

Progress on support for veterans as country marks Armed Forces Week

- More than a fifth of Veterans Strategy Action Plan commitments already delivered as the nation celebrates the start of Armed Forces Week
- Government confirms all departments now taking part in guaranteed interview scheme for ex-military, with 800 veterans already offered employment through the programme
- More than £1 million in new funding for new digital service for veterans to verify their status online and access services

All central government departments are now guaranteeing veterans progression to the next stage of recruitment, known as the Great Place to Work scheme.

The news comes as the country marks the start of Armed Forces Week, which celebrates the service of military personnel, their families and veterans.

New figures released today show that 800 veterans have already been offered employment through the scheme. The government is taking steps to maximise veteran employability, which we know is the key to positive life outcomes. A successful recruitment round for the new Advance into Justice scheme, which gets veterans into prison officer roles, has also recently closed.

Meanwhile, more than £1 million in new money is being invested into a new digital service for veterans, which will enable them to quickly and easily verify their veteran status online.

The project, which is due to be available for all veterans in 2023, will make it easier and quicker to demonstrate their military service in order to access a range of government and charity services, and reduce waiting times and the likelihood of fraud.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Steve Barclay said:

Our digital ID plans will help to deliver real change to the lives of our veterans, giving us the capability to more quickly identify those that need targeted support so we can then fast-track them through the system and get them what they need.

We are also putting a real focus on helping our veterans into work, recognising the brilliant skills they have and identifying great employment opportunities in cyber security, the prison service and logistics.

I'm determined to make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran and that means harnessing the power of government to drive change and working alongside the charity sector too to make a difference.

This digital verification is also a key step towards delivering Phase 2 of the Veterans ID card roll out. The ID card, which from December 2018 has already automatically been given to any personnel who leave the military, helps veterans access specialist support and services and maintain a tangible link to their career in the forces.

Progress has been made improving healthcare provision for veterans. Op COURAGE, the bespoke mental health pathway for veterans in the NHS in England, has launched backed by over £17 million a year investment, plus an additional £2.7 million over the next three years. The service will bring three bespoke veterans' mental health services into one long-term integrated service from April 2023.

Waiting times for veterans reduced for an assessment via Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS), one of the three services included in Op COURAGE, has dropped from 6 weeks in 2018/19 to 2 weeks in 2021/22, meeting the 14 days target.

The number of 'Veteran-Friendly' GP surgeries has also increased since the publication of the Action Plan, with a 17% increase from 1,200 to over 1,400.

In January, the Government launched the Veterans Strategy Action [Plan](#) of more than 60 commitments backed by an extra £70 million. Great progress is being made with over a fifth of commitments already completed after just six months.

The Government is also making sure veterans receive a high standard of support, across the whole UK. The appointment of a new Veterans Commissioner for Wales, Colonel James Phillips, announced in March to advise on issues affecting Welsh veterans, and the 2021 Census in England and Wales and this year's Scottish census including veteran status for the first time, will help give unprecedented insight into the veteran community.

A number of other events will also take place throughout the week, to mark Armed Forces Week, culminating on Saturday, where Armed Forces Day will be hosted in Scarborough.

The 'Great Place to Work for Veterans scheme' makes it easier for veterans to join the Civil Service. When veterans opt into the scheme and meet the minimum criteria, they progress automatically to the next stage for most roles – whether that's an interview or an online test.

Alongside the Strategy, over the last year we have delivered significant legislation ensuring veterans, serving and families are protected and supported in law:

- Overseas Operations Act 2021 – tackling vexatious claims and ending the

cycle of re-investigations against our Armed Forces

- Armed Forces Act 2021 – giving statutory teeth to the Armed Forces Covenant, with a new duty to have due regard to its principles
- Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill – now introduced, to give Op BANNER veterans closure, with honour and finality