

Improving Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant

How can organisations more effectively implement the Armed Forces Covenant across the UK in support of everyone in the Armed Forces Community?

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REPORT

RAND Europe

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Finally, our thanks and gratitude go to the participants who introduced each of our sessions and to everyone who took part in the consultation for stimulating and contributing to the high level of discussion that took place. A list of all participants is provided at the end of this report.



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Report

In November 2018, Force in Mind Trust (FiMT) partnered with St George's House to deliver a consultation to discuss how the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant (thereafter, the Covenant) by organisations can be improved.

The Covenant is a major policy commitment by the UK Government towards the members of the Armed Forces Community, which includes individuals who have served or who serve in the Armed Forces and their families. With an Armed Forces Community of over 6 million – nearly 10% of the UK population – the Covenant is in place to ensure that these individuals are treated fairly and do not suffer a disadvantage as a result of their or their family member's service.

This consultation was founded on recent research commissioned by FiMT from Shared Intelligence and the National Centre for Social Research on how the delivery of organisational pledges made under the Covenant can be improved. The overall aim of this consultation was to further discuss the report findings and recommendations with a wider group of stakeholders, to better understand how the implementation of organisational pledges under the Covenant could be made more effective.

As such, the consultation posed the following question to participants:

How can organisations more effectively implement the Armed Forces Covenant across the UK in support of everyone in the Armed Forces Community?

To meet this objective, the consultation focused on exploring the following areas:

- The role of the Covenant in society
- Observations and insights from recent research
- Exploring issues and barriers to effective delivery
- Developing potential solutions

A large number of views were represented at the consultation, spanning the four constituent countries of the UK, as well as government, businesses, research, and the charity sector.

Given the wide range of views, this report is not meant to provide a comprehensive overview or a detailed roadmap on how effective implementation of the Covenant might be achieved, seeking instead to present the current understanding, landscape, and future areas of work. It is also worth noting that some of the discussions focused particularly on certain populations – such as Service leavers – or certain aspects of the Covenant – such as employment. As such, this report brings together insights under the following headings:

- Introduction
- Aim of the Covenant
- The Covenant for different organisations
- Issues and barriers to effective delivery of the Covenant
- Recommendations around potential solutions
- Insights and conclusions

As with all St George's House consultations, this report has been prepared under the Chatham House rule and aims to outline, from an independent standpoint, the main ideas and views put forward during the consultation, with the understanding that not everybody involved in the discussions may have endorsed all the proposals and viewpoints included. Phrases that are italicised, and in speech marks, are direct unattributed quotes from the consultation and have been included to provide greater context and understanding to the issue being discussed.

Introduction

The Covenant is an important policy mechanism designed to ensure that the Armed Forces Community does not suffer a disadvantage as a result of a person's or their family member's service in the Armed Forces, and as such it covers a broad spectrum of policy areas and support. Organisations who sign up to the Covenant include businesses, public sector organisations, and charitable organisations, and the nature of pledges made remains at the discretion of the organisation. As such, there are no specific pledges that different types of organisations are required to make, meaning that pledges can, for example, include employment support for Service leavers, Service spouses, reservist spouses, as well as the offer of discounts to members of the Armed Forces Community, or more generally having policies which ensure no disadvantage for the Armed Forces community when accessing services.

While the Covenant has shown its potential to ensure no disadvantage is experienced since the Armed Forces Act came into force in 2011, further improvements – particularly regarding delivery and implementation of the Covenant and the pledges – can be achieved to ensure ongoing benefit to all members of the Armed Forces Community. Participants in particular highlighted that it is important to bear in mind that we are working within a **devolved model** of delivery. Differences across the different constituent countries of the UK need to be borne in mind, and best practices from across all four nations need to be taken into account, making use of this data to improve quality of delivery.

Northern Ireland and veterans: A brief overview

Underpinned by the terms of the 1998 Peace Agreement, the devolved government in Northern Ireland (Assembly and Executive) cannot address Defence matters, including – but not restricted to – delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant. This reflects tensions across society that continue to run deep and within which the Armed Forces do not sit comfortably. The situation is further complicated by the fact that Local Authorities have no responsibilities for housing, health or education. Therefore, when they sign the Covenant, not only is there often a political (and therefore) divisive dynamic behind their so doing, but it can carry limited practical weight.

There is, of course, nothing in principle to prevent veterans or Service families gaining access to necessary support. The challenge, in the absence of a Covenant-driven devolved government level drive to underpin this, is to find a structure that will do so. Northern Ireland has now done this, by mobilising the structure and networks of Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations (RFCA) NI, already delivering a considerable amount of Ministry of Defence (MOD)-sponsored business within the above context, in order to ensure that veterans' and families' needs are not neglected. In particular, overseen by the Confederation of Service Charities (Cobseo) and with Covenant funding, RFCA NI manages a Veterans' Support Office (VSO) that not only exploits RFCA NI's wider network, but in particular mobilises the formally elected (by law) representatives to the Association from each Local Authority (irrespective of political make-up) who are now appointed as formal veterans' champions who will sponsor all veterans in their respective needs where these - for whatever reason - are not being met by either statutory bodies or the charitable sector.

This delivery mechanism circumvents politics-driven constraints. Apart from delivering services to veterans that statutory bodies and charities are not able to undertake, it seeks to improve the capacity and delivery of the Covenant in Northern Ireland by building relationships with and improving coordination between the public and charitable sectors. The VSO enables veterans in Northern Ireland to have a streamlined, well-informed, and well-connected single point of access to a network of help which includes military charities and statutory services. This network of support is enhanced by the UDR/R IRISH Aftercare Service which delivers comprehensive cap-badge specific support and also support to Wounded Injured and Sick. This dual-route system has proven to be optimal in providing support and has the following characteristics:

- **Trust:** Veterans in Northern Ireland live in their former operational environment. They are inherently suspicious, and trust in organisations and individuals is hard-won.
- **Simplicity:** A streamlined case management system is in place, which records outcomes.
- **Ease of access:** A personal, face-to-face service.
- **Longevity:** Both RFCA and the Aftercare Service are well-established, longstanding organisations.

The provision of services to veterans by the statutory services differs in NI in that care will not be veteran-specific. This is primarily because veterans do not identify as such in Northern Ireland for security reasons. Thus, for example, veterans find themselves being treated within a Health and Social Care system that sees some of the highest suicide and self-harm rates in the UK, but one that is impacted by the social, political and economic legacies of conflict and a historically lower per capita spend than England, resulting in very long waiting lists.

The unwillingness to identify as a veteran also results in a lack of knowledge as to who the veterans are, where they are located, and what their needs may be and this is one of the greatest concerns in relation to former Service personnel in Northern Ireland, although progress is being made.

The delivery of care in a discrete bottom-up manner is created specifically to fit the Northern Irish context. Whilst some may push for a more overt demonstration of the Covenant in action, this risks the bespoke system that is in place and currently delivering.

Aim of the Covenant

Solutions and improvements cannot be derived without first understanding what the Covenant wishes to achieve across UK society. Participants were asked how they wished the general public to understand the Covenant, in order to frame their conversations.

Participants shared their impressions that the Armed Forces appears to be a *'declining brand'*, with **society losing touch with the Armed Forces**. As a consequence, this leads to a lack of awareness of both the Armed Forces, and the Covenant and its role in society. Several factors conspire to achieve low civilian awareness and understanding. These include the end of mandatory national service, and a reduced media profile of Armed Forces deployments, meaning civilians have less of an understanding now than before of what service in the Armed Forces involves. In addition, this lack of understanding by civilians can lead Armed Forces personnel to feel undervalued and underappreciated.

Beyond awareness of the Covenant by the general public, participants also discussed **awareness-raising within organisations and businesses of what the Covenant is, and what it is trying to achieve**.

Participants highlighted issues from the organisations' perspective, and how the Covenant could be perceived as a system which advantages one group over another, which could go against internal policies. Discussions mentioned the importance of better awareness-raising about what the Covenant is seeking to achieve: not providing additional advantage, but rather seeking to reduce existing disadvantages for members of the Armed Forces Community.

Participants also noted that the Covenant appears to be primarily understood by businesses through an **employment lens**, which may be as a result of the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS), which recognises signatory organisations that demonstrate and advocate support to defence and the Armed Forces Community. It was mentioned that the scope of the recognition of organisations through the ERS could be widened in this respect.

Participants also discussed the **changing needs of the Armed Forces** in the next five to ten years, and how these will impact effective delivery and implementation of the Covenant. Several aspects were mentioned, including the shifting demographics of Service leavers: at the moment, the majority of the Service leavers are fully retired, but that will not be the case in the future, where more and more Service leavers will fall within the working age bracket. The increased use of technology was also mentioned, which may change the skillset requirements for some military personnel when they move into civilian employment. Participants also pointed out that change within the MOD, such as on employment or housing policies, will also change how people behave and relate to the Covenant.

Participants also mentioned how the Covenant may play a role in **reengaging society more positively with the Armed Forces**, and help emphasise the important role played by members of the Armed Forces Community. In that respect, increased knowledge of the Covenant could also help underpin a new narrative around the Armed Forces. Some participants pointed out that the pace of change is still relatively slow, and it may take time for change to occur, however others noted that the Covenant should seek to be adaptive, taking into account issues playing out in civil society more broadly.

There is also the need to consider the **significant and increasing role civilians play in comprehensive defence and security and national resilience planning**, and that national defence increasingly does not purely fall within the governmental domain. Participants mentioned the increase of civilians taking part in the defence effort, and the close involvement of the defence industry and sub-contracted staff as part of defence delivery. Questions were raised as to whether the scope of the Covenant should be expanded to include these civilians taking part in the defence effort. However, concerns were also raised about the Covenant becoming too much of a 'catch-all' and losing sight of what is at the heart of the Covenant: the ability to address the needs of the Armed Forces Community and to ensure fairness and no disadvantage. Participants agreed that there is a need to better define the current narrative on the Armed Forces Community, before further expansion of the Covenant can begin.

When discussing effective implementation of the Covenant, participants queried **what is meant by effective**, and in particular *'what does effective look like?'* Discussions noted that there is a need to define performance measures more clearly and for an evidence base to be created before further information is communicated to the public on the Covenant. However, participants agreed that there are different understandings around what is meant by effective, depending on whether it is assessed at the strategic or at the implementation level.

According to some participants, the government **should provide organisations and businesses a better sense of what they can gain from signing up to the Covenant**. This includes saving on recruitment costs, or making the most of the skillset and extensive training received by Service leavers while in the Armed Forces. There were debates about the tension which exists in terms of what may be positive for business, but which may not be in line with what the Covenant stands for, but how this is nonetheless a narrative that businesses will wish to respond to. The use of 'success stories' and harnessing the Gold Award recipients of the Employer Recognition Scheme to provide mentoring to other organisations and sharing their stories of positive experiences could also help drive further pledges.

Overall, this discussion showed the numerous facets to consider when discussing the Covenant: not only the importance of having a clear narrative that can be adapted for different audiences, but how to ensure better awareness-raising, taking into account the future context, and better defining 'effectiveness'. Finally, participants noted that the Covenant has been active for seven years, and part of the current focus should be to look at the successes that have been brought about, and distil lessons and best practices from the achievements over this period.

The Covenant for different organisations

Having discussed the Covenant and the broader understanding associated with it, the discussion moved to looking at the Covenant in practice around three types of businesses and organisations: large employer organisations, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), and health, education, housing, and finance organisations.

Large employer organisations

What came out of the discussions regarding large employer organisations is the **relative lack of knowledge around the Covenant**. This included a lack of knowledge on the different schemes available under the Covenant. Some participants suggested this could be due to the complexity of the process around taking part in the Covenant, such as knowing how to implement pledges, and even whether or not these organisations have signed up to the Covenant. Other participants raised the point from another angle, in that knowledge as to whether an organisation has signed up to the Covenant is also difficult to obtain for members of the Armed Forces Community.

Participants raised queries regarding the drivers of the Covenant in large employer organisations and of the Gold Award recipients more generally. They mentioned the usefulness of identifying the type of drivers or actors that lead an organisation to sign up to the Covenant, and whether lessons could be drawn so this could be replicated more widely. Participants queried what makes an organisation move from supporting the Armed Forces in a general sense, to acting upon the Covenant, and suggested that further information should be sought on this topic.

The process of **putting the Covenant into action** was also discussed, in particular the linearity of the process: does signing come first, or can actions happen before organisations have signed? However, discussions showed that organisations do not necessarily have to be signed up to the Covenant to act in its spirit and uphold its values, with many organisations already delivering Covenant outcomes without having signed up to it.

Participants also brought up the necessity to look at **where members of the Armed Forces Community are based**, and to develop place-based strategies focusing on the geographic areas where help or support may be needed most.

SMEs

Despite their smaller size, participants pointed out that **SMEs do play a large and important role** in delivering pledges under the Covenant, as they make up the largest private employer group in the UK. As research presented during the consultation shows, the smaller the organisation, the less likely it is that they have signed the Covenant. If they have signed the Covenant, they are also less likely to have acted upon it.

Discussions pointed to the fact that the focus should be both on large employers and SMEs, with more being done to emphasise the benefits and value of the Covenant to all organisations.

However, SMEs **face a number of challenges not faced by larger organisations**, such as a bigger workforce risk from reservists being mobilised, or loss of service spouses at short notice. Participants highlighted the need to better understand the types of risks facing SMEs, particularly compared to larger organisations. In particular for SMEs, more education is needed regarding the skills held by members of the Armed Forces Community, and what they can bring to an SME.

As with large employer organisations, putting the Covenant into action was discussed by participants, in particular the necessity to provide **clearer next steps for organisations** once they have signed the Covenant. In order to achieve this, participants suggested better defining the support members of the Armed Forces Community want businesses to provide – in other words, what would be most helpful to them and their situation? This in turn would enable SMEs to better tailor support and act upon the Covenant.

Health, education, housing, and finance organisations

As with large employer organisations, participants noted the generalised **lack of awareness of the Covenant** among health, education, housing, and finance organisations. It was also pointed out that while there may be awareness of the Covenant at the more senior levels and signatories, staff on the ground may not be aware of the Covenant or of the pledges to be upheld.

Participants also noted that a **holistic approach** for serving personnel, ex-Service personnel and their families is necessary in these organisations, and that these organisations need to be reminded or be made aware that solutions should not just be made for the Service leaver or active personnel, but for their family as well. In this specific break-out group, participants also noted that there are geographic variations in terms of knowledge of the Covenant and in terms of application of its principles.

However, participants also raised a point regarding *'placing of Service leavers on a pedestal and creating an unintended reaction from society,'* which might be negative, should the Covenant be perceived as an unfair advantage compared to the civilian population.

Overall, participants mentioned that perhaps tailoring the Covenant by organisation type might be effective, in order to adapt and focus resources and courses of action to different circumstances. A number of participants also raised the act of signing the Covenant, and whether too much emphasis was placed upon this, rather than actions taken by organisations, whether or not they have signed the Covenant.

Issues and barriers to effective delivery of the Covenant

Participants raised a number of issues and barriers to effective delivery of the Covenant, many of which were mentioned repeatedly over the course of the consultation.

Firstly, **awareness-raising and understanding of the Covenant** – both in terms of what the Covenant is and what it is trying to achieve – was raised by participants, in particular relating to the public perception of the Armed Forces. Some participants said that to fully grasp the Covenant, the public needs to understand the Armed Forces better, the roles they have, and the benefits they bring.

During the discussions, it was noted by participants that employers – and organisations more generally – are not necessarily knowledgeable on the Armed Forces and the concerns and issues of members of the Armed Forces Community. According to participants, better public understanding of the Armed Forces and the value which Service leavers provide could help organisations understand the importance of providing support to the Armed Forces, and may incentivise pledges to the Covenant.

In addition to public awareness, participants also discussed **awareness of the Covenant within the Armed Forces** – while over half of the people surveyed in a recent FiMT- funded report, ‘Benefit not Burden’, reported being aware of the Covenant, a larger proportion appear to know of the schemes operating under the Covenant, such as Forces Help To Buy. This led to a debate on the term ‘covenant’ and its associated benefits, and the gulf in knowledge between both. The term ‘covenant’ was raised as potentially being part of the awareness issue, as it may not mean anything to people. Participants suggested that the use of a bridging term could be beneficial.

Certain participants also mentioned that **misunderstandings around the scope of the Covenant**, which should not become too narrow – in other words only focus on employers and the veteran community – and instead maintain in mind the purpose of the Covenant when delivering support. The idea of ‘*simplified marketing*’ was brought forward, which would be specific about the different components of the Covenant. Some participants mentioned matching the messaging to the audience, and the need to tailor content.

Participants stated that the interface of the Covenant should be **simple and accessible**. It was noted though that a simple interface does not necessarily mean a simple system – particularly as the Covenant requires ‘*a complex network of people that need to come together to deliver the Covenant.*’

Overall, the delivery mechanism of the Covenant was considered sub-optimal by some participants. In order to be more efficient, it was suggested a move towards greater use of grass-roots networks or similar, rather than expecting a single point of dissemination to be effective. This was tied to the perceived governmental nature of the Covenant. On the one hand, participants mentioned the cross-governmental approach which requires internal governmental awareness and a better internal network involving all the organs of the state. On the other hand, the government being behind the Covenant may lead it to being seen as an overtly political mechanism rather than a policy which is delivered through a networked approach of all actors cooperating and pledging to support its outcomes.

The **measurement of success and effectiveness of the Covenant** was also raised as an issue by participants. The lack of indicators for success in particular were highlighted, with participants querying whether success should be defined by metrics such as number of signatories, or by actions undertaken. It was mentioned that Defence Relationship Management has started creating a list of measures for the key outcomes they are seeking to achieve regarding employment. However, some participants stated that performance measures should extend beyond employment and look at wider outcomes and benefits of the Covenant. Other participants countered that data availability led to a particular focus on employment, as similar data was not available on other topics, such as housing, due to a lack of network with local service providers. Other concerns were raised about this becoming a box-ticking exercise, particularly if the areas measured and marked as ‘achieved’ were not revisited at a later date to ensure continued good practice.

Participants also discussed whether the **current and future governmental resources are sufficient**, and whether they extend over the range of areas covered by the Covenant. There were suggestions to look into putting in place a new funding mechanism, to ensure sufficient resources to deliver the Covenant effectively.

Recommendations around potential solutions

Based on the discussions around barriers and issues to effective delivery of the Covenant, solutions were discussed around four main thematic groups: communications about the Covenant internally to the Armed Forces Community, communications with the wider public and organisations, gathering of data and metrics, and developing cross-government resources to deliver change.

Internal communications

Participants discussed communication of the Covenant – its existence and the benefits it could offer individuals – within the Armed Forces Community. Points were raised regarding the need to create a more **compelling narrative** around the Covenant and ensuring the correct message is communicated. Participants have also emphasised the need for **simple messaging**, which resonates with the Armed Forces Community. Better information or explanation around the terms used was highlighted as being potentially helpful. For example, participants mentioned that there may not be a clear understanding around what terms, such as ‘approved employer’, mean.

This could include **tailored messaging** for different groups, while maintaining the same underlying meaning. Communications could focus on the practical aspects and benefits of the Covenant – in other words, how it can help with day-to-day activities. Internal communications could also be used as an **expectation management tool**, to ensure realistic expectations by the Armed Forces Community of the Covenant.

Some participants suggested that the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) could help play a role in internal communications regarding the Covenant. However, others raised the point that the CTP revolves around future employment, but does not address the other areas, such as housing and finance, which are also covered by the Covenant. Furthermore, the CTP only looks after Service leavers for two years after they leave, whereas problems can appear further in the future as well. Participants noted that in those cases, there is no similar mechanism to support Service leavers.

The use of **professional communications support** was recommended, such as the use of specialists in behaviour change communications. It was also noted that delivery of the message needs to be from someone trusted by the members of the Armed Forces Community. As such a peer, rather than a government official, is likely to have greater success in delivery. It was also suggested that there might be a role here for the families’ federations of the military charities. However, the involvement of such federations may be challenging, as not all charities have access to the serving personnel along with the family.

However, to really affect change, participants mentioned the need for internal **senior endorsement and ownership of the Covenant** within the Armed Forces, to help ensure greater awareness and a culture change.

External communications

Communication and messaging of the Covenant to the general public and organisations was a recurring theme of the consultation’s discussions. Participants suggested using a **place-based approach**, which is person-centred, and would make the Covenant more about social duty. This would help explain – in a positive way – what the Armed Forces do, and why pledges are made. Participants mentioned, for example, the portrayal of the Armed Forces as a conduit to increased national resilience and security, rather than a narrative of how they ‘*defeat foes.*’ This more positive and role-enhancing narrative would

also be an easier space for businesses and organisations to align themselves to with regard to the values and outcomes Covenant, according to participants.

Increasing national education on the Armed Forces and the sacrifices made by members of the Armed Forces Community through an **Armed Forces Champion** could be a key element in helping raise this awareness and ensure a better societal understanding. Furthermore, some participants mentioned that mobilising voices from the Armed Forces Community could also help share stories and prompt actions to be taken.

Participants noted that to be successful, communication should be *'military-friendly'*, in other words, sympathetic to the exceptional circumstances imposed on Service and ex-Service personnel and their families. It was also mentioned that having an **information or support package for signatories**, which could include an online knowledge base and repository of positive stories, would be beneficial.

Participants also highlighted that networks already exist in places, such as between Gold Award recipients, and that these should be used as **force multipliers**, in order to connect the different parties and formalise these networks. This may require a dedicated position who would work on pulling the various networks and parties together.

Gathering of data and metrics

The gathering of robust data is essential in order to evaluate the successful delivery of the Covenant. Some metrics are already gathered, but the gathering of this data requires a specific role to be maintained. Participants discussed the necessity of using a structured method such as **Theory of Change** to ensure a robust approach to evaluating the effectiveness of the Covenant. A Theory of Change would help define the outcome desired, and as a result the metrics and indicators necessary to monitor the change. This would also help ensure a unified vision and streamlined metrics across various stakeholders.

The data gathering process was also raised as an issue which needs to be addressed: data should first be gathered regarding employment levels, but then should be drilled down to see whether members of the Armed Forces Community are in meaningful employment which matches their skill level, as there is a concern that Service leavers take employment that is below their skill-levels and where they might not feel meaningfully employed. Participants discussed implementing a **red-amber-green (RAG) rated scorecard** to visualise progress made, and where further progress is required.

Cross-government resources to deliver change

Participants discussing resourcing solutions found close linkages between their thoughts and the recently published Veteran's Strategy¹. Overall, the approach suggested by participants combines top-level policymaking with low-level implementation.

Participants noted that there is a focus on MOD to lead the Covenant, but in reality this is a **pan-government department issue** and requires a joined-up approach. Participants pointed out that the Covenant touches multiple areas outside of defence: housing, health and welfare, financial aspects and money management, education and skills development, employment and employer engagement. As such, resources from these different government departments should be pooled to enhance the effective delivery of the Covenant by organisations. Some participants suggested asking for a minor donation from all organisations towards the Covenant, which could in turn create a multi-million pound investment that could be used to further change.

It was also suggested that a **mapping of what constitutes benefits** or added-value for employers with regard the Covenant could be undertaken, to better understand how to engage businesses with the Covenant.

¹ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-for-our-veterans>

Increased use of data and knowledge held locally could help direct government resources more effectively. Participants noted that different government departments are starting to increase their data sharing on the topic, such as with Local Authorities and military charities, and that this is already a positive step forward, such as to help map the different levels of need across the UK, and making use of Local Government data and knowledge. Leveraging the networks created through the ERS could also be an effective use of resources. Collaborations could be widened as well, to include charities, business networks, and physical liaison officers.

Participants also mentioned the Veteran's Gateway, as one of the tools which touches upon all sectors relating to the Covenant, and not just employment.

Insights and conclusions

Over the course of the consultation, a number of different aspects of the Covenant were discussed. These included the following overarching conclusions:

- **Awareness and understanding:** awareness-raising of the Covenant is a key aspect which needs to be prioritised, within the Armed Forces Community, signatory and non-signatory organisations, but also within the general public at large. On the one hand, increasing the profile and understanding of the Covenant could ensure that members of the Armed Forces Community are aware of the support available to them, and on the other hand, this could also help foster a better understanding on the civilian side of the Armed Forces Community.
- **Communications:** related to the point above, the need to tailor messaging to make the Covenant more relevant to the different audiences – whether this be internal to the Armed Forces Community, or to organisations – could help the different communities increase not only their awareness but also their understanding of the Covenant.
- **Support:** the provision of support to businesses is twofold. On the one hand, there is the provision of additional support for signatory organisations by the MOD as a way of helping organisations and businesses take action after signing the Covenant, and helping to improve service provision. On the other hand, there is also the provision of support to non-signatories, such as guidance around the complementarity of the Covenant with internal organisational policies.
- **Networks:** making use of existing networks and force multipliers can help optimise resourcing and obtain more signatories. This could be achieved through Gold Award recipients of the ERS, who could reach out to more organisations about signing the Covenant, or answer questions and provide guidance to newly joined organisations. Not only could this increase signatory numbers, but also the number of organisations actively taking part in the spirit of the Covenant.
- **Data and metrics:** the gathering of data and metrics across all aspects of the Covenant is also essential to understanding the effectiveness of delivery, and to providing better clarity on areas requiring further effort or improvement. Closer collaboration with, and data-gathering from, organisations and institutions working directly with the Armed Forces Community, along with a structured method of evaluation such as a Theory of Change are two examples of ways which could help achieve this aim.

Participants

Name	Organisation and Role
Ms Dawn Austwick	Chief Executive, Big lottery Fund
Miss Charlotte Boulton	Senior Consultant, Shared Intelligence
Mrs Liz Brown	Covenant Programme Manager (Northern Ireland), Cobseo
Mr Stephen Crookbain	Director, DRM (MOD)
Mr Alun Davies	Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, Welsh Government
Mr Gary Dimmock	Outreach & Business Solutions Centres Director, University of Wolverhampton
Mr Martin Docherty-Hughes	SNP MP for West Dunbartonshire, and member of the Defence Select Committee.
Mr David Duffy	Contract Director, Right Management – Career Transition Partnership
Mr Peter Evans	Armed Forces Covenant Manager, Welsh Government
Mrs Teresa Frith	Senior Apprenticeships and Skills Policy Manager, Association of Colleges
Ms Sarah Grand-Clément	Analyst(Rapporteur), RAND Europe
Mr James Greenrod	Armed Forces Covenant Joint Team Leader, Ministry of Defence
Councillor Doreen Huddart	Councillor, Local Government Association
Miss Shelley Hughes	Personal Assistant to Alun Davies
Ms Ren Kapur MBE	Founder and CEO, X-Forces Enterprise
Miss Jessica Lacey	Armed Forces Project Officer, Welsh Government
Air Vice-Marshal Ray Lock	Chief Executive, Forces in Mind Trust
Professor John Louth	Director, Defence, Industries and Society, Royal United Services Institute
Mr Thomas McBarnet	Director of Programmes, Forces in Mind Trust
Ms Carol Monaghan	MP for Glasgow North West and SNP Spokesperson for Armed Forces & Veterans
Mr Brian Parry	Partner, Brian Parry Associates LLP
Mr Hans Pung	Chairman, Forces in Mind Trust
Mr Nick Roberts	President, Atkins
Ms Catherine Sermon	Interim People Campaigns Director, Business in the Community

Mr Matthew Seward	Assistant Director (Public Affairs and Public Policy), The Royal British Legion
Miss Nicola Smith	Senior Programme Officer, NHS Employers
Colonel David Steele	Military Knight, Windsor Castle
Miss Isabel Summers	Evaluation Officer, Forces in Mind Trust
Mr Phil Swann	Executive Chair, Shared Intelligence
Mr Richard Tyrie	Founder / CEO, GoodPeople Business Ltd
Mrs Sarah Walker	SUH Project Manager and Armed Forces Champion, Black Country Chamber of Commerce
Colonel Charlie Wallace	Scottish Veterans Commissioner
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