



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

REPORT

Armed Forces Covenant: annual report 2021

What the Welsh Government has done during 2021 to ensure fair treatment of serving Armed Forces, veterans and their families.

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The Armed Forces Covenant

An Enduring Covenant between The people of the United Kingdom 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 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 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.

Ministerial foreword

This report covers the period from April 2021 to 31 March 2022. At the time of writing, COVID remains a concern for Welsh Government though the level of response which required military support has thankfully passed. Once again, I would like to place on record the thanks of Welsh Government to the Armed Services for the way in which they have continued to support us through this challenging time.

Indeed, it has been a different and difficult period for many, veterans included, with the often lonely days of peak-COVID in this period being a difficult time for the veterans community. Comradeship - meeting and sharing successes and troubles, is so vital to so many veterans. Whilst many groups and individuals adapted with flexible workarounds, there were few substitutes to physical contact. It has been a pleasure to start resuming visits to see veterans groups on the ground.

In spite of the challenges there are still achievements to celebrate during the period of this report, in particular:

- providing a first jobs fair and employers workshop in Wales and for Wales
- publishing our first Wales Resettlement Guide
- securing additional recurrent funding for Veterans NHS Wales.

As well as reflecting on what has already happened, this is an opportunity to look to the future too and in doing so briefly highlighting three key developments that will shape the next year:

- Ukraine, the role of the Armed Forces in supporting Ukraine through training and materials
- the cost of living crisis, and its impact on those providing services to veterans and veterans themselves

- having a Veterans Commissioner for Wales, responding to his advocacy for the veterans community.

Finally, having led the work on the Welsh Government's new LGBTQ+ Action Plan, I welcome the recognition being given to the historic wrongs for those who served in a very different environment to today's Armed Forces pre-2000 where being lesbian or gay was a criminal offence. I particularly look forward to the Etherton review and Welsh Veterans making their voices heard within it.

Hannah Blythyn MS
Deputy Minister for Social Partnership

Introduction

The Welsh Government's annual report on the Armed Forces Covenant is intended to provide an update on the delivery of support for the Armed Forces community, Service People and veterans, in Wales. It outlines progress and achievements and how Welsh Government has worked with a wide range of stakeholders including local government, local health boards, schools, business and the Armed Services.

The report covers a range of themes and updates are provided in separate sections. It is worth remembering that there is considerable overlap and cross-over between them:

- commemoration and remembrance
- crime and justice
- education and schools
- family life
- finance and Benefits
- housing

- health and well-being
- making the transition to civilian life and work

Whilst the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership has portfolio responsibility for oversight of delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant on matters where Welsh Government has devolved responsibility, delivery against these themes is shared across a number of different Ministers, Deputy Ministers and their supporting teams.

It is also important to remember when reading this report, that for the great majority of Service people and veterans, the Covenant and its principles of 'no disadvantage' for all and 'special consideration' for those who have given the most, such as the injured or the bereaved' is there, available if needed in the background.

Armed Forces Expert Group comments

The Armed Forces Expert Group (AFEG) brings together key representatives from across the Armed Services and Veterans sector. It meets with the Deputy Minister twice each year to help shape Welsh Government priorities.

Members of the Expert Group representing the 3 Armed Services, Service/Veterans charities and family federations, local government and health services were invited to provide observations on this year's annual report. The Families Federations for the three services returned a combined response which is set out in the Families Federation response to the Welsh Government Covenant 2021 Annual Report.

The Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force Families Federations would like to acknowledge the government's progress made against the commitments listed during challenging circumstances. Wales continues to be a positive and

supportive location for our Armed Forces and families to live and work.

We were grateful for the opportunity to address the Wales Annual Conference in October 2021, to update them on the work that we are doing as well as the issues that our families are encountering.

The introduction of the MOD Families Strategy is providing a positive platform to take forward the work that our service personnel and families need, we are pleased to see the Welsh Government's commitment to working with the MOD, Families Federations and other stakeholders on this project.

Currently military families in Wales, and around the UK, are experiencing challenges accessing dental and orthodontic care. We will continue to work with local healthcare providers and the Welsh Government to make sure military families moving into Wales are not at a disadvantage.

We welcome the introduction of the MOD Wrap Around Childcare scheme but recognise that there needs to be sufficient childcare providers to enable this to be a success for our families. There are ongoing funding challenges for our Service families undertaking Higher and Further Education, we will continue to work with both the MOD and Welsh Government on this.

Following COVID there has been an increase in spouses and partners of our Service personnel looking to work from home, we will continue to work with the Welsh Government and other stakeholders in Wales to promote the opportunities that **Forces Families Jobs** and the **Military Coworking Network** provide. RAF Valley is one of the Units that has a dedicated Military Co-working Network hub.

We fully support the decision to provide long term funding for the Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru programme, plus the extension to fund the Armed Forces Liaison Officers.

We welcome the continued close collaborative working relationship with the Welsh Government in supporting the serving Armed Forces communities living in Wales.

Armed Services highlights

‘Connecting, supporting and delivering’ were key themes for the 3 Armed Services over this reporting period which saw their continued contribution to Welsh Government’s COVID-19 response and the beginnings of a return to more traditional activity.

The 3 services reporting in March 2022 to the Armed Forces Expert Group highlighted a near 2 year commitment which had included:

- helping design, construct and equip the Dragons Heart hospital in the Principality Stadium
- reviewing, improving and helping deliver PPE and oxygen
- delivery of mobile testing
- supporting WAST with drivers and decontamination duties
- planning and delivery of whole community testing
- supporting the vaccination programme in Wales

This had involved over 1,900 Regulars and Reservists from the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force and supported every health board in Wales.

At the time of the March Expert Group meeting, the 3 Armed Services were looking forward to reducing their support as the situation improved and in line with other operational commitments whilst maintaining a watching brief.

During the period of this report, we received news on future change to the Armed Services footprint in Wales arising from the UK Government defence

review. This included:

- the continuing presence of Brecon Barracks as a Headquarters for 160 (Wales Brigade)
- the prospect of the development of a new barracks in Caerwent, providing a future home for 1 Rifles and the Queens Dragoon Guards from 2028
- a new Army Reserve company for Hightown Barracks in Wrexham
- the withdrawal of 14 Signals Regiment from Cawdor Barracks at Brawdy in Pembrokeshire

Other significant developments noted over the period of the report included:

- the official opening of the new HMS Cambria in Cardiff
- the Battle of Britain anniversary and exhibition and planned events across Wales
- preparing for the 40th anniversary of the Falklands conflict
- the resumption of Royal Air Force STEM engagement with schools across Wales
- plans for the Royal Air Force in Wales to work with the Wales Aerospace and Space forum in order to connect with the 160 companies in Wales that work in the aerospace and space sector

Working to deliver

The Armed Forces sector has continued to work together to uphold the principles of the Armed forces Covenant and deliver related services. It does this through active forums, networks and groups with which the Welsh Government engages.

These provided scrutiny, feedback and opportunities for partnership working during 2021 to 2022, both at a Wales and UK level, ensuring a co-ordinated

approach.

Armed Forces Expert Group on the Needs of the Armed Forces Community

The Welsh Government's Deputy Minister for Social Partnership chaired the AFEG in September 2021 and March 2022. All members were given an opportunity to participate and provide their views on items such as the UK Government's Armed Forces Family Strategy and the Veterans Scoping Exercise. In 2019 the Group set out a list of areas they saw as requiring priority action over the term of this Welsh Government. This report updates on progress at Appendix 1.

Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Armed Forces Network

The WLGA Armed Forces network continued to meet during 2021 to 2022. Local Government representatives had an opportunity to provide feedback on the Armed Forces Bill 2021, hear an update on the work of the Armed Forces Liaison Officers (AFLOs) and the ongoing work of Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru (SSCE Cymru). Following the 2022 local government elections, a new cohort of Armed Forces champions will be updated on progress and come together to exchange best practice across Wales via the network.

Armed Forces forums

Regional and local Armed Forces fora have continued to meet virtually. Welsh Government officials have continued to attend and listen to feedback, whilst also providing updates on issues such as the Armed Forces Bill and the Veterans

Scoping exercise.

Wales annual conference

On 15 October 2021 the Welsh Government's Armed Forces Conference was once again held virtually. Over 100 representatives from charities, government and public sector partners attended. The opening address was provided by the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership with presentations from Woody's Lodge and the Family Federations. Attendees provided their views on the delivery of the Covenant in Wales.

Ministerial engagement

The First Minister and Deputy Minister for Social Partnership have engaged regularly with UK Government and stakeholders across the Armed Forces sector. During the period Welsh ministers met with a range of partners including Woody's Lodge, the Armed-Services heads for Wales and attendees of the veterans awards event held in September 2021.

Ministerial meetings provided an opportunity to highlight good practice and affirm our views on national issues affecting Wales, for example supporting the UK Government's appointment of the Veterans' Commissioner for Wales.

Through their engagement ministers were able to highlight their support for the Armed Forces community. In providing a keynote speech during the veterans employment event in November 2021, the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership highlighted the valuable skills veterans can bring to organisations in which they are employed.

Veterans' Commissioner for Wales

On 1 March the UK Government announced the appointment of Colonel James Phillips as the Veterans' Commissioner for Wales. Following the announcement, the Welsh Government worked with the Office for Veterans Affairs and the Wales Office to ensure the role reflected the devolved nature of service delivery and established governance structures. The Welsh Government is now working with the commissioner and partners to develop his networks and engage with veterans across Wales.

All Wales Armed Forces Charity forum

The All-Wales Armed Forces Charity forum has continued to meet through the period of this report. This provides charities with an opportunity to discuss issues and share best practice. The Welsh Government attendance provides an opportunity to share updates and hear directly from those who work with the Armed Forces community.

Veteran Support Groups and Hubs

The network of Support Groups and hubs across Wales have continued to provide camaraderie and support for the Armed Forces community, bringing people together to improve wellbeing. These include Valleys Veterans, Adferiad, Woody's Lodge, VC Gallery, Bulldogs Boxing and Newport Veterans' Hub. New groups have also been established including in Caerphilly and Abergavenny. The Welsh Government has supported these groups with a £25,000 small grants programme.

Senedd Cross-party group on the Armed Forces and

cadets

We have continued to attend the Cross-party group and work with all members to share information and publicise support for the Armed Forces community. This forum provides a valued network for members of the Senedd and the Armed Forces community to engage and highlight best practice and key issues that need addressing in a collaborative manner.

Armed Forces Liaison Officers

The network of 8 Armed Forces Liaison officers (AFLOs) across Wales help us work on a regional basis with local authorities and local organisations, delivering policies and services that support the Armed Forces community.

The AFLOs cover 7 regions operating from a host local authority:

- South West Wales: Swansea, Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend
- West Wales: Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire
- South East Wales (2 AFLOs): Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf; Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan
- Gwent: Caerphilly, Newport, Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen
- North Wales: Anglesey, Gwynedd, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham
- Powys

Welsh Government has confirmed funding of £275,000 a year for these roles to continue from 2021 to 2023. This will help them to build on the excellent work achieved to date. The Welsh Government also provides the AFLOs with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and AFLOs provide bi-annual progress reports. KPIs for the reporting period covered:

- information and awareness raising of national priorities

- delivery of Our Community Our Covenant guidelines
- data collection

The AFLOs across Wales meet regularly as a group to share experience and best practice between areas. They hold regular Armed Forces Forums as a means of bringing together local leads for Armed Forces and Veterans matters, raising local issues.

Their work is broad and covers varied elements of support for all members of the Armed Forces community.

A brief summary of AFLO activity is included below with some more detail at Appendix 1:

- signposting and advising service people and veterans
- delivering mental health first aid training
- collecting housing data and encouraging common approaches to Veterans provision
- developing a Covenant Wales website
- event co-ordination: remembrance activities, Armed Forces Day events, local commemorations
- helping set up Breakfast clubs and virtual social groups
- delivering training on the Covenant to local authorities, Police and LHB staff
- collaborating on funding bids for local services
- promoting the Guaranteed Interview Scheme
- cascading useful information to local groups

Education liaison

Regional schools liaison officers (RSLOs) worked with local authorities and schools in Wales to update the data held on service children. This identified a total of 2,677 service children in 589 schools. In comparison to March 2021,

these figures have increased by 620 service children and 95 schools.

Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru and the RSLOs delivered training to school staff to increase knowledge around service children and families. The RSLOs delivered CPD sessions to 169 participants from 74 schools in Wales

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT)

The AFCT charity has continued to support projects in Wales. Its Board structure provides for Welsh Government views along with the other devolved Administrations to be represented in its strategic oversight of grant allocation. Notable projects in this report period include:

Veterans Places, Pathways and People programme

Adferiad Recovery and portfolio partners were awarded £795,000 to ensure sustainable provision of support for veterans in Wales. The portfolio of projects will work regionally to develop better, more joined up lasting support for local veterans with mental health needs in Wales.

Forces for change

The Forces for change grant in Wales supported a number of projects including:

- the Building Heroes Education foundation received £9,750 to provide veterans and Service leavers with opportunities to learn construction skills and support the building of Veterans accommodation.
- Powys County council were awarded £10,000 to support Nepalese service families with language skills and supporting integration between the school

and local community.

Sustaining support: supporting veterans and families impacted by the Afghanistan conflict

- Adferiad Recovery were awarded £35,000 for the Valleys Veterans Equi Grow project. This will provide additional, targeted support to Afghanistan veterans experiencing acute mental health issues, anguish and regression into alcohol abuse, which is impacting on their daily lives.
- Combat Stress were awarded £113,583 to deliver specialist mental health services to address the needs of Welsh veterans with complex mental health problems following service in Afghanistan. Combat Stress will provide these services in close partnership with existing providers, to ensure seamless services to veterans.
- Woody's Lodge secured £35,000.00 to maintain the well-established support team that provides much needed assistance, guidance and signposting for the Armed Forces veterans community. They will be able to continue to offer extended home visits for veterans who might benefit from this.

Progress against commitments and recommendations

This section of the report provides an update on the Welsh Government's progress against commitments and recommendations. The table references 3 sources:

- the Armed Forces Expert Group observations on the 2020 Annual Report: listed at Appendix 1
- the 2019 veterans scoping exercise: listed at Appendix 2

- the 2020 annual report future commitments: listed at Appendix 3

Some of these commitments overlap in terms of source and many are ongoing in nature.

Commemoration

Ministers: First Minister and cabinet as required.

Delivery partners: The Armed Services, AFLOs, local authorities, The Royal British Legion/partners.

Action	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
Work with the WLGA, military, local government and Third Sector partners to celebrate Wales National Armed Forces Day.	2020 Report	Due to COVID-19 restrictions there was little opportunity for major public events. The Welsh Government worked with partners to promote Armed Forces Day (virtually). This included a series of video messages to highlight the important role of our reservists along with video messages from the First Minister and the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership.	This is an ongoing annual commitment. We will work with partners to deliver an annual Wales National Armed Forces Day event starting with Wrexham on 18 June 2022.
Mark the delayed 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain and the Centenary of	2020 Report	In support of the 80 th anniversary of the Battle of Britain commemorations the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership attended events at both Cardiff City Hall and Westminster Abbey to pay tribute for	The main ceremonial events have been completed. The exhibition

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Action	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
the Royal British Legion.		<p>the sacrifices made by Welsh aviators including pilots, ground crew and communities.</p> <p>AFLOs and local partners have supported the Battle of Britain commemorative exhibition being displayed across Wales.</p>	<p>continues to tour and AFLOs and partners will communicate locally when it is in their locality.</p>
Continue to work with our key partners to support commemorative events, including the Battle of Britain and Remembrance.	2020 Report	<p>The Welsh Government worked with Race Council Cymru, 160th (Welsh) Brigade and RBL to hold a commemoration in recognition of the sacrifices of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Service personnel and families in November 2021.</p> <p>The Minister for Social Justice took part in the Wales Field of Remembrance opening in Cardiff castle in November 2021.</p> <p>The First Minister participated in the Wales National Service of Remembrance on Remembrance Sunday.</p>	<p>There is an ongoing commitment from Welsh ministers to support national commemorative events including annual Falklands 40 Remembrance activity later this year.</p> <p>2022 will see the marking of the 40th anniversary of the Falklands conflict including a national service of remembrance.</p>

Criminal Justice

Portfolio: Minister for Social Justice

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Delivery partners: MOJ, HMPPS, Veterans NHS Wales, police

Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
Bring together the AFLOs and those supporting veterans in prison to improve knowledge and awareness of support available.	Scoping Ex	Working with the Ministry of Justice, we have supported a new forum bringing together AFLOs, prison staff, Veterans NHS Wales and key partners to share best practice and information to improve services for veterans in the criminal justice system. A new pilot project with Veterans NHS Wales has been established to address this issue.	We will monitor the Veterans NHS Wales pilot project so that veterans in prison in Wales have access to specialist veteran's mental health services.
Work with the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), IOM Cymru and other partners to deliver the recommendations of the veterans scoping exercise.	2020 Report	All police forces in Wales have signed the Armed Forces Covenant. During the last year all Police and Crime Commissioner's offices have committed to signing the Covenant with Gwent PCC fully signed up. Identification of Veterans by custody Sergeants has been identified as an area where we would like to see progress. However, this is a matter for individual forces and will require work to manage the required change ICT systems when opportunities occur.	Further engagement with Lead PCC.

Education

Portfolio: Minister for Education and the Welsh Language

Delivery partners: SSCE Cymru and RSLOs, local authorities, school governing bodies

Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
Permanently fund the supporting Service Children in Education Wales fund and continue investment in the SSCE Cymru Project to ensure Service children have the best possible start.	Expert Group Scoping Ex	The Welsh Government's budget for 2022 to 2023 again included £270,000 to fund the Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru programme. This will provide a universal offer plus targeted funding to support service children locally where it is most needed. An indicative budget of £270,000 has also been agreed for 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025, which will aid with longer term planning.	Ongoing review as part of the budget process.

During Financial Year 2021 to 2022, a total of £85,292 was provided towards the Further and Higher Education Scheme enabling service leavers across Wales to benefit from Further and Higher education.

The Welsh Government contributed £28,150 during Financial Year 2021 to 2022 towards the Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme providing children of those who have died in service with a head start in life through scholarships.

Family support

Portfolio: Social Justice

Delivery partners: MOD, families federations

Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
We will work with the UK Government and partners to produce a UK Armed Forces Families strategy.	2020 Report	The strategy was launched in October 2021. A workshop to take forward the strategy was delivered in February 2022 with stakeholders from across Wales including the Forces Families Federations.	The Welsh Government are participants in the MOD-led delivery groups taking forward the recommendations.
We will continue to meet with the Families Federations and ensure the views of Service families in Wales are being heard.	2020 Report	The Families Federations are key members of the Armed Forces Expert Group raising issues that affect the families of Serving personnel. We have engaged directly with the Families Federations to take forward the UK Armed Forces Families Strategy in Wales.	This is an ongoing commitment.

Finance and benefits

Portfolio: Social Justice

Delivery partners: DWP, Money Advice Pension Service, RBL and 3rd Sector

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advice organisations

Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next Steps
<p>We will work with the Money Advice Pension Service (MAPS), DWP and other providers to promote financial support services through a targeted campaign to the Armed Forces community.</p>	<p>Scoping exercise</p>	<p>Through our Information, Awareness and Finance Scoping Action Group we continue to consider financial support needed by the Armed Forces community and ways of addressing this.</p> <p>A Money Guiders' event was held on 26 January 2022 to develop the understanding of those responsible for providing financial guidance. It was led by Money and Pension Advice Service and the Royal British Legion. Focussing on support available to veterans the event also included guidance from the DWP.</p>	<p>The Armed Forces Branch is attending MOD-led meetings to consider the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis on the Armed Forces Community.</p> <p>Identify opportunities to deliver further events this year tying in with wider Welsh Government work on the cost-of-living crisis.</p>
		<p>The DWP attended the West Wales Regional Partnership Board June</p>	

Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next Steps
<p>Continue to provide free bus travel for seriously injured service personnel and seriously injured veterans who meet the necessary qualifying criteria</p> <p>Automatic entitlement to a concessionary travel pass (for example not requiring further assessment) applies where a person who meets the residency criterion has been awarded one of the following State benefits. The War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement (WPMS), or An award under Tariffs 1 to 8 of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS).</p>	<p>2020 Report</p>	<p>This is an ongoing commitment including 2022 to 2023.</p>	<p>This commitment is being maintained in 2022 to 2023.</p>

Governance

Portfolio: Social Justice

Delivery partners: MOD, OVA, Armed Service Leads, WLGA, AFLOs

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Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
<p>Through our established governance structures the Welsh Government will ensure partner organisations have the opportunity to raise issues affecting the Armed Forces community.</p>	<p>2020 Report</p>	<p>Our Armed Forces Expert Group continues to be the forum whereby key issues affecting the Armed Forces community can be raised and addressed. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership chaired 2 virtual meetings during 2021 to 2022.</p> <p>The Armed Forces Branch meets quarterly with the AFLOs to discuss issues being raised on the ground. We also meet with the Wales Charity group, all Regional Armed Forces forums and Tri Services.</p> <p>The Welsh Government has provided £550,000 to ensure funding for the Armed Forces Liaison Officers (AFLOs) posts across Wales have been secured for a further 2 years.</p>	<p>The Armed Forces Expert Group is due to meet on 14 September.</p> <p>Regular AFLO meetings to continue.</p>
<p>Develop a national plan to implement the changes required from the Armed Forces Act.</p>	<p>Expert Group</p>	<p>We have worked with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to ensure the new statutory guidance reflects the situation and devolved nature of services in Wales. This has included four focus groups in Wales and promotion of the Act through AFLOs networks.</p>	<p>The Duty is expected to become law later in the year dependent on the UK Parliament legislative timetable. An e-learning training package has been sourced and is being tailored to Welsh needs. An associated communications plan is</p>

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Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
Provide Wales input into the UK Covenant annual report.	2020 Report	The continued progress in supporting the Armed Forces community in Wales was reflected in the 2021 UK Covenant Armed Forces Annual Report. The report highlighted key achievements in Wales including Welsh Government further investment of £270,000 per year to support Service children in Wales along with the appointment of four Regional Schools Liaison Officers for Service children across Wales, funded by a grant from the Covenant Fund Trust.	also being developed so awareness raising can take place once dates become more clear. This is an ongoing annual commitment.
Work with the UK Government's Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) to continue to deliver on the UK Strategy for our Veterans.	2020 Report	We have worked with the OVA as part of the Veterans Strategy Data Working Group and monitoring group to provide progress updates and ensure a collaborative approach on cross-cutting issues that affect veterans across the UK. We are continuing to progress our Veterans Scoping Exercise delivery plan to reflect pan-UK commitments.	This is an ongoing commitment. The Armed Forces Branch meets regularly with OVA.

Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
Continue to work with the UK Government on new Covenant legislation, preparing for its implementation.	2020 Report	We have worked closely with the MOD as the Armed Forces Bill was passed as an Act in December 2021. We also tabled a Legislative Consent Motion in the Senedd to support the legislation, which was passed in October 2021.	This is an ongoing commitment. The Armed Forces Branch is meeting regularly with MOD on Covenant related working groups.
		Development of the statutory guidance is now near completion. In collaboration with the MOD we arranged delivery of focus groups in Wales in July and November 2021 involving external stakeholders and Welsh Government policy officials from housing, health and education. Feedback from the Welsh Government has been reflected in the updated guidance.	
		Final statutory guidance is expected to be published during 2022 with the 'due regard' duty come into force late 2022.	

Health and well-being

Portfolio: Health and Social Services

Delivery Partners: LHBs, Veterans NHS Wales, Northumbria University, Public Health Wales, National Clinical Leads for Persistent Pain, AFLOs, Armed Forces

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Prosthetics Forum, BLESMA

Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
Ensure that there is ongoing review of the capacity and funding needed for Veterans NHS Wales to meet the mental health needs of veterans in a timely manner for first appointment and follow up treatment.	Scoping Exercise Expert Group	<p>In March 2021 we provided additional funding of £235,000 for Veterans NHS Wales providing total recurrent funding from 2021 to 2022 onwards of £920,000 a year.</p> <p>This has allowed Veterans' NHS Wales to create Highly Specialist Veterans Clinical Lead posts within the service and maintain the provision of therapy across Wales.</p> <p>Welsh Government meets Veterans' NHS Wales twice a year to assess capacity and monitor waiting.</p> <p>See appendix 4 for further information.</p>	Regular meetings with Veterans NHS Wales to monitor delivery/ capacity.
Work with our AFLOs and partners including regional suicide and self-harm prevention coordinators to promote mental health first aid training.	2020 Report	<p>'One is too many' co-production workshop led by Northumbria University held in Llandudno June 2022 involving veterans, families and stakeholders from Wales.</p> <p>Second workshop held in August 2022 with Wales stakeholders to provide input into research.</p>	We will continue to support the One is Too Many project to support targeted interventions for veterans who are at

Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
		<p>Armed Forces Liaison Officers and Regional Suicide and self-harm prevention coordinators have raised awareness of support available to help tackle suicide and self-harm.</p> <p>With funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, mental health first aid training was delivered to all 6 local authorities in North Wales and 9 local authorities in South Wales.</p> <p>To date over 200 staff from Police, Local Health Board, local government and charities have obtained level 2/3 qualification in First Aid Mental Health.</p>	risk of suicide.
Update the 'Veterans Substance Misuse Treatment framework and deliver better support to veterans with substance abuse issues	Expert Group	The Substance Misuse Delivery Plan will be revised over the coming year; this will include consideration of the needs of specific groups including veterans.	We will update the Substance Misuse Delivery Plan and include consideration of the needs of specific groups including veterans.

Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
Work with the LHB Champions Forum to commence the rollout of the GP accreditation scheme in Wales.	Scoping Exercise 2020 Report	Public Health Wales, in collaboration with Welsh Government, has produced an online guidance resource to remind general practices of their responsibility in identifying veterans registered with the practice, recording their veteran status and ensuring they receive priority access to NHS care (including hospital, primary or community care) for any conditions arising as a result of their military service.	We will promote guidance for GPs to support the Armed Forces community and we will work with partners across health to explore a Wales veteran-friendly GP scheme.
Ensure that injured veterans can consistently access chronic pain treatment when they need it, where they need it and in a manner that works for them, close to home and different from the service provided by the Veterans Trauma Network, which is	Expert Group	The Welsh Government is continuously reviewing and supporting the development of persistent pain services. In addition to publishing guidance for those living with persistent pain, the Welsh Government have appointed two National Clinical Leads for Persistent Pain responsible for overseeing equitable services across Wales, including treatment	There is a national persistent pain network that can consider issues and services when appropriate.

Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
intended for those with major physical disabilities		and support for veterans living with long term pain conditions.	The Wales Armed Forces prosthetics forum will monitor experiences of veterans in accessing pain management.
We will review and publish our new Armed Forces Covenant, Healthcare Priority for Veterans Guidance, subject to UK developments including the Armed Forces Bill.	2020 Report	The review of the 'Armed Forces Covenant healthcare priority for veterans guidance' was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.	We will assess our priority guidance following the publication of the Statutory guidance for the Armed Forces Act and 'due regard' duty.
We will continue our Armed Forces Prosthetics Forum, monitoring and responding to issues in relation to the health	2020 Report	Our Armed Forces Prosthetics Forum continues to monitor support for amputee veterans and families. BLESMA, the Welsh Government, Welsh Health Specialist Services	We will continue to deliver our enhanced prosthetics

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Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
needs of limbless veterans.		<p data-bbox="683 510 1182 741">Committee and the artificial limb centres are working closely to monitor issues around pain management, wheelchair provision and capacity within services supporting amputees.</p> <p data-bbox="683 786 1182 976">Civilians are now eligible for microprocessor knees; including veterans with non-service attributable injuries, subject to clinical need.</p> <p data-bbox="683 1021 1182 1375">In 2021 to 2022, a total of £258,559 was allocated to provide veterans with service-attributable injuries with the prosthetics they require. There were 38 veterans with service-attributable injuries registered across the 3 artificial limb centres in Wales in Wrexham, Cardiff and Swansea.</p>	<p data-bbox="1222 510 1422 577">policy for War veterans.</p> <p data-bbox="1222 622 1422 976">We will provide a forum for BLESMA and specialists in the field to communicate issues of concern.</p>

Housing and homelessness

Portfolio: Climate Change

Delivery Partners: Local Authorities, Housing Associations, AFLOs

Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
<p>Extend housing priority need to cover 5 years post leaving military service and ensure divorced or separated spouses and partners of Service personnel in Wales can access housing support on the same terms as other Armed Forces families.</p>	<p>Expert Group</p>	<p>Legislative changes will be taken forward in Wales to reform homelessness services to focus on prevention and rehousing. This will include consideration of the needs of, and engagement with, a range of groups, including the Armed Forces community in its widest sense.</p>	<p>We will consider the needs of the Armed Forces community in our reform of homelessness services in Wales.</p> <p>We will hold a workshop with Armed Forces sector to consider what housing support is required for the Armed Forces community and how we can promote awareness of existing support.</p>

Transition

Portfolio: Social Justice

Delivery Partners: RFCA, RFEA, CTP, AFLOs, Armed Services

Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
Work with the MOD to provide services in Wales to improve transition into civilian life.	Expert group Scoping Ex 2020 Report	<p>We have held regular meetings with MOD to pursue this recommendation. We submitted evidence and case studies from the Veterans scoping exercise to highlight the views of service leavers and veterans in Wales on their transition experience.</p> <p>A Service leaver and veterans Jobs Fair and Employers' seminar was held at Celtic Manor, November 2021.</p> <p>Career Transition Partnership (CTP) held career transition workshops at HMS Cambria June 2022.</p>	<p>Career Transition Partnership (CTP) to hold additional transition workshops at HMS Cambria in Cardiff November 2022.</p> <p>We will deliver with partners a Service leaver/ veteran/families jobs fair and employers conference on 17 November 2022.</p> <p>We will continue to call for the new Career Transition Partnership contract to deliver courses in Wales.</p> <p>Through AFLOs, we will ensure Local Authorities and other public service organisations have access to training for frontline staff to increase knowledge of the Armed Forces community and the new 'due regard' duty via the Armed Forces Act</p>
Expand and accelerate the roll out of guaranteed	Expert Group	The Welsh Government is an active participant in this	Use available Welsh Government levers to encourage and promote

Actions	Source	Progress 2021 to 2022	Next steps
interviews for Armed Forces Service leavers, Reservists and spouses who meet the minimum criteria for public sector jobs in Wales		scheme. Public bodies and private employers have continued to deliver guaranteed interview schemes for the Armed Forces in Wales. This includes local authorities, Local Health Boards in Wales and private employers working with the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA).	uptake where opportunities present.
We will publish a Wales Resettlement Guide in conjunction with the Career Transition Partnership and 160th (Welsh) Brigade.	Scoping Ex 2020 Report	The Welsh Government, working with 160th (Welsh) Brigade Wales, CTP and the Transition Action Group produced and launched the first Wales Resettlement Guide in June 2021 to bring together information and signposting on the support available in Wales.	We will refresh the Wales Resettlement guide working with 160 Brigade, Career Transition Partnership, Defence Transition Services and the veterans scoping exercise Transition Action group.

Case studies and exemplars

These case studies and exemplars provide a snapshot of work across the Sector in Wales.

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Employer recognition scheme

Since the scheme started in 2014, there have been 208 bronze, 71 silver and 46 gold awards made in Wales.

In 2021, 24 employers from Wales attained silver status, and of these 15 progressed further in the year to reach gold status alongside Hywel Dda UHB and the Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust who also secured their gold status this year.

Silver and gold achieved in 2021

- Admiral Group PLC (Silver and Gold)
- ARC Academy UK Ltd
- BCB International Ltd
- Brightlink Learning Ltd
- Camilleri Construction Ltd
- Denbighshire County Council
- EA Inclusion
- Enbarr Foundation CIC
- Hafal
- K Sharp Ltd
- North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
- NPTC Group of Colleges
- Ollywood Ltd
- Pathway Risk Management Ltd
- Penparcau Community Forum Ltd

Gold achieved in 2021

- Hywel Dda University Health Board
- Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust

Silver achieved in 2021

- Portsec Security Ltd
- Print Inc & Design Ltd
- Quadrant 4
- Rubicon Facilities Management Ltd
- The VC Gallery
- Transport for Wales
- Veterans Awards CIC
- Woody's Lodge

All Wales digital careers and jobs fair

In partnership with Working Wales, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Regional Learning and Skills Partnerships and supported by other organisations and employers, 3 all-Wales digital careers and jobs fair were held during October 2021. Open to all members of the community, including the Armed Forces sector, the event provided an opportunity to hear about key employment sectors across Wales and jobs available.

Local authority guaranteed interview schemes

To date 44 local employers in Wales have introduced the guaranteed interview schemes for Service leavers, veterans and reservists.

In January 2022 Rhondda Cynon Taf Council launched its guaranteed interview scheme; recognising the valuable skills members of the Armed Forces community can bring to the workplace. Aimed at all Service leavers, Veterans and Reservists who meet the required essential criteria for any vacancy set out in any council employment pack, the scheme will guarantee the individuals an interview for vacancies available.

Local health board support: Hywel Dda

Hywel Dda Health Board gained the Defence employer recognition Scheme gold award in November 2021. It is continuing with its actions to support the Armed Forces community and to offer peer support and guidance to other organisations who wish to apply for bronze or silver levels in the scheme.

It also supports the guaranteed interview scheme for Veterans whereby if individuals meet the minimum essential criteria for the role, they are guaranteed an interview.

Between March 2021 and February 2022, a total of 320 applicants declared they were a 'Member of the Armed Forces community', following shortlisting processes 153 were invited to interview with 47 offered employment. The varied roles included 12 in additional clinical services, 12 in administrative and clerical posts, 4 allied health professionals, 5 in estates and ancillary roles and 11 in registered nursing and midwifery.

The health board has used its Armed Forces staff network to provide lived experience insights to identify actions that would improve outcomes for Veterans and other members of the Armed Forces community seeking employment in the health board.

Hywel Dda Health Board is also registered on the Career Transition Partnership and Forces Families Jobs websites and has an active profile with vacancies

regularly uploaded. It participates in events organised by the CTP and Veterans and members of our Armed Forces Staff Network attend to share their experiences of transitioning from the Armed Forces, and show the range of roles available within the NHS.

Mental health treatment pathway pilot

Veterans' NHS Wales (VNHSW), in collaboration with Welsh Government and the prison health care estate, are piloting an integrated care pathway (ICP) for veterans with service-related mental health problems who are currently detained in Welsh prisons. The pathway will be evaluated after 6 months and revised following a quality improvement model. In essence this will allow health care staff to have a consultation with VNHSW staff regarding suitability before a referral to VNHSW.

Veterans in prisons (VIPs) will be offered an assessment by video conference call with a VNHSW therapist in the health board they are returning to upon release. Once released into the community the veteran will be able to commence therapy or will start once they come to the top of the health board's waiting list. If the veteran is still serving their sentence in prison, then they will be offered a remote therapy in prison following further discussion on suitability and access to a safe and confidential space.

Woody's Lodge

In April 2022, Deputy Minister for Social Partnership Hannah Blythyn and Deputy Minister for Mental health and wellbeing Lynne Neagle visited Woody's Lodge at the Amelia trust farm in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Ministers met with staff and veterans and heard about the work of the charity and future plans.

Woody's Lodge and the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) worked together on a funded project to promote and raise awareness of the support available for veterans. The project has enabled improved collaboration and networking with other organisations to reach and support Royal Navy and Royal Marine veterans within southeast and west Wales. The project sought to improve family communications and social interactions for isolated veterans, increase mobility support for veterans utilising Woody's Lodge, transport and lay foundations for improved support to Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel and their families through collaborative organisational relationships.

'Gerald' a 98 year old World War 2 Veteran was one of the beneficiaries of this project. An assessment of needs enabled a programme of repairs, adjustments and support visits to enable him to continue to live at home; advocacy on medical needs secured a new hearing aid and additional GP support; benefits advice secured entitlement to a backdated and increased Attendance Allowance. Together, these all contributed to a marked improvement in his living environment.

Armed Forces friendly schools Cymru

Launched in April 2022, the objectives of AFFSC are to embed good practice for supporting Service children, create a positive environment for Service children to share their experiences and encourage schools to become more engaged with their Armed Forces community. SSCE Cymru and the RSLOs work closely with schools to support them in achieving their status, through completing activities/ actions on the SSCE Cymru School checklist.

For further information, visit the [SSCE Cymru website](#).

Mount Street Junior school in Brecon was the first school to achieve AFFS Cymru bronze status.

“ AFFS Cymru status reaffirms support, care and guidance in the school is particularly strong in improving/maintaining the mental health and wellbeing of pupils. Status confirms that the ethos and vision of the school is recognised in the community.

“ Headteacher. ”

Little Troopers virtual workshop

On 10 November over 260 service children from 40 primary schools across Wales took part in a free virtual workshop run by the charity Little Troopers in collaboration with SSCE Cymru.

The service children logged in to the Little Troopers at School workshop where they used storytelling, imaginative play, drawing, movement and drama to explore some of the unique challenges that forces life can bring such as having a parent deployed overseas and regularly having to move home and school.

“ I really enjoyed the workshop; it was nice to know we are not alone. Knowing that there are others across the world that get these feelings was good to hear. I am glad that there are people in school that help us. ”

Valley Veterans

The Valley Veterans hub in the Rhondda founded over 10 years ago as an informal support group for PTSD sufferers is now a vibrant and active hub with more than 140 participants. It has continued to grow over the last year, delivering support for veterans and families throughout the area. Horticultural and equine activity are conducted daily by the group in their own dedicated area

adjacent to Ton Pentre Community Centre. The weekly breakfast club attracts up to 60 veterans and links them with key partners including the local authority and charities. The daily equine activity draws regular attendance from around a dozen veterans.

Valley Veterans work closely with Trivallis, a local housing association, who have provided a £5,000 grant to improve the site with security fencing.

VC gallery

The VC gallery have continued to deliver a range of support and initiatives over the last year. Thanks to the Hywel Dda local health board, the charity was able to achieve its bronze employer recognition scheme award along with Investors in Carers (IiC) a quality assurance scheme which recognises best practice for the support of unpaid carers. The VC has registered carers with their GP practices and set up carers support groups which are held weekly at both sites. Two lead carers one for each site that help to facilitate the scheme, and all staff members and key volunteers have received training on how to identify unpaid carers for the benefit of the Armed Forces Community.

‘Art of Memories’, funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust has collected and recorded stories from Serving personnel, veterans and their families and are used to inspire participants to create artwork and poetry. Over 200 poems and hundreds of artworks have been produced and the project so far has connected with over 150 veterans, either face to face or virtually.

‘Sharing my father’s story with you has helped to keep his memory alive. The true meaning of Remembrance.’ Veteran’s daughter.

‘Dig for Victory’, offers outdoor green therapy on the edge of the Pembrokeshire National Coast Path that was once a WW2 coastal battery. The project has seen hundreds of Armed Forces community members accessing the gardens.

Development continues to the bunker on site, adding disabled friendly access and planting still continues with produce then given to veterans and over 40 local families.

'Tackling Loneliness' this program has enabled the VC gallery to employ a full-time member of staff who facilitates this project. The VC gallery operates 'Naafi breaks' for reservists, veterans and their families, breakfasts which are held twice a month one at each site, and facilitate days out. The VC gallery focuses on general chats and company with other veterans, refreshments, and help to access digital platforms, with a focus on older veterans living in the local area. Part of the project is to identify more male and female veterans within Pembrokeshire by taking our mobile museum to various sports venues, village halls, etc, to meet ex-forces personnel wherever they might live. The VC Military peer mentors also visit local residential homes or homes of veterans with mobility issues to help with engagement. We have currently identified nearly 100 veterans across the south of Pembrokeshire within this project

Blind Veterans UK

Blind Veterans UK have worked with the sector in Wales to continue to deliver specialist equipment to blind and vision impaired veterans throughout Wales.

Between May 2021 and March 2022, the charity spent £60,305 on the provision of specialist equipment to help blind veterans in Wales lead independent and fulfilling lives within their own homes and beyond, despite significant sight loss. The wide variety of equipment provided, such as read-easy scanners, IT equipment, talking watches and kitchen equipment has allowed beneficiaries in Wales to obtain a degree of independence they thought was no longer possible, helping them to regain control of their lives, restore their confidence, and improve their wellbeing.

Newport Veterans Hub CIC

The hub has continued to deliver valuable support in the last year for veterans and families. Between August and November 2021, 13 drop in sessions were held at Malpas Court mansion with over 150 veterans attending. During November and December 6 sessions were held at Newport stadium with a total 314 veterans attending over the period. The hub has worked with partners such as Veterans NHS Wales, DWP, Guitars for Veterans and Newport County AFC.

Financial inclusion masterclass sessions

In April 2022 the AFLO for Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire organised financial inclusion masterclass sessions with the DWP, to upskill service providers on aspects of financial support including Personal Independence Payments and Access to Work.

RBL Wales

The RBL Wales Benefit debt and money advice service worked with 100 clients securing a gain of £607,130 last year with benefits and compensation.

Council Veteran Advice Services: Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil

The Veteran Advice Service provides free information, advice, and support to members of the Armed Forces community within the 4 local authorities. The service covers a range of areas, including benefits, adult social care, finances, employment and housing. The service is available to Armed Forces personnel,

Veterans, reservists, and family members.

Since the Veteran Advice Service launched in 2017 in Cardiff and 2018 in Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil over 4000 enquiries have been received across 4 authorities and saved the Armed Forces community unclaimed benefits to the value of £1,933,993.

Veterans legal link

Veterans legal link have continued to provide free legal advice to veterans and signposting to other services, working closely with partner organisations. The service focuses on early intervention and crises avoidance, to help meet the complex needs of vulnerable veterans and their families. Between April 2021 and May 2022 the service supported 103 clients with a wide range of support issues, relying on a network of lawyers and students, charities and support organisations.

Veterans trauma network

The VTN has continued to deliver support for those most severely injured during service.

Case study

An ex-soldier who had suffered severe limb trauma when serving and had had multiple operations with no relief of pain was seeking an amputation from his local orthopaedic surgeon. The local surgeon was not keen, having little experience of amputation of a viable and functional limb for pain. The VTN put in place: appropriate psychological support via referral to Veterans NHS Wales and other local services; third sector support through BLESMA who put him in touch

with an amputee support group; and referral to a specialist trauma surgeon in Swansea, who subsequently carried out the amputation with appropriate prioritisation due to his patient's veteran status and service-attributable injury. The patient is recovering well.

Year	Number of Referrals	Outcomes
2021	5	1 x amputation 2 x still in service inappropriate referrals 2 x written advice to GP for expedited referral to appropriate clinicians
2022	3	1 x out of area funding support 1 x expedited access to local services 1 x utilising VTN England MDT for discussion (ongoing)

Appendix 1: Priority actions identified by the Armed Forces Expert Group for the term of the Welsh Government

North Wales: Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Wrexham

- Delivery and completion of mental health first-aid training with over 100 staff from police, local health board, local government and charities obtained level 2/3 qualification in first aid mental health.
- Collection of housing data to help identify the Armed Forces community and

improve signposting to support. To date 57 people have been identified.

- Development of a Covenant Wales website to improve information flow across Wales.
- Delivery of a successful Wales Armed Forces day in Wrexham.

South West Wales: Swansea, Neath PT, Bridgend

- Responding to direct queries regarding benefits, wellbeing and accessing allotments, substance misuse, criminal justice and homelessness.
- Facilitating delivery of £25,000 'Strengthening Delivery of the Covenant' grant across region with 9 recipients awarded allocations.
- Delivery of Neath Port Talbot festival of Remembrance 2021 including social media planning. Battle of Britain Exhibition secured for September 2022.
- Engaged with the 3 local authorities to distribute communication on support for veterans during the Afghanistan crisis including mental health support providers.

West Wales: Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire

- Launch of breakfast clubs project for 2022 involving VC Gallery, Links and Woody's Lodge. Launch event in Llanelli with over 50 veterans present.
- Delivery of training sessions to staff: 8 sessions with 132 staff trained including local authority, DWP and local health board. Delivered 3 training sessions for Dyfed Powys police custody sergeants in collaboration with Woody's lodge. Armed Forces network developed within the force and working with HR team on Defence Employer Recognition Service.
- D-Day event held in Ceredigion bringing together veterans to combat isolation and share experiences in a COVID safe environment. Three veterans have now formed a friendship group and AFLO linked them with VC

Gallery who now organise weekly contact with each other as a result.

- Armed Forces question added to 3 local authority housing applications/ assessment of need.

Powys

- Supported 160 (Welsh) Brigade with a community day in June 2022.
- Worked with local authority education team to secure £9,000 funding to provide extra support for Nepalese service children.
- Increased referrals/requests for support from AFLO as frontline staff awareness has increased regarding services available for the Armed Forces community.
- Regular updates provided to the Grow in Powys website where the Armed Forces community material is located.

Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf

- Guaranteed interview scheme launched within RCT. Applies to Service leavers, Veterans and Reservists who meet the required essential criteria for any vacancy set out in any council employment pack. Continued training for all new starters.
- Veteran advice service data captured across customer relationship management system, from 1 January 2019 to 1 March 2022 the service has received 970 referrals. Wide range of issues including social care (24%), benefits (20%) and housing (12%).
- Three virtual veteran groups established providing peer support and camaraderie to local veterans. Opportunity to link with support providers when required.
- Secured £18,900 Covenant trust funding for Veterans connected project providing tablets and digital support to tackle isolation. The tablets are available for Veterans to loan free of charge from Rhondda Cynon Taf and

Vale of Glamorgan councils. Early indications from online/virtual Veteran coffee morning have shown a positive impact in reducing social isolation.

Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan

- Over 80 members of staff at Cardiff council were trained by the Veteran Mentor during October 2021 to March 2022. In the Vale of Glamorgan 70 staff have been trained, helping increase knowledge and awareness of support services available.
- Staff training, e-learning module on Armed Forces Covenant is mandatory for all new staff and refresher training every 3 years, total completed since mandatory is 2870 staff.
- Helping to organise the Queen's Dragoon Guards Parade in July 2022, meetings and arrangements for location, parade route, refreshments and invitation of dignitaries. Supported Falklands 40 bike ride in June 2022 which began in Cardiff.
- Forces fitness events were arranged for Service Children at Romilly park Barry and Cardiff for month of military child in April.
- Successfully secured land adjacent to Barry Veteran Group hub. Five year lease agreed to allow the use for growing vegetables and plants and having a shed and benches. The project will allow veterans to give back to the community.

Gwent: Caerphilly, Newport, Monmouthshire, Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent

- New Veterans hubs have been established in Caerphilly and Abergavenny. The groups provide peer support and allow specialist providers to support those veterans who require in areas such as benefits and housing applications. Motivational Preparation College for Training (MPCT) learners

have also attended to develop intergenerational work.

- Increased social media engagement: Twitter accounts include: Wales Covenant (234 followers), Gwent AFC (859 Followers), hubCaerphilly (124 Followers), Monmouthshire VetHub (21 followers) new twitter site for launch March 7.
- Awarded £19,400 for Mental Health Courses for South East Wales. MHFA and 'Your Mental Wellbeing Toolkit' has been well received and a total of 56 participants have received training. Bespoke sessions for the Prison and Reservists has been arranged. A minimum of 128 personnel will receive training by the end of the funding.
- From September 2021 to April 2022, 242 individuals have received training including housing, education, employment, social services. Also, health boards, housing associations, DWP and charities have attended. Average rate of understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant rose from 2.37 out of 5 to 4.53 out of 5 post-training.

Appendix 2: Priority actions identified by the Armed Forces Expert Group for the term of this Welsh Government

- Develop a national plan to implement the changes required from the Armed forces Act
- Work with the Ministry of Defence to provide resettlement centre services in Wales to ensure improved transition into civilian life
- Ensure that there is ongoing review of the capacity and funding needed for Veterans NHS Wales to meet the mental health needs of veterans in a timely manner for first appointment and follow up treatment
- Ensure that injured veterans can consistently access chronic pain treatment when they need it, where they need it and in a manner that works for them, close to home and different from the service provided by the Veterans

- Trauma Network, which is intended for those with major physical disabilities
- Commit to permanently fund the supporting Service children in education Wales fund and continue investment in the SSCE Cymru Project to ensure Service children have the best possible start
 - Expand and accelerate the roll out of guaranteed interviews for Armed Forces Service leavers, Reservists and spouses who meet the minimum criteria for public sector jobs in Wales
 - Extend housing priority need to cover 5 years post leaving military service and ensure divorced or separated spouses and partners of Service personnel in Wales can access housing support on the same terms as other Armed Forces families
 - Update the 'Veterans Substance Misuse Treatment framework and deliver better support to veterans with substance abuse issues. On Remembrance we look forward to hearing about the Welsh plan.

Appendix 3: Veterans scoping exercise recommendations

The Veterans scoping exercise, which took place from September 2018 to August 2019, was a Wales-wide conversation designed to identify the gaps in services for veterans and their families. The exercise also formed the [Welsh Government contribution to the UK strategy for our Veterans](#).

Housing

- Consider updates to the Welsh Government housing guidance to ensure greater consistency and awareness of Armed Forces amongst housing staff.
- To consider amending priority need to include veterans with Service-related conditions.

- To consider amend housing guidance to provide recognition of divorced/ separated spouses.
- To encourage and promote the collection of data on veterans applying for social housing, ensuring they are identified at point of access. Requirement for local authorities and housing associations to identify.

Health

- To promote and encourage the identification of veterans within the healthcare system.
- Promote and raise awareness of veterans' issues amongst health staff.
- To ensure Veterans mental health treatment in Wales is meeting current need.
- To ensure mental health support providers, such as Veterans NHS Wales, engage with prisoners prior to release.
- To ensure Veterans experiencing substance misuse have the support required to help deal with Service experience.
- To ensure Artificial Limb Advice Centre (ALAC) prosthetists have the appropriate training to respond to new technological advances. Establish forum to consider delivery of prosthetic services for veterans.

Transition

- To promote the skills and benefits Service leavers and veterans bring to the workplace.
- To launch and promote Forces Families Jobs with Families Federations in Wales. Partners and the sector to promote this initiative to beneficiaries.
- To help ensure veterans can relate the skills gained during Service to skills required in the civilian workplace.

Education

- To raise the profile of the needs of Service children in schools in Wales, providing support where needed and improved data.
- Information and awareness.
- To raise the profile and information flow amongst local authorities and front line staff on support and services available to the Armed Forces community.

Governance

- To ensure issues and areas of good practice identified at local level are escalated for discussion at the Armed Forces Expert Group.
- The Welsh Government to explore a Cross Government Armed Forces delivery group with officials across policy areas (scoping programme board as potential vehicle).

Criminal justice

- To build on the support already in place for the identification of veterans entering the criminal justice system.
- To raise the awareness of information available on support at a local level for those leaving custody.

Finance

- To provide clear information and training on financial management and accountability prior to transition.
- Support existing work by DWP and partners to engage with the Armed Forces community and promote to veteran networks/groups.

Appendix 4: Annual report 2020 Future commitments what we aim to do over the next year

Armed Forces Covenant: annual report 2020

Health and well-being

- We will work with our LHB Champions forum to start the rollout of the GP accreditation scheme in Wales. We will review and publish our new Armed Forces Covenant, healthcare priority for Veterans guidance, subject to UK developments including the Armed Forces Bill. We will continue to take forward the recommendations of the Veterans' scoping exercise in relation to healthcare.
- We will continue our Armed Forces Prosthetics Forum, monitoring and responding to issues in relation to the health needs of limbless veterans.
- We will work with our AFLOs and partners including regional suicide and self-harm prevention coordinators to promote mental health first aid training.

Education

- We will continue to explore improvements to data collection on Service children in Wales, working with key partners such as SSCE Cymru.
- We will engage with key partners who work with Service families to monitor their experience of School admissions in Wales.
- We will support the MODLAP and SCIP alliance forums in Wales.

Housing

- We will continue to take forward the recommendations of the Veterans' Scoping exercise in relation to housing.

Benefits and finance

- We will work with the money advice pension service (MAPS), DWP and other providers to promote financial support services via a targeted campaign to the Armed Forces community.
- We will continue to provide concessionary travel for veterans and families in line with existing schemes. Support on return to civilian life.
- We will publish a Wales resettlement guide in conjunction with the Career Transition Partnership and 160th (Welsh) Brigade.
- We will provide grant funding to support local Armed Forces projects via our network of Armed Forces Liaison Officers.
- Through AFLOs, we will ensure local authorities and other public service organisations have access to training for frontline staff to increase knowledge of the Armed Forces community.

Criminal Justice

- We will bring together the AFLOs and those supporting veterans in prison to improve knowledge and awareness of support available.
- We will work with the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs), IOM Cymru and other partners to deliver the recommendations of the Veterans Scoping exercise

Employment and skills

- We will work with employment action group members to deliver a veteran employment event.
- We will continue to promote the great place to work for veterans initiative to provide veterans with employment opportunities in Welsh Government.
Family support
- We will work with the UK Government and partners to produce a UK Armed Forces Families strategy.
- We will continue to meet with the Families Federations and ensure the views of Service families in Wales are being heard.

Commemoration

- We will work with the WLGA, military, local government and third sector partners to celebrate Wales National Armed Forces day.
- We will mark the delayed 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain and the Centenary of the Royal British Legion.

Governance

- Through our established governance structures we will ensure partner organisations have the opportunity to raise issues affecting the Armed Forces community.
- We will provide Wales input into the UK Covenant annual report.
- We will work with the UK Government's Office for Veterans' affairs to continue to deliver on the UK Strategy for our Veterans.
- We will continue to work with the UK Government on new Covenant legislation, preparing for its implementation.

Appendix 5: Veterans NHS Wales metrics

Number of referrals to Veterans NHS Wales service April 2021 to

Sum of referrals	April 2021	May 2021	June 2021	July 2021	August 2021	September 2021	October 2021	November 2021	December 2021	January 2022
Aneurin Bevan	5	6	3	3	13	10	9	13	8	
Betsi Cadwaladr	8	11	7	6	10	3	11	9	8	
Cardiff and Vale	3	9	7	3	4	6	5	7	3	
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	8	8	15	12	14	14	10	7	6	
Hywel Dda	6	2	8	5	6	7	5	8	2	
Swansea bay	12	12	11	10	14	17	11	12	9	
Total	42	48	51	39	61	57	51	56	36	

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Number of veterans waiting for assessment April 2021 to March

Sum of veterans waiting for assessment	April 2021	May 2021	June 2021	July 2021	August 2021	September 2021	October 2021	November 2021	December 2021	Jan 2022
Aneurin Bevan	9	11	2	2	5	9	3	8	4	
Betsi Cadwaladr	4	4	3	4	3	4	2	8	4	
Cardiff and Vale	6	8	6	7	4	7	3	3	4	
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	12	0	3	3	5	16	15	16	10	
Hywel Dda	1	2	5	12	6	6	5	5	6	
Swansea bay	14	12	13	11	6	10	19	16	19	
Grand total	46	37	32	39	29	52	47	56	47	

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Number of veterans waiting for treatment April 2021 to March 2

Sum of veteran waiting for treatment	April 2021	May 2021	June 2021	July 2021	August 2021	September 2021	October 2021	November 2021	December 2021	January 2022
Aneurin Bevan	18	15	16	16	15	19	22	24	24	
Betsi Cadwaladr	31	28	23	17	16	18	15	11	9	
Cardiff and Vale	14	18	20	21	23	25	24	26	25	
Cwm Taf Morgannwg	19	21	19	16	19	15	18	20	18	
Hywel Dda	14	7	6	5	7	5	4	3	4	
Swansea bay	24	21	22	24	14	24	17	19	24	
Grand total	120	110	106	99	94	106	100	103	104	

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Appendix 6: Glossary of abbreviations

Abbreviations

AFC	Armed Forces Covenant
AFCFT	Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust
AFEG	Armed Forces Expert Group
AFLO	Armed Forces Liaison Officer
ALAC	Artificial Limb and Appliance Centre
CTP	Career Transition Partnership
LHB	Local Health Board
MODLAP	MOD Local Authority Partnership
MDT	Multi-Disciplinary Team
OVA	Office for Veterans Affairs
RBL	Royal British Legion
RFCA	Reserve Forces and Cadets Association
RFEA	Regular Forces Employment Association

SP	Service People
SSCE Cymru	Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru
RSLO	Regional Schools Liaison Officer
VLL	Veterans Legal Link
VNHSW	Veterans NHS Wales
VTN	Veterans Trauma Network
WLGA	Welsh Local Government Association

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