deliver a **regular veterans' survey**, asking veterans for their experiences across a range of issues and services they use. The results will be used to inform policy across government and provide external veterans support organisations with insights to shape their services.

We will **commission research looking at veterans' experiences** and how to improve and build on existing services:

- The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) will look at the **supply of supported housing** by the end of 2022, including meeting the needs of the veteran community, and ensure data on **veteran homelessness** is collected consistently.
- The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) will evaluate the impact of an innovative pilot intervention which offers **veterans in custody** tailored support, and consider the findings of external research into how we can improve identification of veterans within the criminal justice system, in order to better support them.

- The OVA will publish research, including looking at the **needs and experiences of non-UK<sup>1</sup> and female veterans** by March 2023, to give us the information we need to make sure policy fully meets the needs of all veterans.
- Our data and research strategy will respond to emerging issues, including ensuring that we have a full understanding of the impact of the events of 2021 in Afghanistan on veterans and their families. In August 2021 ministers chaired a Mental Health summit and the OVA will host a follow up **summit on the long-term impact of the withdrawal from Afghanistan** bringing together charities, representatives from academia and government in early 2022 to inform the government's response.

Our research will help to **demonstrate how veterans are contributing to our economy and society**, providing insight into social mobility and how veterans with scarce skills contribute to the UK's prosperity agenda. The data collected through the Vets-CHECK survey already highlighted the resilience of our veteran community during the Covid-19 pandemic. Where the data we collect highlights positive examples of veterans thriving in civilian life, we will use this to tackle negative stereotypes of veterans and promote positive public perceptions.

## DATA ACROSS THE UK

- The Welsh Government will use their Armed Forces Liaison Officers (AFLOs) to work together with local authorities to improve housing data.
- The Scottish Government intends to include a question on veteran status into their three primary surveys: the Scottish Household Survey, the Scottish Health Survey, and the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey.
- The Northern Ireland Veteran Support Office is developing a bespoke approach to data collection on the veteran population in Northern Ireland.

The commitments set out above represent a major step forward in this understanding our veterans. Our data and research programme will allow us to identify any gaps in support, and ensure services respond to need and deliver for veterans and their families. We will **publish further detail in our research and data strategy** during 2022.

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1 The term non-UK veteran applies to anyone who joined the Armed Forces as a Commonwealth citizen or from the Republic of Ireland (either as a sole or dual national). Gurkhas serve under a special and unique arrangement.

## SUPPORTING FEMALE VETERANS

As more women join the Armed Forces our female veteran community is set to grow in number, adding to the large number who served in the past. We must ensure that we celebrate and recognise their contribution to the Armed Forces, and make sure the services we deliver to female veterans meet their needs:

- NHS England will deliver a health improvement programme aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of women who are serving and who have served through a national multi-departmental, multi-agency, steering group established in July 2021.
- The OVA will commission new qualitative research seeking to understand the circumstances where female veterans seek support, and any barriers to accessing that support.
- The OVA will provide £150k in grant funding to charities to aid the development of best practice to ensure that veteran charities are inclusive and accessible.



**Anna-Marie Tipping**, Regional Lead, Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance. Formerly Royal Navy

# TRANSFORMING SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR VETERANS



When Service leavers become veterans they become entitled to a suite of government support to match their needs. Whilst the vast majority of veterans transition to civilian life with minimal support needs, high quality support services must be available to those who need them whether in healthcare, housing or employment support. They served the UK and we must ensure the services we provide to them in return are world-class.

Since the last Action Plan we have made notable progress, including through making access to veteran-specific mental healthcare easier with the creation of Op COURAGE, and removing barriers to accessing local authority housing support. Additionally, **the Armed Forces Act 2021** includes clauses that will impose a duty of due regard to the Covenant principles on local public bodies when conducting relevant functions in the areas of health, education and housing. We are going further in this Action Plan to ensure services continue to develop and transform: making them easier to access and ensuring they fully meet the needs of veterans and their families.



## Health and wellbeing



Ensuring veterans have the right health and wellbeing support is a key priority, and through this Action Plan we will build upon the progress that has already been made in developing bespoke support services for veterans. We will make them easier to access and navigate while also ensuring mainstream services are meeting veterans' needs.

All national health services across the UK are available to members of the Armed Forces Community. In England, NHS England commissions additional services for veterans with service related injuries. Veterans can, and are encouraged to, use these services whenever they need support and tell their GP 'I have served', so they can be signposted to specific veterans' support if required.

NHS England will be providing **£18m more over three years for veteran health services** including Armed Forces and family single points of contact; the development of clear pathways to support improved access to sexual assault referral centres (SARCs) for serving personnel and veterans; and improving support to veterans in the Criminal Justice System through the development of an end to end pathway.

**Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service**, the overarching name for the Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS), Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS) and Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service (HIS), launched last year, and provides a broad range of specialist mental health and wellbeing care and support for Service leavers, reservists, veterans and their families. NHS England will bring these three bespoke veterans' mental health services under the Op COURAGE umbrella into one long-term integrated service from April 2023, making the system easier to navigate for veterans and their families.

In August 2021, the Health and Social Care Secretary announced plans to provide an additional £2.7 million for Op COURAGE to support veterans impacted by recent events in Afghanistan. This additional funding, which has been matched by £2.7 million from NHS England, is facilitating the expansion of Op COURAGE, along with providing treatment for complex mental and physical trauma, as well as alcohol and substance misuse. As part of this, care co-ordinators will act as a point of contact for veterans, helping them to navigate health and care services and liaising on their behalf with health and care professionals. This extended service provision is also available to military police and interpreters who supported the UK Armed Forces in Afghanistan; and families impacted by this conflict.

The **Veterans Trauma Network (VTN)** is located within 18 NHS acute trusts, some of which include major trauma centres, and supports veterans with service related physical health conditions to access

appropriate care. It works closely with Defence Medical Services, national centres of clinical expertise, Op COURAGE, and military charities to provide a complete package of care, care coordination and peer support work to veterans with physical health problems as a result of their time in the Armed Forces. The VTN will be further developed to create an **integrated plan to support the physical health of veterans**. Through improved personalised treatment by clinicians who understand the military environment and specialise in the type of physical health problems veterans may have, veterans will receive better specialised care for injuries relating to time in service.

We are rolling out **'Veteran Aware' accreditation to NHS providers and practices** throughout England.

This accreditation supports NHS Trusts and practices to provide the best care for veterans and their families, and ensures that they are afforded no disadvantage in the care they receive. Over 100 healthcare providers are now **accredited as 'veteran aware'** and more than 1,100 GP surgeries are accredited as 'veteran friendly'. NHS England is working to ensure all Primary Care Networks have a 'Veteran Aware' accredited GP practice, all NHS Trusts in England are accredited as 'Veteran Aware' by March 2023, and that independent providers and hospices across England are accredited by 2024. To ensure that veterans know how to access a range of support focussed on improving their wellbeing, the OVA will work with DHSC, DLUHC and others to explore options for the **introduction of veteran-aware training for social work teams** into every local authority in England.

All NHS England programmes take into account that veterans may have additional needs. The NHS England Armed Forces Patient and Public Voice group is set up to advise on the unique experiences of veterans and their families. In addition, NHS England has work-plans for select groups within the Armed Forces Community that look at historical and evidence-based inequalities.

These include:

- **LGBT veterans** – working with and funding the charity sector to support individuals through health issues that may arise from the historic ban on LGBT persons serving in the Armed Forces.
- **Female veterans** – learning from research on the experiences of women who have served in the Armed Forces, and building this into services. For the first time, NHS England and the MOD will deliver a health improvement programme specifically for female serving personnel and veterans, supported by an evidence-based research programme.
- **Families and carers** – helping ICBs and service providers recognise the unique disadvantages and associated vulnerabilities that service and serving families – including those of veterans – can face. These include issues relating to service moves, transition, caring, dealing with post-injury life, bereavement and separation. The work plan helps professionals make decisions so that Armed Forces Community families can access the best services where they live as part of their integrated care system.
- **Ethnic minorities** – working to understand the pattern of service use and access and ensure that inequities are removed and are not created or exacerbated based on ethnicity.

Events last year in Afghanistan had a big impact on veterans and their families. We will use the £5m additional funding to service charities to ensure health and wellbeing support needs are met:

1. We have added £600k to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's (AFCFT) Sustaining Support – Impact of the Afghanistan Conflict programme, which will help multiple organisations to expand or extend existing projects, focusing on younger veterans and their families.
2. We will award grants to a range of projects to support veterans affected by events in Afghanistan, including mental health provision and broader support and engagement activities. This new Afghanistan Impact Programme will be delivered for the OVA by the AFCFT.

We will also make available £5m for FY 2022-23 to a **Health Innovation Fund**. This will be used to fund a range of projects to improve understanding on how innovative medical treatments or new clinical pathways can be used to better meet veteran healthcare needs.

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING ACROSS THE UK

- The Welsh Government will continue to support the Veterans NHS Wales specialist mental healthcare service and Veterans Trauma Network (VTN) Wales service for veterans with complex physical injuries.
- The Welsh Government will review and publish a new *Armed Forces Covenant, Healthcare Priority for Veterans Guidance*, subject to UK developments including the Armed Forces Bill.
- The Welsh Government will work with Armed Forces Liaison Officers (AFLOs) and partners including regional suicide and self-harm prevention coordinators to promote mental health first aid training.
- The Scottish Government will launch a Mental Health Action Plan to support veterans in Scotland to live a healthy life and be able to reach their full potential.
- The Scottish Government will develop and publish a new long-term suicide prevention strategy, which will take a cross-government approach to tackling the social and economic determinants of suicide across Scotland's population.
- The Scottish Government will continue to support Veterans First Point and Combat Stress to provide health and wellbeing support services to Service leavers and veterans in Scotland.
- The Northern Ireland Veteran Support Office (NIVSO) is developing a number of specific programme initiatives, incorporating enhanced complex mental health support and a 24/7 Helpline. The NIVSO will generate specific health and wellbeing data from across a range of partners within the charitable and statutory sector, with focus on A&E Departments, Substance Misuse Teams and PSNI Stations.

## Making a home in civilian society



Ensuring that every veteran has a secure place to live following service is one of the key elements of a successful transition to a fulfilling civilian life. We have already delivered important changes in this area by changing the law to improve veterans' access to social housing as well as removing the local connection test to take into account frequent moves during Service.

In this Action Plan we will go further still and commit to **ending veteran rough sleeping** by the end of this parliament through improved pathways of support.



**Ceiran Castle**, Rotational Specialist Paramedic, North West Ambulance Service. Formerly Royal Army Medical Corps

## Employment, education and skills



Stable long-term **employment opportunities** after service are the foundation of positive life outcomes for veterans, and we know that veterans all over the country are leaving service equipped with skills and expertise that benefit not only themselves but our economy too.

Through this Action Plan we will build on previous work to make sure veterans are able to find quality employment after leaving service.

- From April 2022, organisations employing Service leavers will be able to benefit further from the **12 month National Insurance contribution holiday** by applying for relief through PAYE in 'real time', while also claiming back retrospectively for relevant contributions paid since April 2021.
- We have sold over 30,000 **Veterans Railcards**, and as the economy and society reopens the Department for Transport will strive to put more railcards in veterans' hands, saving them and their families more money.
- The Armed Forces Covenant and Defence **Employer Recognition Scheme**, for organisations that demonstrate exceptional support for the Armed Forces community, continues to grow and the government is working to encourage more organisations to engage with the scheme and sign the Covenant. More than 7,000 organisations have now signed the Armed Forces Covenant, with 493 Gold Award holders.

We will continue to **build on transitional and in-service support** so veterans are better supported **UK-wide** to find the career they want post service.

- MOD will re-let the **Career Transition Partnership (CTP)<sup>2</sup>** contract in 2023, which will make sure this provision continues to meet the needs of Service leavers as they look at new careers and education opportunities outside the Armed Forces.
- DWP will evaluate the impact of the new model of **50 Armed Force Champions and 11 Leads in the Jobcentre Plus network**. This new model is designed to help improve the support DWP provides to veterans and others by ensuring members of the Armed Forces Community can find support at Jobcentre Plus Offices from specially trained members of staff who understand their needs.
- DWP will look at the difference the Service leavers **Adjustment Passport** makes in supporting eligible Service leavers with disabilities into work.
- MOD will develop a **package of life skills training** and support to Service personnel to aid transition from finding housing to personal finances, with a pilot taking place in 2022.



**Stephen Commander**, Commercial Capability Lead, Department for Transport. Formerly 7th Parachute Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery

Supporting veterans to take up opportunities to serve their country again in public services will not only provide veterans with a fulfilling career opportunity, but will also mean that the UK can continue to benefit from their unique experience, expertise and skills:

- We will promote opportunities for Service leavers to go into **careers with the Uniformed and Health Services** (the latter via the Step into Health programme for careers in the NHS) and MOJ will introduce a **brand-new programme** to support veterans wanting to become Prison Officers.

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<sup>2</sup> CTP is a contracted service between MOD and Right Management Limited, which currently runs until 30 September 2023.

- We will support veterans into the Civil Service by fully rolling out the **Great Place to Work for Veterans** guaranteed progression scheme to all Departments, including Senior Civil Servant (SCS) level roles.
- The Cabinet Office will remove employment barriers for those veterans who face more challenges finding employment through the **Going Forward into Employment** scheme which will provide direct placement opportunities for veterans within the Civil Service. Military partners/spouses will also be eligible for this scheme.
- The Department for Education will increase collaboration with the MoD to promote opportunities for **Service leavers to get into teaching**, increasing signposting and communications tailored to veterans, and encouraging veterans to take up the 'Get School Experience' and 'Teacher Training Adviser' services that will help them towards a teaching career.
- The OVA will create a network of **departmental Veterans' Champions** in the Civil Service to share learning and promote opportunities for veterans to progress within the Civil Service.



Poppy Factory production team worker Nicola Stokes working on machinery cutting out individual poppy petals

## Making services work better for veterans



Many veterans will need little support in their civilian life, but wherever veterans and their families do need to interact with support services, those services need to be easy to find, access and use. We also need to ensure they coordinate so veterans face as streamlined an experience as possible.

Many veterans have access to a number of pension benefits and, in the unfortunate event they face injury when serving, compensation schemes, both of which are administered by Veterans UK (part of the MOD). At the moment applications for these schemes are made and managed using a largely paper-based system with forms available to download from GOV.UK. Over the next two years we will undertake a £44m transformation programme to ensure that **veterans can apply for and access Veterans UK services online**. This will significantly reduce the time taken to respond to veterans' enquiries.

It also needs to be easier for veterans to verify their status in order to access government services. We will carry out a scoping study to design a service which will offer the **digital verification of veteran status**. If implemented, this will reduce waiting times, reduce the likelihood of fraud, and allow veterans to easily access a wider range of government services. It will also allow us to start developing delivery options for Phase 2 of the rollout of Veterans' ID cards.

Just as important as providing world-class services to veterans is to ensure that they can easily **find the correct support**. The Veterans' Gateway provides a first point of contact to ensure veterans are directed to the right services via a website and telephone, SMS and live chat advisors. The OVA will work with the relevant charity partners and MOD to modernise and enhance the service so it remains fit for purpose and meets the needs of the whole veteran community. We will fund **improvements to the Veterans' Gateway website** so that it is more accessible and provides an improved user experience.

There are currently many different parts of government at the UK-wide, devolved and local levels that work on issues affecting veterans, as well as the service charities and other organisations supporting veterans and their families. We will take steps to ensure **better collaboration and coordination** of these interventions across government, including setting up formal structures to enable the Office for Veterans' Affairs to regularly coordinate with the Devolved Administrations, engage with and gather policy input from local government and service charities, as well as continuing to benefit from the insights of the Veterans' Advisory Board.



We will also use Veterans Advisory Pensions Committees to bring together communities of veterans from their regions to form coordinated responses to government and communicate the initiatives occurring in their regions.

We will continue to work closely with and **support Armed Forces charities** given their key role in supporting the veteran community. In addition to the £10m a year already provided to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust by MOD, we've given: £10m in additional funding to support mental health; £6m for supporting charities through the Covid-19 pandemic; £5m to enable charities to address the impact of events in Afghanistan on veterans and their families; and £475k to support the development of a digital and data strategy for the sector.

## VETERANS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM



Nearly all veterans are law-abiding citizens, however a small minority do come into contact with the criminal justice system. Veterans are already a specific cohort for the purposes of liaison and diversion activities and have specific local pathways which will continue to be evaluated for effectiveness.

We will make sure the right support is in place for those who are in the criminal justice system: reducing the risk of re-offending, understanding why some veterans enter the system and doing more to prevent it. MOJ will:

- Consider the findings of research into identifying veterans within the criminal justice system, and explore what more can be done to improve identification and recording of veterans in the prison and probation system, so that the right support can be put in place.
- Evaluate and assess the HMP Holme House veterans' wing pilot where ex-armed service personnel can volunteer to locate and be offered tailored veteran support. We will evaluate this pilot with a view to supporting recommendations across the wider custodial estate.
- Update and maintain the veterans support map. The map details all available services to veterans in the criminal justice system and will enable ex armed service personnel and their families to access tailored support quickly and seamlessly, with or without the support of a caseworker.
- NHSE will implement commitments made in the Armed Forces Forward View to support the healthcare needs of veterans in the Criminal Justice System.



Members of the Transport for London contingent prepare to march past the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday

# RECOGNISING VETERANS' CONTRIBUTIONS



It is vital that veterans who have gone above and beyond to serve our nation have their contribution adequately recognised. Public perceptions of veterans' contribution and support available to them should match the lived experience of a veteran in the UK today.

Since the publication of the *Strategy for Our Veterans* in 2018 and the creation of the Office for Veterans' Affairs we have been making an ever increasing effort to highlight examples of veterans supporting their communities, excelling in their new careers and enriching our society. There is still more work to be done and the commitments in this Action Plan will go further in ensuring their contribution to public life is recognised and that the public understands what it means to be a veteran – in particular where they belong to groups who have not previously felt this was the case.



Supporters of Fighting with Pride on Remembrance Sunday 2021. For the first time, LGBT+ veterans had an official role in the service of remembrance at the Cenotaph last year.

## Recognising the contribution all veterans have made

The government is committed to supporting all veterans to access the services they need to thrive in civilian life, regardless of their age, gender, marital status, disability, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation. We also want all veterans and their families to feel their service is valued and recognised.

The United Kingdom is proud to be a world leader in promoting diversity and inclusion, and our commitment to today's Armed Forces Community reflects this. Regrettably, some people have historically been excluded from serving their country, or from fulfilling their potential within the Armed Forces. Over the next two years, the government is determined to take bold steps to begin looking at how we can redress these past wrongs.

As part of the government's year of domestic action on LGBT issues, we will commission an **independent review into the impact that the pre-2000 ban on Homosexuality in the Armed Forces has had on LGBT veterans** today. The review will seek to better understand the experience of LGBT veterans who served in the Armed Forces between 1967 and 2000. It will provide evidence to inform how the government can fulfil its commitment in the *Strategy for Our Veterans*, and pursue our ambition of every veteran's service and experience being valued and recognised.

Additionally, as a first step, the Home Office and MOD will work together to explore how the existing **disregards scheme** can be extended to enable a greater number of veterans with convictions for service offences relating to their sexual orientation to apply to the Home Office for a disregard.

We will develop a better understanding of the demographics of our veteran community in the UK than ever before. This will enable us to look at whether there are issues disproportionately affecting certain groups of veterans. We will be able to break down census data by a range of demographics. We will also undertake **more qualitative research**, including looking at the experiences of female veterans. We will also look at the experiences of ethnic minority veterans and commission research into the experiences of non-UK veterans, which will enable us to better understand and meet their specific support needs.

The work of the Independent Veterans' Advisor (covering the UK and England), Northern Ireland Veterans' Commissioner and Scottish Veterans' Commissioner have done much to act as a voice for veterans independent from government. Following on from this work, the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales and the OVA will establish a **Veterans' Commissioner for Wales** to recognise the particular needs and contributions of veterans in Wales. This role, building on the success of counterpart roles covering the devolved nations, will ensure that veterans' in all constituent parts of the UK will have someone to scrutinise policy in their country.



## ADDRESSING NORTHERN IRELAND LEGACY ISSUES

The current system for addressing the past is not working well for anybody, particularly victims and survivors. It is delivering neither justice nor information to the vast majority of families, including over 1,000 of whom lost loved ones while serving the State.

That is why on 14 July 2021 the government published a Command Paper setting out the government's proposals for addressing the legacy of Northern Ireland's past, which focuses on information recovery and reconciliation.

Following the publication of the Command Paper, HMG has engaged a broad range of stakeholders and interested groups, including veterans, to discuss the proposals. We have always been clear

that the government will deliver on its commitment to NI veterans as part of a wider package to address legacy issues in Northern Ireland which focuses on reconciliation. We remain firmly committed to continuing to engage with veterans while legislation is debated in Parliament and beyond, to ensure that their views and experiences are understood. Of particular importance will be making sure that veterans who need support are able to receive the help they deserve – from pastoral care to legal assistance.

For anyone injured in the Troubles and living with permanent disablement as a result, a new scheme – the Troubles Permanent Disablement Scheme – opened in August 2021. Applications for the Troubles Permanent Disablement Scheme can be made online or on paper.



Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Steve Barclay helping sell poppies on London Poppy Day alongside serving personnel from the Armed Forces

## Promoting a positive public perception of veterans

The way the public and employers perceive veterans helps determine the climate into which they return when transition out of the Armed Forces is complete. Although the wider public generally believe that veterans make a valuable contribution to society and that military service instils positive values such as self-discipline and loyalty, negative and incorrect stereotypes of veterans as being psychologically impaired can be damaging to veterans and their families, and in turn can feed public misconceptions. These incorrect stereotypes result from a focus on stories of veterans in crisis rather than the vast majority who transition successfully and happily into civilian life.

The OVA will do more to understand public perceptions of veterans, and the influencing factors driving these. Developing an evidence base on public and employer perceptions will inform our communications strategy to build public understanding and improve positive perceptions of veterans, showcase their strengths and contribution to society and make sure that government services are effectively signposted.

Some of the ways we will do this are:

- **Conducting research** to create an understanding of the UK public and employers' perceptions of veterans to inform communications and policy interventions which show we value and support veterans.
- Working across departments to promote **positive messages about veterans volunteering** in their communities, including through involvement with Volunteers' Week 2022 and highlighting veteran winners of Points of Light awards.
- Creating a **UK Government communication strategy** to promote positive images of veterans and build an awareness of the diversity of their experiences, skills and contributions to society.



**“THE FRIENDSHIPS, THE  
CAMARADERIE AND THE SENSE  
OF FAMILY NEVER LEAVES,  
EVEN AFTER I DID.”**

**Patricia Price**, Independent Consultant and Researcher.  
Formerly Royal Engineer.

# LOOKING AHEAD AND NEXT STEPS



The 2022-2024 Veterans Strategy Action Plan does not represent the limit of our ambition to support and empower our veteran community over the next two years. The government will build on these commitments, ensuring those who have served are able to grasp with both hands the opportunities of civilian life. We acknowledge we cannot do this alone – making the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran is a mission for everybody in the United Kingdom. We ask service charities, employers and other organisations working with veterans and their families to work with us to achieve this vision.

Together we can encourage positive public perceptions of veterans, ensure every veteran can find quality employment and deliver world-class, evidence-based services that meet the needs of veterans and their families.

In 2024, the government will develop a fuller Veterans Strategy refresh, setting out how far we have come in achieving the policy outcomes set out in the *Strategy for our Veterans*, and what remains to be done to deliver on our policy ambition by 2028 to make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran.



Minister for Defence People and Veterans Leo Docherty meets three Chelsea Pensioners in traditional red uniform at The Royal Hospital Chelsea

# ANNEX A - TABLE OF COMMITMENTS



Each policy commitment below represents an action we will be taking in order to deliver on at least one of the key themes and cross-cutting factors in the original *Strategy for Our Veterans* as well as to meet our overall goal of making the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran.

Key themes	
 <p><b>1. Community and Relationships</b> – veterans are able to build healthy relationships and integrate into their communities.</p>	 <p><b>2. Employment, education and skills</b> – veterans enter appropriate employment and can continue to enhance their careers throughout their working lives.</p>
 <p><b>3. Finance and debt</b> – veterans leave the Armed Forces with sufficient financial education awareness and skills to be financially self-supporting and resilient.</p>	 <p><b>4. Health and wellbeing</b> – all veterans enjoy a state of positive physical and mental health and wellbeing, enabling them to contribute to wider aspects of society.</p>
 <p><b>5. Making a home in civilian society</b> – veterans have a secure place to live either through buying, renting or social housing.</p>	 <p><b>6. Veterans and the law</b> – veterans leave the Armed Forces with the resilience and awareness to remain law-abiding civilians.</p>

Cross-Cutting Factors	
 <p><b>1. Collaboration between organisations</b> – improved collaboration between organisations offers veterans coherent support.</p>	 <p><b>2. Coordination of Veterans' services</b> – the coordination of veterans' provision delivers consistent aims and principles over time and throughout the UK, ensuring veterans, their families and the bereaved are treated fairly compared to the local population.</p>
 <p><b>3. Data on the Veteran community</b> – enhanced collection, use and analysis of data across the public, private and charitable sectors to build an evidence base to effectively identify and address the needs of Veterans.</p>	 <p><b>4. Public perception and understanding</b> – the UK population value veterans and understand their diverse experiences and culture.</p>
 <p><b>5. Recognition of Veterans</b> – veterans feel that their service and experience is recognised and valued by society.</p>	

## Understanding our veteran community

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
Ongoing	Expand the Armed Forces 'marker' (including veterans) for new universal credit applicants to include existing claimants.	DWP	Finance and Debt
Ongoing	Include new veteran markers in UK Government datasets and work regularly across UK Government departments to look at where veteran markers can/should be added to new or existing datasets.	OVA	Better Data
Ongoing	Conduct regional engagement with local authorities to understand the data they collect and hold on the veteran community.	OVA	Better Data
January 2022	Establish an advisory group of academics and researchers. This new grouping will allow researchers to share their work, knowledge and understanding in their area(s) of expertise. It will also allow the sharing of the latest government research, policy and programmes, ensuring a robust academic contribution to the work of the OVA.	OVA	Collaboration and coordination of veterans' services
January 2022	Establish an advisory group of organisations employing veterans. This new grouping will focus on members' experiences employing those who have served. It will also provide a forum for discussion around the range of policies and programmes impacting veterans in this area.	OVA	Collaboration and coordination of veterans' services
January 2022 (final report findings) June 2022 (action plan produced)	Follow up on the findings from the Probation Institute's upcoming research publication into ex-service personnel journeys into harmful behaviour.  The MoJ will consider the findings from this research and explore what preventative interventions could be put in place to lower risk.	MoJ	Veterans and the Law

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
February 2022	Convene expert stakeholders from academia and the charity sector to a summit on the effect of the withdrawal from Afghanistan on veterans and their families, to inform the longer term government understanding of and response to the impact.	OVA	Better Data
Mid-2022	Publish UK Government data and research strategy, outlining the further steps to better understanding the UK's veteran community.	OVA	Better Data
Summer 2022 (topic summaries) Autumn 2022 onwards (multivariate and further analyses)	Publish analysis on the veteran community from the 2021 Census in England and Wales.	ONS, OVA	Better Data
Late 2022	Continue to support phase 4 of the King's Centre for Military Health Research longitudinal study looking at the health and wellbeing of UK Armed Forces Personnel. For the first time, this will also look at topics including social mobility, taking the insights beyond health and wellbeing.	OVA	Better Data
Late 2022	Add new Covid-19 questions to the King's College London cohort study to check whether the results of the Vets-Check survey, which examined the impact of Covid-19 on Veterans, are enduring.	OVA	Better Data
December 2022 (final publication) June 2023 (action plan published)	Consider the findings of Forces in Mind Trust's research into identifying veterans within the criminal justice system, and explore what more can be done to improve identification and recording of veterans in the prison and probation system.	MoJ	Veterans and the Law

## Veterans' Strategy Action Plan

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
End of 2022	Conduct research to understand the supply of supported housing, including that which meets the needs of the veteran community, and to provide an understanding of any needs gap.	DLUHC	Making a home in Civilian Society
End of 2022	Ensure LAs are recording all veterans approaching LAs who are owed a homelessness duty, rather than only those who require more assistance directly as a result of them having served.	DLUHC	Making a home in civilian society
End of 2022	Add ONS measures on loneliness and social isolation to the regular Veterans Survey, in order to understand the extent to which veterans are experiencing feelings of loneliness and social isolation.	OVA	Community and Relationships
End of 2022	Develop a single set of veterans' KPIs and metrics, to measure UK Government progress made against the 2028 Strategy for our Veterans outcomes.	OVA	Better Data
End of 2022	Share the Service Leavers Data (SLD) with the Scottish Government to support their evidence base on veterans living in Scotland. Through the Administrative Data Research Scotland (ADR Scotland) partnership with the Scottish Government, researchers from the Scottish Centre for Administrative Research (SCADR) will link the SLD to the National Records of Scotland (NRS) population spine to produce a de-identified dataset of veterans living in Scotland. SCADR researchers will then link this to other datasets, including the Scottish census, and undertake the analysis of the de-identified linked data. Use of the SLD will be restricted to this single, pre-agreed project and MOD retain final decision-making control over how the data is used.	MOD	Better Data

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
March 2023	Develop a veterans dataset based on the 2021 England and Wales census data, which will be kept up to date to enable future analysis and insights.	OVA, ONS, MOD	Better Data
March 2023	Commission and publish new qualitative research specifically looking at the experiences and support needs of ethnic minority veterans.	OVA	Better Data
March 2023	Commission and publish new qualitative research specifically looking at the experiences and support needs of non-UK veterans.	OVA	Better Data
March 2023	Commission and publish new qualitative research seeking to understand how female veterans access support, and any barriers to female veterans feeling they can seek help.	OVA	Better Data
November 2023 (evaluation complete) May 2024 (report recommendations considered)	Conduct evaluation and assessment of the HMP Holme House veterans' wing pilot where ex-armed service personnel will volunteer to locate on this wing and be offered tailored veteran support. An in-depth evaluation of the veterans activity hub will be carried out, with any outcomes and recommendations to be shared with key stakeholders with the view to support recommendations across the wider custodial estate.	MOJ/HMPPS	Veterans and the Law
End of 2023	Create a regular veterans survey, to collect insights into their experiences and needs, in collaboration across UK Government and consulting with the service charity sector.	OVA, ONS	Better Data
End of 2023	Publish official annual statistics of the frequency of suicide within the veteran cohort in England and Wales/GB.	OVA, ONS	Better Data

## Transforming services and support for veterans

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
Ongoing	Ensure the needs of veterans and their families are taken into account during development of national health strategies, to make sure veterans and their families are not disadvantaged.	DHSC, NHSE, OVA	Health and Wellbeing
Ongoing	Continue to commission, co-ordinate and integrate the three bespoke veterans' mental health services under the Op COURAGE umbrella through bringing the services together into one long-term integrated plan. Linking to this will be the establishment of a common mental health assessment framework, in collaboration with non-statutory providers, including the charity sector.	NHSE, DHSC	Health and Wellbeing
Ongoing	Continue to provide support and care for Service leavers through the Integrated Personal Commission for Veterans (IPC4V) framework phase 1. This initiative supports eligible veterans with complex and enduring physical, neurological and mental health conditions, attributable to injury whilst in service, to multi-disciplinary team support.  NHSE will work with ICBs to promote and increase the uptake of personalised care for veterans with complex and enduring need including LTC under the IPC4V framework phase 2 framework.	MOD/NHSE	Health and Wellbeing

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
Ongoing	<p>Promote opportunities for Service leavers and veterans to go into careers with the Uniformed and Health Services and associated support staff in England through collaboration across DWP, the CTP, NHS England, Home Office and MOJ. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of resources and messaging to ensure consistency for Service leavers receiving support and advice through the MOD and veterans living in the community. This will also recognise and support veterans who wish to move between the uniformed and health services.</li> <li>• Creation of a formal network of leads at a regional and central level across the DWP, MOD and uniformed and health services, to encourage collaboration and sharing of best practice.</li> <li>• We will look to collaborate with the devolved administrations wherever possible and appropriate.</li> </ul>	MOD, DWP, Home Office, NHS Employers, MOJ	Education, Employment and Skills
Ongoing	<p>Promote opportunities for veterans to go into teaching careers through collaboration between the CTP and DfE. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CTP to ensure Service leavers interested in teaching are encouraged to utilise Get School Experience and Adviser services.</li> <li>• DfE to offer dedicated signposting for Service leavers on the Get Into Teaching website.</li> <li>• CTP and DfE to link up more consistently at a regional level regarding respective careers fairs and promoting them to Service leavers interested in teaching.</li> <li>• CTP to promote Troops to Teachers in collaboration with DfE.</li> </ul>	MOD, DfE	Education, Employment and Skills

## Veterans' Strategy Action Plan

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
Ongoing	Update and maintain the veterans support map. The map details all available services to veterans in the criminal justice system and will enable ex armed service personnel to access tailored support quickly and seamlessly, with or without the support of a case worker. The map can also be used by anyone who is looking to find support for friends or family.	MoJ/HMPPS	Veterans and the Law
Ongoing	Engage quarterly with Local Authorities through the existing MOD Community Action Group, to discuss key policy issues affecting veterans and their families and to enable information and best practice sharing between central and local government.	OVA, MOD	Collaboration and coordination of veterans' services
Ongoing (improving evidence) March 2022 (sharing best practice with DPOs)	Support initiatives for veterans with disabilities and better understanding their needs and lived experience in collaboration with the Disability Unit. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improving the evidence across-government of veterans who self report a disability.</li> <li>sharing best practice with Disabled Persons Organisations about how veterans use adaptive sport to help increase activity levels and participate in communities, in collaboration with Sport England.</li> </ul>	OVA, CO Disability Unit, DHSC	Health and Wellbeing
January 2022	Establish a working group with Devolved Administration colleagues, which meets quarterly during SAP implementation to discuss UK-wide commitments, and to share best practice on devolved matters.	OVA	Collaboration and coordination of veterans' services
January 2022	Formalise a working partnership between FCDO and RBL to support UK AF veterans living overseas who need consular assistance.	FCDO	Collaboration and coordination of veterans' services

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
January 2022	Develop a fast-track recruitment scheme for Service leavers and veterans to become prison officers and engage in active outreach at ex-Armed Forces recruitment fairs.	MoJ, HMPPS, MOD	Employment, Education and Skills
January 2022	Bring together all Service leaver & veteran life chances schemes in the Civil Service under the central management of Going Forward Into Employment, to improve efficiencies and provide a clear pathway for Service leavers, veterans and military partners/spouses who need extra support by removing barriers to finding employment.	CS Commission, HMRC	Employment, Education and Skills
March 2022	Provide £150k in grant funding to charities to aid the development of best practice to ensure that veteran charities are inclusive and promote accessibility to female veterans.	OVA	Collaboration and coordination of veterans' services
April 2022	Roll out the Great Place to Work for veterans initiative across the whole Civil Service for roles at all levels including the Senior Civil Servant (SCS) level.	OVA	Employment, Education and Skills
Spring 2022	Conduct a review of the governance of veterans issues across government, to ensure clear and effective cross-government, DA and third sector collaboration, and decision making at the working, senior official and ministerial levels.	OVA, MOD	Collaboration and coordination of veterans' services
Q2 2022	Undertake a scoping study to design/roll out, for the first time ever, a service offering the digital verification of veteran status. This has the potential to offer a 'step change' in digital provision for veterans, allowing veterans to potentially access a wide range of government services. Further work post-project will allow us to start developing delivery options for Phase 2 of the rollout of Veterans' ID cards.	OVA, MOD	Public Perception of Veterans

## Veterans' Strategy Action Plan

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
End of 2022	Establish a network of veterans champions across the Civil Service to share best practice on veterans issues and champion veterans within their departments and ALBs.	OVA	Employment, Education and Skills
End of 2022	In partnership with the MOD and relevant Armed Forces, the OVA will undertake additional work and consultation to ensure the Veteran's Gateway has effective investment, governance and awareness amongst the veterans community in order to connect people with the right support.	OVA	Collaboration and coordination of veterans' services
End of 2022	Develop a package of life skills training and support to service personnel to aid transition, with a pilot within 2022.	MOD	Finance and Debt
End of 2022	Review and improve the accessibility of the Enhanced Learning Credit Scheme to Learning Providers and Veterans. Thus, making it easier for veterans to access a wider range of academic and vocational opportunities and support their development or chosen career post-Service.	MOD	Employment, Education and Skills
March 2023 (all trusts accredited)	Ensure through the Integrated Care Board framework, that every Integrated Care System has an Armed Forces lead and an agreed framework to support the Armed Forces community, and every Primary Care Network has a veteran-friendly accredited GP. Roll out Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance accreditation further across Trusts with all trusts being accredited by March 2023. Ensure that accreditations are being renewed in line with VCHA/ RCGP requirements, and continue to monitor impact and effectiveness to best support veterans.	RCGP, VCHA, NHSE	Health and Wellbeing

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
April 2023	Implement the new model for Armed Forces Champions and Leads in the Jobcentre Plus network, including monitoring and evaluation of their role.	DWP	Employment, Education and Skills
Spring 2023	Develop the Veterans Trauma Network to create an integrated plan for the physical health of veterans. This includes offering support to work with devolved administrations to foster alignment in provision.	NHSE, DHSC	Health and Wellbeing
Mid-2023 (review date)	Undertake rolling evaluation of the Adjustments Passport pilot, which provides disabled Service leavers with a transferable record of their required workplace adjustments, to inform decisions on further roll out of the scheme. Further evaluation of the pilot will commence in May 2022 (through to mid-2023) to provide additional evidence of the scheme's impact.	DWP	Employment, Education and Skills
October 2023	Relet the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) contract to ensure that service enhancements and improvements are made to meet the needs of stakeholders.	MOD	Employment, Education and Skills
End of 2023/24	Provide direct placement opportunities for jobs in the Civil Service for veterans and military spouses/partners who face challenges finding employment through the Going Forward into Employment scheme, with a target of 50 for 2022/23 and 100 for 2023/24.	CS Commission	Employment, Education and Skills

## Veterans' Strategy Action Plan

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
End of 2023/24	Deliver a health improvement programme aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of women who are serving and who have served (veterans) through the a national multi departmental, multi-agency, steering group established in July 2021. This will draw upon relevant academic research, government policy and other relevant research, and will build upon the commitments that the NHS and the MOD has made to improve service provision in this area.	NHSE, MOD, DHSC	Recognition of veterans and supporting their needs
Partial launch in 2023, with additional services added over coming years	Design, as part of a £44m funding commitment, a single Veterans UK portal allowing access to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS), the War Pensions Scheme (WPS) and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS). This will be an 'end-to-end' digital solution, including a digital correspondence and case management system. The new service will significantly reduce the time taken to respond to veterans' enquiries.	MOD	Digital Transformation
March 2024	Begin to pilot Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance accreditation roll-out to independent hospitals and hospices.	VCHA, NHSE	Health and Wellbeing
End of 2024	End rough sleeping for Armed Forces veterans by the end of the Parliament.	DLUHC, OVA	Making a Home in Civilian Society
End of 2024	Explore options for the introduction of veteran-aware training for social work teams in every Local Authority in England.	DHSC, DLUHC, OVA	Health and Wellbeing
End of 2024	Develop clear pathways to support improved access to sexual assault referral centres (SARCs) for serving personnel and veterans.	NHSE	Health and Wellbeing

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
End of 2024	Work collaboratively to implement commitments made in the Armed Forces Forward View in support of veterans in the criminal justice system. This will include a single pathway and additional complex care provision for veterans in the criminal justice system.	NHSE, MOJ	Veterans and the Law

## Recognising veterans' contributions

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
Ongoing	Deliver a drumbeat of communications and engagement activity to increase awareness of the range of government funded support services available to veterans and their families when they leave the Armed Forces.	OVA	Public Perception of Veterans
March 2022	Undertake a bespoke campaign on employability to promote to the business audience the skills veterans have, and the schemes that are on offer to increase veteran employment and assist their transition into the civilian workplace. This will include raising awareness of the National Insurance contribution holiday for employers who hire veterans which, from April 2022, can be claimed back in real time and retrospectively for the 2021 financial year.	OVA	Public Perception of Veterans
April 2022	Establish a UK Government veteran communications coordination group, to ensure Territorial Offices and the OVA collaborate effectively to celebrate the contribution of veterans to society, wherever they choose to settle in the UK.	Wales Office, Scotland Office, NIO, OVA	Public Perception of Veterans
May 2022	Conduct comprehensive research to create a baseline insight and understanding of the UK public and employers' perception of veterans, to inform communications and policy interventions which show we value and support veterans.	OVA	Public Perception of Veterans
Spring 2022	Readvertise the membership of the Veterans' Advisory Board (VAB) as part of regular processes to ensure we continue to capture independent voices representing all parts of the veteran community.	OVA	Collaboration and coordination of veterans' services

Target date	Commitment	Lead	Original strategy theme/factor
September 2022	Create a UK Government communications strategy to promote positive images of veterans; build understanding and awareness of the diversity of their experiences, skills, and contribution to society.	OVA	Public Perception of Veterans
September 2022	Work across departments to promote and amplify positive messages about veterans volunteering in their communities, by promoting the contribution veterans are making through volunteering as part of the 2022 Volunteers' Week and highlighting veteran winners of Points of Light awards.	DCMS, OVA	Community and Relationships
December 2022	Explore how the existing disregards scheme can be extended to enable a greater number of veterans, with convictions for services offences relating to their sexual orientation, to apply to the Home Office for a disregard.	OVA, MOD, Home Office	Recognition of veterans and supporting their needs
Winter 2022	Introduce new terms of reference for Veterans Advisory Pensions Committees (VAPCs) empowering them to bring together a community of veterans from their region to form coordinated responses to government and communicate initiatives occurring in their region. Review the new terms of reference during 2022.	OVA	Collaboration and coordination of veterans' services
End of 2022	Conducting research to better understand historic hurt and the experience of underrepresented groups within the whole veterans community. The first stage of this work will be to commission an independent review into the historic treatment of LGBT veterans (pre 2000). Further work may investigate the disparities felt by, amongst others, women, disabled and ethnic minority veterans.	OVA, GEO, MOD	Recognition of veterans and supporting their needs
End of 2022	Appoint a Welsh Veterans Commissioner.	Wales Office, OVA	Recognition of veterans and supporting their needs

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