

BuildForce: shaping military skills for a career in construction

For 10 years [BuildForce](#) has been championing the armed forces community within the construction industry. Through a bespoke programme, backed by industry leaders, BuildForce matches skilled service leavers and veterans with meaningful careers in construction and the built environment.

A Community Interest Company, BuildForce was established in 2011 as a collaborative industry led programme. The hugely successful pilot programme involved six major construction organisations (Carillion, Crossrail, Ernst & Young, Lendlease, Morgan Sindall and Wilson James) and was funded by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). 10 years on, with the weight of the construction industry behind them, they are the industry's largest nationwide military programme.

Achieving their Silver MOD Employer recognition Scheme award in 2020, BuildForce are proud advocates of the Armed Forces Community and regularly encourage industry employers to sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

BuildForce offers a wraparound service with industry specialists who map out a unique journey to support each service leaver and veteran in to their chosen career. Support includes training, mentoring, site visits and work placements, all preparing the prospective candidates for interviews and securing roles. The service is underpinned with mental health support, on-hand to offer guidance and advice as the service leavers make their transition.

Caroline Logan, BuildForce Programme Director said:

BuildForce is simply matching military skills to construction demands. The broad spectrum of roles that the industry is seeking compliments the skillset the military train for. We talk about the parallel lines of a military posting and a construction site; working outside in arduous conditions which are often dangerous, being part of a team, the camaraderie, following orders, attention to detail; these are just a few of the transferable skills the military have in abundance.

A job in construction isn't just about being on the tools (hard hats & building sites), it is accessible to all ranks and skill sets, and offers real potential for career progression. Having a framework that engages with and understands the individual's needs and capabilities is what underpins the successful achievements of BuildForce to this day.

Richard Castell, Amey Operational Relationship Manager and BuildForce Champion has experienced first-hand the value BuildForce bring to the

industry.

Richard said:

Our sector needs talented motivated and reliable staff and those with a service background invariably fit the bill. Buildforce takes a professional, systematic approach to supporting veterans, service leavers, service spouses and reservists. In the 14 months since our initial involvement we now have a network of 26 mentors across the business and a team of senior recruiters who now understand the broader transferable skills of service personnel and can advise on opportunities within the business.

Army veteran David Duncan began his journey with BuildForce in January 2020. Faced with the challenges of a career transition during COVID-19, BuildForce guided and equipped David with the tools to achieve successful employment within his chosen industry.

David Duncan (Army veteran, 2nd Battalion the Mercian Regiment) served two tours of Afghanistan during his career. During his second deployment, David was shot in the face which eventually lead to medical discharge in September 2012. After leaving the military he went on to travel the world and upon his return to the UK worked in the travel industry.

Whilst working full time in the travel industry and raising a young family, David also completed a number of Safety qualifications with the view of pursuing a career in the Health and Safety industry. In January 2020, David got in touch with Buildforce to support his career aspirations and transition into the construction industry. Not long after, Covid-19 meant that David was put on furlough by his employer in the travel industry, at which point he focussed on his career development, completing numerous professional safety qualifications.

Over the course of his furlough, BuildForce secured David a work placement with Wates Group, working closely with their Health and Safety Director, who also served as David's mentor.

In a bid to gain further construction experience, BuildForce connected David with health and safety professionals in his area arranging an additional work placement, where David could better understand the role of a health and safety manager on site.

Through the combination of work placements, mentoring, David's determination and the BuildForce support network, David is now a health, safety and environmental advisor with major homebuilder, Vistry Group. Vistry Group has since highlighted David's adaptability, intuitiveness, and his ability to be comfortable in the uncomfortable, all military transferable skills.

Reflecting on the past 10 years, BuildForce Chief Executive Angela Forbes said:

We set out to formally connect our Service personnel with the construction industry. We've now established entry routes into industry with greater transparency on careers available. David is a great example of this. We want to serve those who have served our country and will continue to champion the employment of our service leavers and veterans throughout all areas of the construction industry.

Reflecting on his career transition David said:

I can say with absolute confidence that without the support, both in person and virtually from Buildforce, I would not have been able to gain employment in the construction industry as a Health and Safety Professional.

More information

COP26 President Designate Alok Sharma and Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi meeting

Press release

Alok Sharma and Narendra Modi met today during the COP26 President's visit to India.



COP26 President Designate Alok Sharma and Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi met today in Delhi to discuss their countries' shared commitment to climate action in the lead up to the COP26 summit in Glasgow this year.

Mr Sharma congratulated PM Modi on his ambition to deliver a significant

increase in renewable energy, set out at the Climate Ambition Summit the UK co-hosted in December 2020, and for his personal leadership on tackling climate change.

Mr Sharma outlined the UK's net zero commitment and said that, as hosts of COP26, the UK had sent a clear message to the world in setting an ambitious new Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

They agreed that progress on making sure the most vulnerable countries were able to adapt to the impacts of climate change was critical and that to do this governments must meet their climate finance commitments.

Mr Sharma and PM Modi also discussed the importance of governments, businesses and individuals working to tackle climate change and said they looked forward to continuing their close work ahead of COP26.

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Innovations to be tested on pioneering autonomous submarine

Tech start-ups, innovators and academics are being offered the chance to showcase and test their novel sensor and payload technology on the Royal Navy's first extra large autonomous test submarine.

The project offers a unique opportunity to undertake at-sea testing and trials of industry and academia innovative prototype technology on the pioneering Extra Large Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle (XLUUV) developed by MSubs Ltd through the first stage of the [Developing the Royal Navy's Autonomous Underwater Capability](#) programme with the [Defence and Security Accelerator \(DASA\)](#) and the [Defence Science and Technology Laboratory \(Dstl\)](#).

MOD will supply and support the XLUUV to allow for technology to be fitted and integrated, trials to be planned and carried out, and equipment removal. In addition, up to £20k will be made available to innovators who are selected for this opportunity to cover travel and subsistence costs.

The XLUUV will be made available to test on-board systems, sensors and payloads required to support a range of scenarios to help develop the Royal Navy's understanding of the utility and operational boundaries of uncrewed underwater vehicle systems.

Full scope and examples of sensor and enabling capabilities we are interested in can be found in the [competition document](#).

The testing is not intended at this point to lead to a procurement of sensors

or payloads.

The main aim of this activity is to help the Royal Navy shape future requirements and design future capabilities and concepts of operation whilst providing innovators in industry and academia the opportunity to develop and test technology aligned to this future capability.

We are seeking novel solutions which might be prototypes ([above Technical Readiness Level \(TRL\) 4](#)) or commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) products adapted for novel use, which can be integrated with the XLUUV.

Those wishing to take part need to submit an initial one-page pitch via the DASA online [submission service](#) by midday on 8 March.

A panel of experts from the Royal Navy, Dstl and MSubs will review the pitches. Organisations will then be invited to submit a full proposal before 13 April 2021 at midday (BST).

A series of pre-bookable one-to-one sessions with the project team are available on March 2 and March 16.

Register here for [2 March 2021 \(closing date Friday 26 Feb at 6pm\)](#).

Register here for [16 March 2021 \(closing date Friday 12 March at 6pm\)](#)

MSubs Ltd, a Plymouth-based small and medium sized business, was previously [awarded £1m to develop the test submarine](#).

[**UK Foreign Secretary condemns politically motivated charges against Aung San Suu Kyi**](#)

Press release

The UK has condemned the charges against Aung San Suu Kyi in a court hearing in Myanmar today and calls for her immediate release.



Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

The charges against Aung San Suu Kyi are politically motivated, and the latest example of the Myanmar military undermining democratically elected politicians. Aung San Suu Kyi and all other elected politicians arbitrarily held must be released immediately.

The UK and likeminded nations will not ignore these violations. We will ensure those responsible are held to account.

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[New technology to help identify those at high risk from COVID-19](#)

- New predictive risk model to help clinicians identify adults with multiple risk factors that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19
- Over 800,000 adults will now be prioritised to receive a vaccine as part of the current vaccination cohorts
- Research is developed by subgroup of NERVTAG, led by the University of Oxford and funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)

New technology has been introduced in England to help clinicians identify, for the first time, a new group of people who may be at high risk from COVID-19. Over 800,000 adults will now be prioritised to receive a vaccine as part of the current vaccination cohorts.

The technology analyses a combination of risk factors based on medical records, to assess whether somebody may be more vulnerable than was previously understood, helping clinicians provide vaccination more quickly to them and ensuring patients can benefit from additional advice and support.

This assessment is made possible today for the first time thanks to new

technology and emerging evidence about the impact of COVID-19 on different groups and who could be most vulnerable – which means further steps can be taken to protect those most at risk.

The research, commissioned by England's Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty and funded by the National Institute of Health Research, found there are several health and personal factors, such as age, ethnicity and body mass index (BMI), as well as certain medical conditions and treatments, which, when combined, could mean someone is at a higher risk from COVID-19.

The University of Oxford turned their research into a risk-prediction model called QCovid®, which has been independently validated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and is thought to be the only COVID-19 risk prediction model in the world to meet the highest standards of evidence and assurance.

NHS Digital used the University of Oxford's model to develop a population risk assessment. The risk assessment uses the model to predict on a population basis whether adults with a combination of risk factors may be at more serious risk from COVID-19, enabling them to be flagged to clinicians for priority access to vaccination, alongside appropriate advice and support. These individuals will be added to the [Shielded Patient List](#) on a precautionary basis and to enable rapid vaccination.

The research to develop and validate the model is published in the British Medical Journal along with the underlying model for transparency. Additional code underpinning the QCovid® model will be made available openly by the University of Oxford within a month. As our scientific understanding of the virus develops, we can update the model.

Up to 1.7 million patients have been identified. Those within this group who are over 70 will have already been invited for vaccination and 820,000 adults between 19 and 69 years will now be prioritised for a vaccination.

The patients identified through the risk assessment will be sent a letter from NHS England in the coming days explaining that their risk factors may help identify them as high clinical risk and that they are included within the support and advice for the clinically extremely vulnerable. They will be invited to receive a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible if they have not already had the jab, and will be given advice on precautionary measures, including shielding where this is current advice. Their GPs are also being notified.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England Dr Jenny Harries said:

For the first time, we are able to go even further in protecting the most vulnerable in our communities.

This new model is a tribute to our health and technology researchers. The model's data-driven approach to medical risk assessment will help the NHS identify further individuals who may be at high risk from COVID-19 due to a combination of personal and

health factors.

This action ensures those most vulnerable to COVID-19 can benefit from both the protection that vaccines provide, and from enhanced advice, including shielding and support, if they choose it.

Sarah Wilkinson, Chief Executive of NHS Digital said:

I'm very pleased that NHS Digital has been able to deliver the platform to allow the QCovid® model to be used to identify individuals vulnerable to COVID-19 as a result of combinations of clinical risk factors and personal characteristics.

This extends the work we did last year to develop the Shielded Patients List, which included individuals with one of a number of specific clinical conditions.

It is a privilege to be able to support the Chief Medical Officer and his team in their quest to deliver the most sophisticated COVID-19 risk prediction capability.

The independent validation from the ONS is considered the 'gold standard' in quality assurance. The ONS has shown that the model performs in the 'excellent' range, and accurately identifies patients at highest risk from COVID-19. This shows the model is robust and meets the highest standards of evidence.

Lead researcher Professor Julia Hippisley-Cox, a general practitioner and Professor of Clinical Epidemiology and General Practice at University of Oxford's Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, said:

The QCovid® model, which has been developed using anonymised data from more than 8 million adults, provides nuanced assessment of risk by taking into account a number of different factors that are cumulatively used to estimate risk, including ethnicity.

The research to develop and validate the model is published in the British Medical Journal along with the underlying model for transparency.

This will be updated to take account of new information as the pandemic progresses.

I'm delighted that less than a year after being funded by the NIHR, the model is now being used to help protect people at most risk from COVID-19.

A Royal College of Physicians spokesperson said:

The adoption of this risk-assessment model by the NHS will play an important role in supporting clinicians and patients with conversations about COVID-19 and enable decisions to be made with a greater understanding of personal risk.

As with all research during the pandemic, we are constantly learning and so can continue to further enhance the model as data becomes available.

We look forward to providing continued feedback and views from clinicians to support its ongoing development.

The government is also extending the current shielding guidance for all those already identified as clinically extremely vulnerable and new patients identified through the QCovid® model until 31 March. Those already on the Shielded Patient List will receive an update letter this week to inform them of the extension.

During this national lockdown, we are advising all clinically extremely vulnerable people to follow [shielding guidance](#).

As soon as an individual is flagged as potentially clinically extremely vulnerable by NHS Digital's COVID-19 population risk assessment, they will be sent a letter outlining how they have been identified, that they are being added to the [Shielded Patient List](#) as a precautionary measure, and highlighting additional guidance to support them.

We will also be issuing letters by email for those who have registered an email address with their GP practice.

For most, they will have been identified as high risk because they have a combination of underlying health conditions or are undergoing specialist treatment and they may be able to discuss this when they get their vaccination.

As a result of their addition to the high-risk group, patients will receive a letter inviting them for vaccination as soon as possible.

Patients can speak to their GP or specialist clinician if they have questions as to why they have been added to the Shielded Patient List, or if they feel they should no longer be identified as clinically extremely vulnerable. GPs and specialist clinicians will be able to make their own assessment of an individual based on their clinical knowledge and are able to add and remove individuals from the Shielded Patient List.

For now, there will be no changes to the existing list of medical conditions used to identify individuals who may be clinically extremely vulnerable to COVID-19. This list is agreed by the 4 UK Chief Medical Officers on the basis of the latest available evidence.

The research underpinning this work was published in the British Medical Journal on 20 October 2020.

The previous shielding guidance extended until 21 February. It will now be extended until 31 March.