

Benefit not Burden

How to improve the delivery of organisational pledges made under the Armed Forces Covenant



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Benefit not Burden

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FOREWORDS



Air Vice-Marshal Ray Lock CBE,
Chief Executive, Forces in Mind Trust

The United Kingdom's Armed Forces Covenant has become one of the most important tools the public, private and voluntary sectors have at their disposal. It is a means by which Government can ensure that the Armed Forces Community is not disadvantaged, and indeed it is central to the recently announced 'Veterans Strategy'. But it is also a tool that can be used by those same sectors, public, private and voluntary, in their role as enterprises, to be more effective and even to gain a competitive edge.

The research in this report has shown that there are many organisations who wish to support the Armed Forces Community, but who lack the knowledge and understanding of how to do so. Their motives are in part altruistic, patriotic and benevolent, and in part based upon sound business principles. Ex-Service personnel generally offer a substantial premium of capability to a prospective employer, and a commercial supplier can reap the rewards of customer loyalty and brand reputation by offering the Armed Forces Community advantageous access to goods and services, whilst ensuring the unique vagaries of military life do not create disadvantage. The report notes clear examples of how this can be done.

In the Trust's previous work '*Our Community – Our Covenant*' we offered steps that the 407 Local Authorities in Great Britain could take which would help them better deliver their Covenant pledges. Perhaps not surprisingly, '*Benefit not Burden*', which is aimed at millions of organisations, paints a more complex picture (there are over 5.5 million SMEs alone in the UK). Equally, though, it has succeeded in identifying some straightforward steps that could be taken relatively easily and which would result in a substantial improvement in how the nation fulfils its side of the Covenant.

I hope that '*Benefit not Burden*' will have as transformative an impact as its illustrious predecessor. Once again, we have concluded that there is considerable work to be done on communicating accurate and helpful information externally; on rationalizing how the Ministry of Defence delivers its end of the national commitment; on leveraging the untapped organisations that offer considerable potential; and on providing tools and shared learning to public, private and voluntary sector organisations alike.

Drawing on our own experiences, I suggest this transformation will only take place if we collaborate on developing a plan to take forward the report's recommendations. That plan must be owned at the very highest level – for example by the Covenant Reference Group – and be supported by the myriad of representative bodies who stand to benefit from the more effective delivery of Covenant pledges. A bespoke action group, reporting directly into the Covenant Reference Group, would be a good place to start.

I invite anyone interested in supporting the Armed Forces Covenant to examine this report to see how improvements can be made; and I invite the Covenant Reference Group to take ownership of the ideas presented and to ensure the recommendations are implemented.

This though is not just about supporting the Armed Forces Community, it is also about supporting our nation's businesses and other organisations to be successful in their chosen fields. The Covenant can deliver to both sides: if ever there was a piece of research that offered a 'win-win' result, then '*Benefit not Burden*' is it.

Ultimately, and simply, this is a call for millions of organisations across Britain to improve their support to the Armed Forces Community through the mechanism of the Covenant. Truly doing so would not be a burden, it would offer tangible benefit. And it is hard to imagine a better cause.

Ray Lock



Chris Hopson,
Chief Executive, NHS Providers

This report highlights the importance of the Armed Forces Covenant as a promise to treat people who are serving or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, fairly. The report finds that raising awareness of the Covenant will be a key factor to ensure its success and I am therefore very happy to highlight the importance of the NHS provider sector to the Armed Forces Community, as both employers and providers of services.

The main areas of disadvantage for the Armed Forces Community are access to services and employment. This report highlights key initiatives that are aiming to address these challenges in tandem with the Covenant, such as an NHS programme led by Health Education England and 5 NHS regions which recognises the transferable skills of the Armed Forces Community and provides them with career opportunities. We must build on these programmes and embrace the Covenant if we are to ensure that this community has the same access to government and commercial services and products as any other citizen.

NHS trusts that have signed the Covenant speak positively about the initiative, I therefore urge you to read this report and sign up.

Chris Hopson



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation to ensure that people who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly. It focuses on ensuring members of the Armed Forces Community do not suffer disadvantage as a result of service in accessing government and commercial services and products, and that special consideration is appropriate for those who have given the most. The objectives of the Covenant are delivered through organisations that have committed to making a difference by signing it.

Shared Intelligence and The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) were commissioned by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) to carry out research on how to improve the delivery of organisational pledges made under the Covenant. The scope of the research excluded local councils, which were the subject of an earlier study, but included the rest of the public sector (including health, the emergency services and higher and further education) and the full range of business and charitable organisations.

The Brief

The question at the heart of the brief was: How do we improve the delivery of organisational pledges made under the Armed Forces Covenant? In order to answer that question and help focus our research we developed a more detailed set of key lines of enquiry. They are set out in the box below.

Key lines of enquiry

1. Which organisations are acting in ways which reflect the needs and circumstances of the Armed Forces Community?
2. Which organisations have signed the Armed Forces Covenant and is this reflected in action?
3. To what extent are the following factors relevant to the propensity of an organisation to sign the Covenant and/or act in a way that reflects the needs and circumstances of the Armed Forces Community: Geography; Sector; Type; and Size of organisation.
4. What are the drivers and barriers to organisations signing the Covenant?
5. What are the drivers and barriers to organisations acting in the spirit of the Covenant?
6. To what extent is the Covenant seen as a driver of action or as an endorsement of action?

Key Findings

One of the most significant findings from our research is the potential to encourage more organisations to sign the Covenant and take action to meet the needs of the Armed Forces Community. Twenty four per cent of the 548 organisations we surveyed had heard of the Covenant, eight per cent had signed it and 28 per cent said that they were very likely or quite likely to sign it over the next year. Organisations which have signed the Covenant are more likely to act than those which have not. Figure 1 demonstrates the potential from another perspective, comparing pledges made under the Covenant with action taken.

The key challenge is how to exploit this potential: raising awareness of the Covenant is an essential first step.

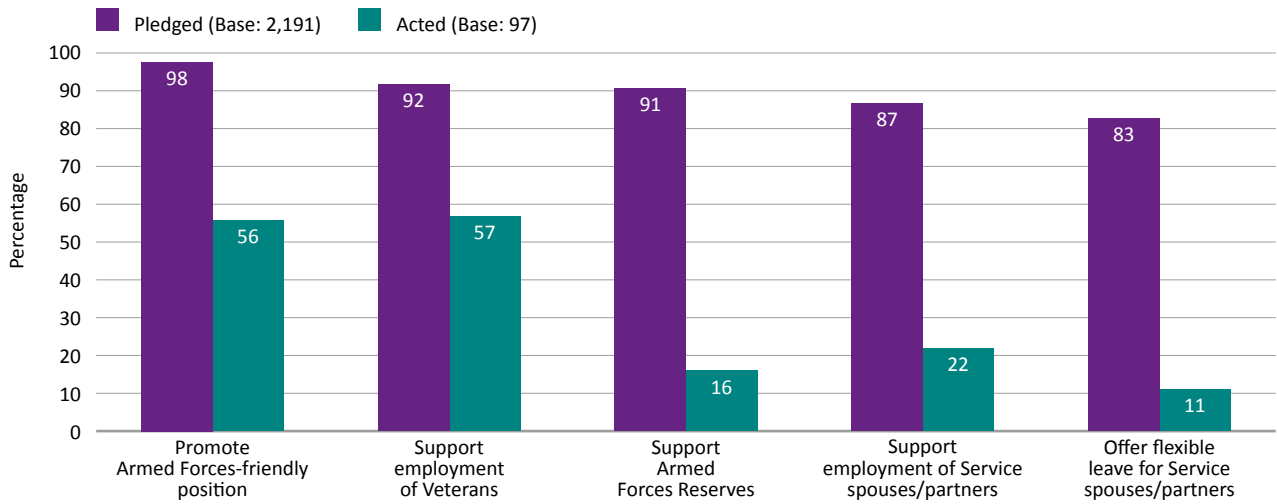
Key Finding: Our research shows that a lack of awareness is a significant barrier to organisations signing the Covenant and acting upon it.

This applies to knowledge of the Covenant, understanding of the potential disadvantage facing members of the Armed Forces Community and knowing what type of action an organisation could take.

Key Finding: Our research also shows that the smaller the organisation is, the less likely it is to be aware of the Covenant, to have signed it or to have taken any action.



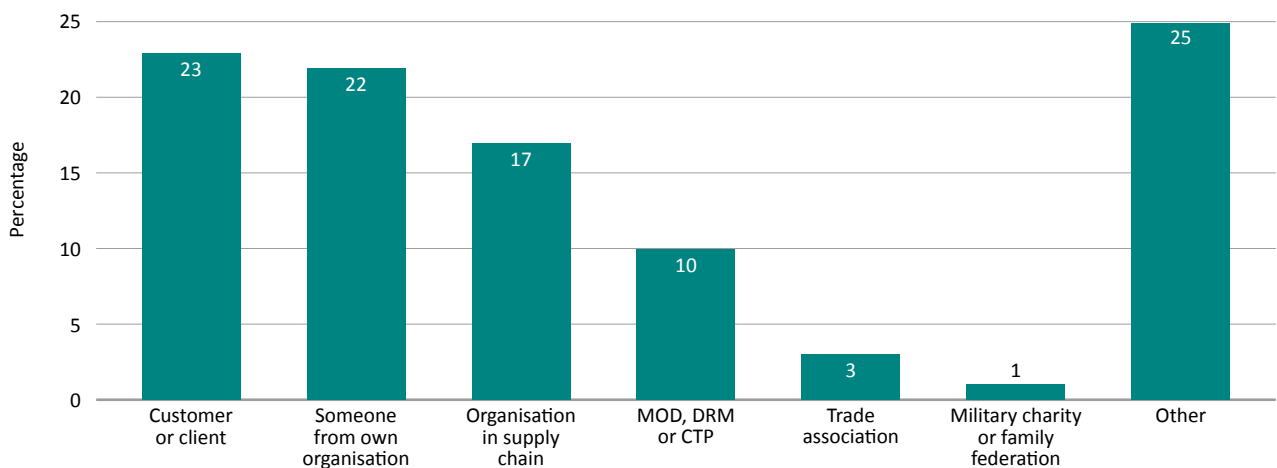
Figure 1: Percentage of Armed Forces Covenant signatories pledging to take various types of action to support employment of the Armed Forces Community (from the Covenant database), compared with percentage of signatories who actually took action in these areas (survey)



Bases: Covenant signatories from Covenant database (2,191) and Covenant signatories from NatCen survey (97)

In order to address this challenge we need a good understanding of how those organisations which are aware of the Covenant heard about it. As figure 2 shows, the most frequently cited sources were a customer, an individual in the organisation, or another organisation in the supply chain. This helps to explain why smaller businesses have less awareness of the Covenant, particularly as only three per cent of organisations heard about the Covenant from a trade association. The crucial role of individuals in raising awareness of the Covenant and encouraging organisations to sign it and act having done so is another important theme.

Figure 2: Percentage of organisations first hearing of the Armed Forces Covenant from different sources



Base: organisations which had heard of the Armed Forces Covenant (190)



Key Finding: Our research shows that organisations which have signed the Covenant are far more likely than other organisations to see direct business benefits from supporting the Armed Forces Community.

This highlights the potential contribution of supply chain and other business relationships and networks to improving the delivery of Covenant pledges.

Key Finding: Our research has also highlighted the potential importance of the synergy between the Covenant and the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS).

Delivered by Defence Relationship Management (DRM), the ERS encourages organisations to be Armed Forces-friendly employers, with three levels of recognition: bronze, silver and gold. It provides a means of meeting the appetite among some of our respondents for follow-up action once they have signed the Covenant and for some form of validation of the action they are taking. The impact in the health service of the Step into Health programme shows the contribution that membership bodies could make to the delivery of Covenant pledges.

Recommendations

Greater coherence nationally

The over-riding challenge is to do more to raise awareness of the needs of the Armed Forces Community, the existence of the Covenant, the types of action that can be taken under it and the potential benefits of doing so. Responsibility for driving this nationally is split between the Ministry of Defence Covenant team (MOD) and DRM, a branch of MOD¹. The primary way in which most organisations can show support for the Armed Forces Community is as an Armed Forces-friendly employer and the ERS, with its bronze, silver and gold awards, provides a sensible pathway for many organisations. There would be significant benefits in crafting a compelling narrative which alerts all new Covenant signatories to the ERS and encourages them to participate in it.

We recommend that:

The MOD and DRM should ensure that there is a coherent and compelling description of the relationship between the Armed Forces Covenant and the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) and that it is communicated effectively and consistently.

The MOD and DRM should put in place arrangements to ensure that, as a minimum, organisations which sign the Covenant are automatically signposted to the Employer Recognition Scheme. They should also develop ways in which signatories could be referred to:

- sources of advice on action to avoid potential disadvantage where that is relevant;
- the ERS Gold Alumni who are prepared to mentor organisations seeking ERS recognition (building on the already existing relationship between DRM, the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association and the Gold Alumni).
- the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), for access to a pool of employees.

Closer alignment of the resources available nationally would help to deliver these recommendations. It is important that the right structures are in place to support the delivery of the Covenant, reducing duplication and opportunities for confusion and friction.

¹ Further information about MOD Covenant delivery can be found on page 16. When we refer to MOD in this report we mean the MOD Covenant Team responsible for policy delivery.



We recommend that the roles, responsibilities and working arrangements of the MOD, wider Government, DRM and CTP should be reviewed with a view to ensuring:

- the most effective use of limited resources;
- effective communication of the Covenant, the case for signing it and good practice in terms of the delivery of Covenant pledges;
- a wider role for CTP in linking employers to individuals;
- wider ownership and promotion of the Covenant across Government;
- ensuring an appropriate level of engagement with Covenant signatories.

Mobilising trade associations, membership bodies, local chambers of commerce etc.

We have concluded that trade associations, membership bodies and chambers of commerce have an important role to play in encouraging organisations, particularly SMEs, to sign the Covenant and deliver Covenant pledges. A number of business representative organisations have signed the Covenant and they have told us that they have an appetite for playing a bigger role in raising awareness of it and improving the delivery of Covenant pledges.

We recommend that:

DRM should continue to progress with their plans to work with trade association and membership bodies² nationally and regionally to increase awareness of the Covenant, to encourage organisations to sign it, and to promote good practice in terms of the delivery of Covenant pledges.

DRM should work with the British Chambers of Commerce, the Local Government Association (LGA), the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and other local, regional and national organisations (including local Chambers of Commerce) to enable the creation of local networks to develop a place-based approach to the delivery of the Covenant, to encourage organisations, particularly SMEs, to sign it and to promote good practice in terms of the delivery of Covenant pledges.

Mobilising the voice of the Armed Forces Community

One of the most striking features of our research is the impact on the delivery of Covenant pledges of individuals within organisations, particularly Veterans or other people with some personal connection to the Armed Forces Community. The evidence suggests that they can be instrumental in making an organisation aware of the Covenant, getting them to sign it and delivering on the Covenant pledges.

We recommend that the MOD should ensure that when the Covenant is communicated to members of the Armed Forces Community, reference is made to the role they can play in raising awareness of the Covenant in their workplaces and with clients and suppliers.

The large military charities have links with many businesses, and all military charities have links of various types with members of the Armed Forces Community. There is potential for these charities to play a bigger, and more important role in raising awareness of the Covenant generally, in encouraging businesses and other organisations to sign the Covenant, and in helping to mobilise the voice of the Armed Forces Community to raise awareness of the Covenant.

We recommend that DRM should discuss with the military charities how they could play a bigger role in raising awareness of the Covenant with businesses, other organisations directly and via the Armed Forces Community.³

² Such as the FSB, EEF, the Association of Colleges, the National Housing Federation

³ DRM are currently in the process of seeking financial approval to increase the number of DRM National Account Managers (NAM) in order to broaden their reach into the not-for-profit arena and increase awareness of the Covenant



More effective promotion of the benefits

There would be considerable benefits in a more concerted drive to present the direct business benefits to organisations of supporting the Armed Forces Community – in terms of, for example, helping to address pressing recruitment and retention challenges – supported by a portfolio of case studies demonstrating both the types of action that organisations are taking and the benefits they are realising by doing so. Two other issues have also arisen during the course of this research:

- first, an appetite for a suite of toolkits to help organisations of different size and type to understand what actions they might take in order to contribute to the delivery of the Covenant;
- second, the potential for further research into the impact of the delivery of the Covenant. This and earlier research has given us useful insight into the take-up of the Covenant, but it has not sought to understand the impact of Covenant pledges on the Armed Forces Community.

We recommend that the MOD should produce, regularly update and maintain a comprehensive resource information pack with examples of the type of action organisations are taking and the tangible benefits to their organisations from doing so. This information should feature prominently on a refreshed Covenant website.

We recommend that MOD should consider further whether a suite of toolkits could improve the delivery of the Covenant.

We recommend that MOD and FiMT should consider the potential of further research to evaluate the Covenant in order to understand the impact pledges have had on the Armed Forces Community beginning with a Theory of Change workshop of interested parties (MOD Covenant Team, DRM, CTP and others).

Building a network

A key barrier identified by many organisations is not knowing what specific action they could take to support the Armed Forces Community or how to take it. There is a demand for access to mentoring to help organisations identify what steps they could take to support the Armed Forces Community and then to help take them.

We recommend that DRM should continue to work with the ERS Gold Alumni through the steering group which the Director of DRM and the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association are on, to explore more ways in which they could help:

- raise awareness of the Covenant;
- build a network of Covenant signatories;
- mentor organisations about the action they can take to deliver Covenant pledges and secure ERS recognition.

Public procurement

Given the high level of commitment to the Covenant within central and local government, one mechanism for mobilising this business imperative is through the public sector procurement process.

We recommend that the MOD and DRM should work with other government departments, the LGA, COSLA, NHS Providers and other national organisations to consider how best to use the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 within public sector procurement to encourage suppliers to sign the Covenant and deliver Covenant pledges.

Database

We recommend that DRM and the MOD should consider maintaining the database we have built for this research and, within GDPR constraints, make it publicly accessible.



INTRODUCTION

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation to ensure that people who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly. It focuses on ensuring members of the Armed Forces Community do not suffer disadvantage as a result of service in accessing government and commercial services and products, and that special consideration is appropriate for those who have given the most. The objectives of the Covenant are delivered through organisations that have committed to making a difference by signing it.

Shared Intelligence and the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) were commissioned by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) to carry out research on how to improve the delivery of organisational pledges made under the Covenant. The scope of the research excludes local councils, which were the subject of an earlier study, but includes business, public sector and charitable organisations.

The scope of this research is very wide. Our findings are informed by a substantial evidence base comprising: the first comprehensive database of organisations which have signed the Covenant and/or are acting to support the Armed Forces Community; and an on-line survey of a representative sample of 548 organisations in Great Britain. This quantitative evidence base has been supplemented by an extensive programme of qualitative research through in-depth interviews and focus groups.

This report presents the findings and recommendations from that research. The report: sets out our brief, methodology and evidence base; explains the background to the Covenant and the arrangements currently in place to deliver it; presents our findings; and sets out our conclusions and recommendations.

THE BRIEF, OUR METHODOLOGY AND EVIDENCE BASE

In this section of the report we summarise the brief for the research, our methodology, including our key research questions, and the evidence base we have assembled.

The brief

In the brief for this research, FiMT required “a thorough and comprehensive review of how the full range of companies and organisations in Great Britain are delivering Armed Forces Covenant pledges”. It referred to the need to highlight effective policies and practices as well as obstacles to that delivery.

This research follows an earlier piece of work⁴ which focused on how the delivery of Covenant pledges made by local authorities could be improved. Local authorities are therefore excluded from the scope of this research which covers commercial companies and businesses of all types and sizes, charities and voluntary organisations, higher and further educational institutions and public sector organisations including the national health, police and fire services. Also excluded from the scope of this research is Northern Ireland because of its unique circumstances and the complementary Northern Ireland Veterans Health and Wellbeing Study being conducted by Ulster University⁵.

The brief, which called for a mixed method approach including quantitative and qualitative research, specified two main topic areas for the research:

- employment opportunities for ex-Service personnel, Reservists, and spouses and children of serving or former Service personnel;
- the provision of services in the broadest sense to members of the Armed Forces Community.

The question at the heart of the brief was: How do we improve the delivery of organisational pledges made under the Armed Forces Covenant? In order to answer that question and help focus our research we developed a more detailed set of key lines of enquiry. They are set out in the box below.

Key lines of enquiry

1. Which organisations are acting in ways which reflect the needs and circumstances of the Armed Forces Community?
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4. What are the drivers and barriers to organisations signing the Covenant?
5. What are the drivers and barriers to organisations acting in the spirit of the Covenant?
6. To what extent is the Covenant seen as a driver of action or as an endorsement of action?

4 Our Community – Our Covenant, also produced by Shared Intelligence and published by FiMT in August 2016. <http://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Our-Community-Our-Covenant-Report-2.pdf>

5 <https://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/20171206-CURRENTANDFUTURENEEDSREPORT-FINAL.pdf>



Our methodology

We adopted a four-stage approach to carrying out and reporting this research:

- an initial **scoping stage**, involving a literature review and stakeholder interviews to help us craft the key lines of enquiry for the subsequent research;
- the core **research stage**, including:
 - an online survey of a representative sample of 548 organisations in Britain;
 - an analysis of a database of organisations which have signed the Covenant, qualified for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, employ Reservists, or are members of the Defence Discount Scheme;
 - 36 depth interviews with people from a range of organisations;
 - 6 geographically dispersed focus groups with people from a range of sectors, including: health, education, charity, legal, finance, insurance and construction.
- a **sense-making stage** using a series of workshops and discussions to help us make sense of our findings, identify good and imaginative practice and craft recommendations;
- the final **reporting stage**.

The research was carried out by Shared Intelligence and NatCen, with NatCen leading on the core research stage. During the research we met twice with an informal advisory group which included representatives from the Ministry of Defence (MOD), military charities, and public and private sectors. We met once during the quantitative research and once during the sense-making stage. We also gave the group an opportunity to comment on an early draft of this report.

In order to help us understand the findings of our research, to draw conclusions from it and to craft recommendations to improve the delivery of the Covenant, we organised a series of sense-making events. At each event we presented our emerging findings and then facilitated a discussion on the conclusions and possible recommendations. The sense-making events included sessions with: the advisory group; NHS Providers; housing associations involved with the Housing Quality Network; organisations in the Black Country⁶; the MOD, Defence Relationship Management (DRM) and the Career Transition Partnership (CTP); and business representative organisations. The findings from these sessions have been incorporated in sections three and four of this report.

A full draft of this report was discussed at a consultation event at St George's House, Windsor. We have reflected some of the conclusions from the consultation in the report and a summary of the discussion is included in annex 3.

Our evidence base

The scope of this research is very wide, covering the whole gamut of businesses, public sector and voluntary organisations in Great Britain, excluding central and local government. This is reflected in the scale of the evidence base we have assembled.

⁶ Hosted by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce.

Quantitative evidence

We have built the most comprehensive database of organisations which are taking action to support the Armed Forces Community. It comprises the 2,191 organisations which had signed the Armed Forces Covenant by March 2018 merged with data from other publicly available databases including: the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme; organisations which employ Reservists, and organisations which are members of the Defence Discount Service⁷.

NatCen also designed and administered an online survey of a representative sample of 548 organisations in Great Britain. The survey focused on the organisations' awareness of the Covenant and of the circumstances in which members of the Armed Forces Community may suffer disadvantage, and motivations for and barriers to signing the Covenant and acting to deliver Covenant pledges.

We draw on this evidence base extensively in section three of this report. Additional analysis of it is included in annex 1.

Qualitative evidence

We have supplemented the quantitative evidence with a substantial programme of qualitative research.

During the scoping stage we carried out a series of stakeholder interviews with:

- the MOD, DRM and the CTP;
- membership and trade bodies for organisations within scope for the research;
- the Army and Naval Families Federations.

During the core research stage, we carried out in-depth interviews and focus groups. The sample for both elements was selected purposively⁸ in order for a full range of experiences to be reflected in relation to the Covenant. There were four criteria used to select participants: size of the organisation; sector; region; and their status in relation to the Armed Forces Community and the Covenant.

A total of 36 interviews were carried out. The themes covered included: awareness of the Covenant and of the issues facing the Armed Forces Community; and drivers and barriers to signing the Covenant and taking action to benefit the Armed Forces Community.

Six focus groups with a total of 38 attendees were carried out in four locations in Great Britain: Portsmouth; London; Bolton; and Glasgow. The themes covered included: awareness of the Covenant and the issues facing the Armed Forces Community in relation to receiving services and employment; actions taken by organisations to meet the needs of the Armed Forces Community; and awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and drivers and barriers to signing it.

We draw on the results of this qualitative research in sections three and four of this report.

⁷ The Defence Discount Service provides discounts to members of the Armed Forces Community. More information can be found here: <https://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk/>

⁸ Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that involves a conscious selection of people to include in the sample who exhibit the characteristics of the social process or phenomenon under study.



Limitations

There are some limitations in relation to the qualitative research which should be taken into account when interpreting the findings:

- difficulties recruiting: recruitment for participants at all stages of the research was challenging as it was often difficult to find the correct person to speak to within an organisation, and a large number of people declined to take part.
- breadth of sample: some groups from the four criteria mentioned above were under represented. This includes organisations with 500+ employees who are not from the human health and social work sector; small organisations who had signed the Covenant; and organisations with 250–499 employees who had not signed the Covenant.
- during the qualitative research: a number of issues emerged relating to a lack of knowledge or in-depth knowledge which limited participants' ability to partake in all elements of discussion.

The findings in this report focus in particular on the role of the Covenant in relation to the employment of members of the Armed Forces Community. This reflects the wide scope of this research and the fact that for the vast majority of the organisations we surveyed and spoke to, it is in their role as an employer that they are most likely to be able to respond to the objectives of the Covenant.



THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT: AN INTRODUCTION

The Armed Forces Community

The Armed Forces Community comprises three groups of people:

- serving members of the Armed Forces, including Reservists;
- former serving members of the Armed Forces, often described as Veterans;
- the spouses, partners and families of serving and former serving personnel.

There are two broad areas in which members of the Armed Forces Community are at risk of suffering disadvantage: in the provision of a wide range of private and public services (including education, housing and health) and in terms of employment.

The disadvantage in relation to services is most likely to apply at points of transition and deployment. For serving personnel and their families this includes, for example:

- applying for school places and NHS waiting lists;
- eligibility for social housing;
- contractual obligations associated with mobile phones, broadband and mortgages;
- the needs of families and individuals at the point of transition out of the Armed Forces.

In relation to employment the risks of disadvantage include employers being wary of:

- the perceived risk of spouses and partners resigning at short notice as a result of the deployment of the serving person;
- the lack of understanding by recruiters of spouses having multiple short-term employments on their CV or inconsistent locations;
- concerns and perceptions about the employment of former serving personnel which can be compounded by a lack of skill transferability; and
- the implications of the deployment of Reservists.

These factors can cause members of the Armed Forces Community to find it difficult to find employment or be “under-employed” in low-skilled jobs.

The Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant is “a promise from the nation that those who serve or who have served, and their families, are treated fairly.” The key phrase in the Covenant is that members of the Armed Forces Community “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 the most such as the injured and the bereaved.”

When the Covenant was launched in 2012, under the provisions of the Armed Forces Act 2011, a distinction was made between the Community Covenant and the Corporate Covenant. The former was to be signed and implemented by local authorities and other public service providers, while the latter was to be signed and implemented by businesses and other types of organisation. In 2016, these were merged and since then there has been one Armed Forces Covenant which all organisations can sign up to.



The scope of the Covenant covers the whole range of public, private, voluntary and charitable bodies. Organisations which sign the Covenant are invited to adopt specific pledges including, for example: taking action to prevent disadvantage, supporting the employment of Veterans, Service spouses and partners and Reservists, and offering discounts to members of the Armed Forces Community.

Part of the discussion at the St George's House consultation explored the purpose and scope of the Covenant in a changing world and how to measure the impact of the Covenant. The question of the purpose of the Covenant is beyond the scope of this research, but we have explored the question of impact and address it in our conclusions and recommendations.

Delivering the Covenant

The scope of the Covenant covers the whole of the United Kingdom and therefore its delivery includes the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations. It requires a cross-Government approach to delivering action and support. It falls within the remit of the Minister for Defence People and Veterans, and a new Ministerial Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Board has been established. In Scotland there is a Scottish Veterans Commissioner and in Wales an expert advisory group has been established. The Armed Forces Act 2011 requires the Secretary of State for Defence to publish an annual Covenant report. A small team in the Ministry of Defence has responsibility for promoting the Covenant and enabling the delivery of Covenant pledges, the MOD Covenant Team. The MOD has, for example, negotiated arrangements for members of the Armed Forces Community in relation to financial services, and broadband and mobile phone contracts. In addition, two other organisations have identified key roles to play in specifically delivering the employment-related aspects of the Covenant: Defence Relationship Management (DRM) and the Career Transition Partnership (CTP).

DRM works with organisations throughout the UK, helping them to understand the value of signing the Covenant and building mutually beneficial partnerships with 'Defence'. It has sector and regional account holders and gives priority to working proactively with larger businesses in sectors in which there is more likely to be a synergy with Defence. DRM provides support to businesses on employing Reservists, Veterans, Cadet Force Adult Volunteers and military spouses and partners. DRM is also responsible for administering the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

The CTP, a partnership between MOD and Right Management Group, provides resettlement services for people leaving the Armed Forces. It also operates as an intermediary service for employers that wish to hire Service leavers.

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme

For many organisations, particularly those in the private sector, being an Armed Forces-friendly employer is the most meaningful action they can take to deliver the Covenant. The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme encourages organisations to support Defence and inspire others to do the same. There are three levels of recognition: bronze, silver and gold. Bronze award-holders are self-nominating. Gold and silver award holders have to have been nominated by an external party or staff member that is a current member of the Armed Forces Community. Gold and silver awards are then determined by selection boards at national and regional levels respectively. All award holders must have signed the Covenant. The requirements for the gold award include, for example, proactively demonstrating their Armed Forces-friendly recruiting and selection processes and acting as exemplars advocating support for Defence People to partner organisations, suppliers and customers. A group of gold award winners has formed, the Gold Alumni, which are increasingly active as a group that collects and disseminates best practice and provides mentors for organisations that are aspiring to achieve gold status.



MOD Covenant delivery explained

While there is a pan-government approach to delivery of the Covenant, the MOD are at the vanguard on a day to day level. There are various teams and organisations within and working with the MOD which do this:

- **MOD Covenant Team:** the central policy team within MOD, who engage with the Armed Forces Community and stakeholders across government and the third sector to, amongst other things, identify areas where disadvantage may occur and develop policies to address these, monitoring progress and reporting to Parliament on an annual basis through the Armed Forces Covenant report.
- **Career Transition Partnership (CTP):** a partnership between the MOD and Right Management Group which works with people transitioning out of the Armed Forces to help them find employment and settle into civilian life.
- **The Reserves Forces and Cadets team:** leads on the Employer Engagement (EE) Policy and the process to deliver it. The EE process is designed to deliver coherent engagement with employers.
- **Defence Relationship Management (DRM):** works with employers across the UK helping them to sign up and deliver their Covenant pledges and progress through the Employer Recognition Scheme. It manages the relationships between Defence and up to 200 organisations including facilitating working secondments for serving Armed Forces personnel. DRM supports and enables engagement by policy teams and single Services connecting enquiries from employers to the appropriate point in Defence whilst tackling disadvantages faced by service personnel in the consumer market.
- **Regional Employer Engagement Boards (REEBs):** at the regional level, EE is co-ordinated by the REEBs, which fulfil a similar role to DRM. This includes setting regional EE priorities and co-ordinating the delivery of military resources to support engagement.

OUR FINDINGS

In this section we pull together the findings from our research under five headings:

- Awareness of the Covenant and drivers and barriers to signing it;
- Awareness of the issues facing members of the Armed Forces Community and the factors influencing that awareness;
- Drivers of action to support members of the Armed Forces Community and tackle potential disadvantage;
- The role of the Covenant in galvanising action; and
- What does good look like?

In addressing these issues, we will draw on the findings from our extensive quantitative and qualitative evidence base, our scoping study and sense-making events. Additional analysis of our quantitative evidence is included in annex 1.

Benefit not Burden: key findings

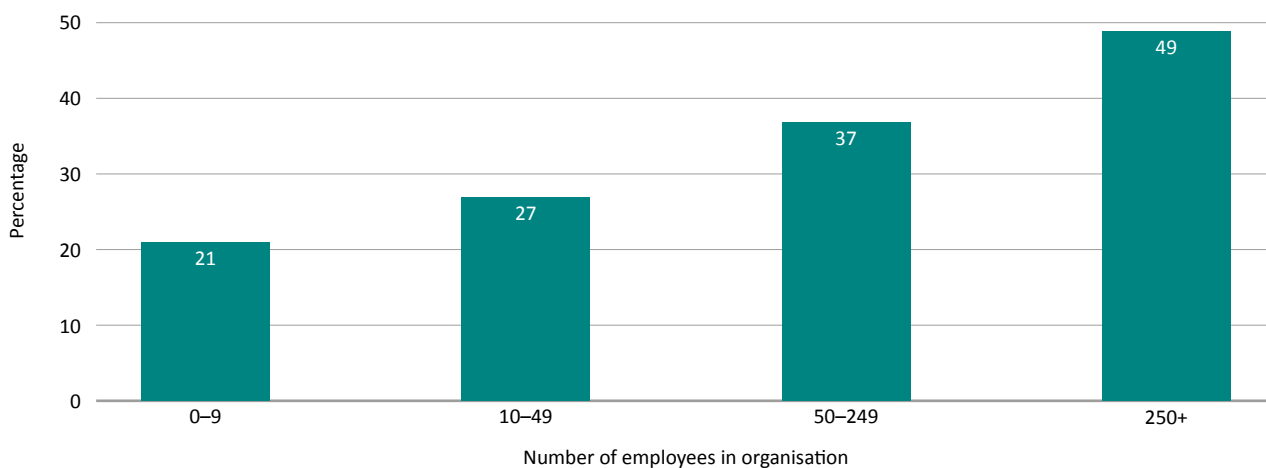
<p>Larger organisations are more likely to have heard of the Covenant, signed it and acted on it</p> <p>Customers, individuals with links to the Armed Forces Community and businesses in supply chains are the main ways organisations hear of the Covenant</p>	<p>24% of organisations have heard of the Covenant</p> <p>8% of organisations have signed the Covenant</p>	<p>Perceived barriers to action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not knowing what action to take Lack of time and resources Tension between the needs of the business and action to support the Armed Forces Community Lack of knowledge of the Armed Forces Community 	<p>Drivers of action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from DRM Campaigns such as Step into Health Being the right thing to do Knowledge of what others have done Benefits to business
<p>10% of organisations heard of the Covenant from MOD or DRM</p> <p>3% of organisations heard of the Covenant from a trade association or membership body</p>	<p>28% of organisations are likely to sign the Covenant</p>	<p>Perceived barriers to signing the Covenant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of the Covenant Feeling that their business is too small Not knowing how to sign it Not knowing what they would do if they signed it 	<p>Benefits of signing the Covenant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being the right thing to do Supporting the local Armed Forces Community Recruiting or retaining skilled staff Enhancing the organisation's reputation

Awareness of the Covenant and drivers and barriers to signing it

The results from our representative survey of 548 British organisations showed that just under a quarter (24 per cent) had heard of the Armed Forces Covenant. Eight per cent of organisations had signed the Covenant, and 28 per cent said they were quite likely or very likely to sign the Covenant over the next year.

The size of organisations is a key factor in their awareness of the Covenant. Figure 3 shows that the larger the organisation, the more likely they are to have heard of the Covenant. Our evidence also shows that larger organisations are more likely to have signed the Covenant, and taken action as a result of having signed it, for example being given an ERS award.

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents who had heard of the Armed Forces Covenant, by number employed in their organisation



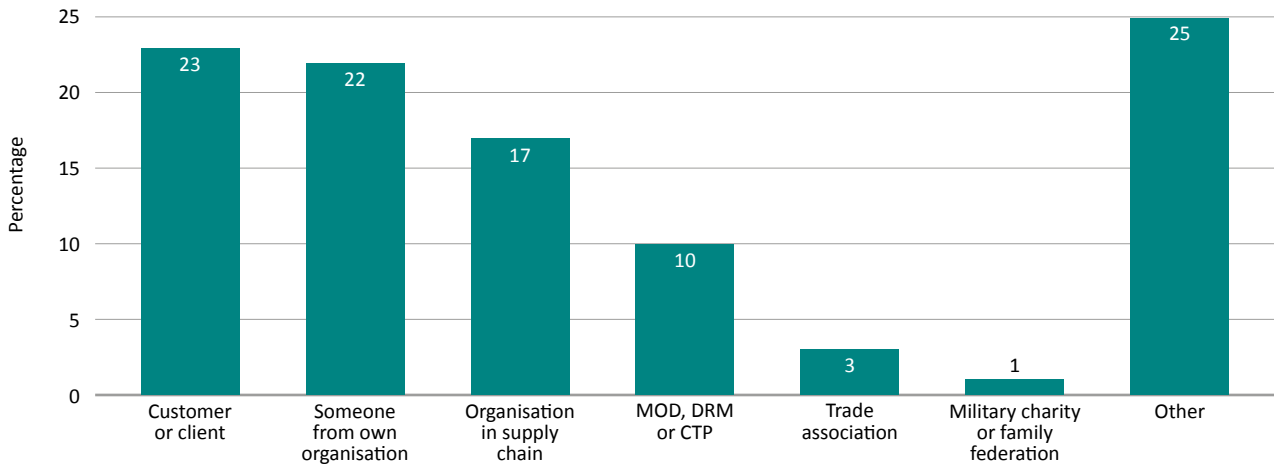
Base: all respondents (548)

There is evidence that organisations in some sectors are more likely to have signed the Covenant than others. Seven per cent of organisations in Great Britain are in the public sector yet 21 per cent of Covenant signatories are in the public sector. The position in the arts and other sector is similar. But in other sectors the percentage of Covenant signatories is smaller than the percentage of businesses in that sector nationally. There is some evidence to suggest that a higher proportion of organisations have signed the Covenant in some regions (East Midlands, West Midlands, the North East and South West) but this is based on small sample sizes.

A significant proportion of organisations first heard about the Covenant from a customer (23 per cent) or an organisation in their supply chain (17 per cent) (see figure 4). Twenty two per cent of organisations which had heard of the Covenant did so via somebody in their organisation. Ten per cent had done so via the MOD, DRM or CTP; and significantly more than three quarters of the organisations that said they had been contacted by the MOD, DRM or CTP went on to sign the Covenant. It is also important to note that only three per cent of organisations which had heard about the Covenant had done so via a trade association and only one per cent via a military charity.



Figure 4: Percentage of organisations first hearing of the Armed Forces Covenant from different sources

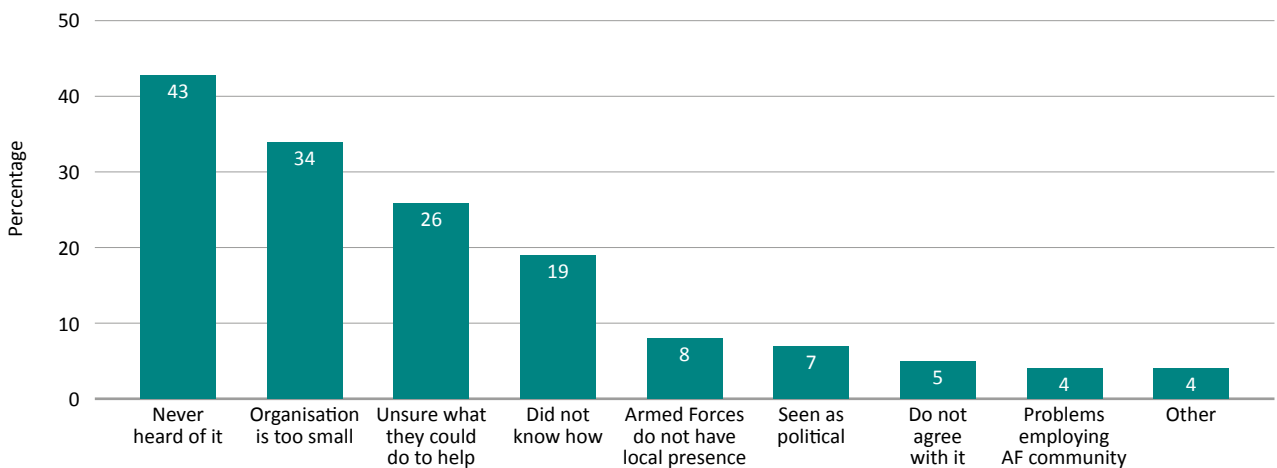


Base: organisations which had heard of the Armed Forces Covenant (190)

These findings are mirrored by our qualitative research which highlighted two other issues. First, there is a group of people who we interviewed that are aware of the Covenant but are confused about the nature and purpose of it. Second, while larger organisations are more likely to have signed the Covenant than smaller ones, there is qualitative evidence that staff in those larger organisations are more likely to have little or no awareness of it than staff in smaller organisations.

We asked those organisations which had heard of the Covenant but had not signed it why they had not done so. Almost half said their organisation was too small (48 per cent). Twenty one per cent said they did not know how to sign it and, 27 per cent said they were not sure what they would do if they did sign it. These findings mirror the response when we asked all organisations why organisations like theirs might not sign the Covenant (figure 5). This also shows that 43 per cent of respondents suggested that organisations might not have heard of the Covenant.

Figure 5: Percentage of respondents giving different reasons why organisations like theirs might not sign the Armed Forces Covenant



Base: all respondents (548)

Our qualitative research identified resources, in terms of funds and time, as an important factor perceived to be a barrier to organisations signing the Covenant. Interviewees spoke about this playing out in two ways: lack of time to find out more about the Covenant; and a lack of resource to do anything meaningful once they have signed it. Organisations are keen not to create expectations among the public or staff that they could not meet.

“While in principle I totally agree [with the Covenant] in reality...I haven't got the funds available to do it. My excess funds are already spoken for in other charitable situations.”

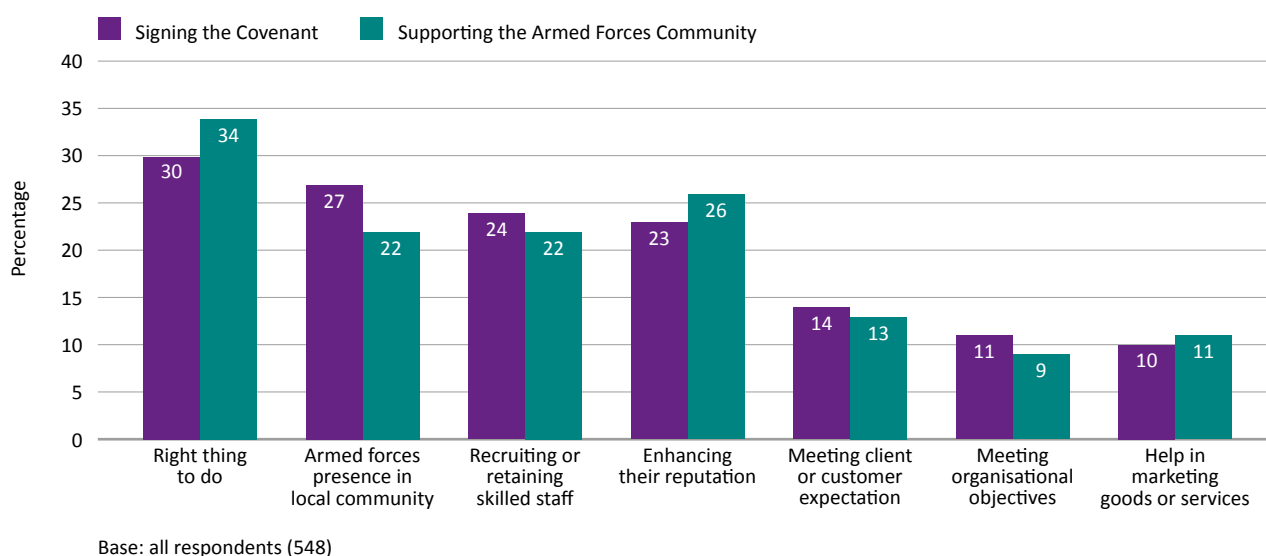
There was also a feeling among some interviewees that the Covenant was not relevant to what their organisation did. This was particularly the case for smaller businesses who saw the Covenant as being relevant to government organisations or larger businesses.

The most frequently cited benefit respondents saw in signing the Covenant is that it is the “right and responsible thing to do” (see figure 6). Some interviewees, however, reject the idea that there is a moral imperative to sign the Covenant and express some discomfort at treating members of the Armed Forces Community as “heroes”.

The presence of the Armed Forces in the local community is also a significant factor in encouraging people to sign the Covenant, as just under a third of survey respondents which had signed the Covenant reported. Interviewees spoke about the value of signing the Covenant as a way of showing support for the Armed Forces Community generally and for members of their staff or service users who are members of this community. This suggests that the typology of places, as developed for the *Our Community Our Covenant*⁹ report, is likely to influence the number of organisations signing the Covenant in an area and the type of action that they might take.

Far fewer organisations perceive a benefit in terms of helping to market services or goods (10 per cent) or meeting organisational objectives (11 per cent). Almost a quarter of organisations, however, see potential benefits in terms of the recruitment and retention of staff. Interviewees expanded on these benefits and mentioned that there are specific skills which people who have served often bring to a role, such as having a ‘can do’ attitude.

Figure 6: Percentages perceiving different potential benefits of signing the Covenant or supporting the Armed Forces Community



9 <http://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Covenant-Report-2nd-Ed.pdf>



Interviewees referred to the ability to network with other organisations as a benefit of signing the Covenant. They also said that they would be more likely to sign the Covenant if their organisation had already taken steps in accordance with the Covenant or felt that it would be easy to do so.

The qualitative research highlights the important part that individuals with some connection to the Armed Forces Community can play in an organisation's decision to sign the Covenant. These can be members of leadership teams or individuals who are passionate about the topic. One interviewee described the role of a senior person who is passionate about the area, ensuring that the Covenant was on the leadership team's agenda and that it would not just be a paper exercise.

We have also heard about "bottom-up" initiatives driven by people with links to the Armed Forces Community. In one NHS trust a group of Veterans felt that more had to be done for members of the Armed Forces Community in their area. They submitted a paper to their trust board which led to the trust signing the Covenant.

There is also evidence that in some cases key individuals can act as a barrier to an organisation signing the Covenant.

Interviewees from larger organisations said that support from the MOD and DRM had helped them in the process of signing the Covenant. Others said that their organisation had signed the Covenant because it was a requirement of the ERS. One person said that their organisation had not taken the ERS forward in a meaningful way, but the Covenant provided an opportunity for it to start from scratch and re-establish ownership of its work to support the Armed Forces Community. NHS organisations referred to Step into Health and the work of NHS Employers as a factor which encouraged them to sign.

Other interviewees noted that they had not been encouraged by central or local government to sign the Covenant.

"I've done a lot of work with central government agencies and [the Covenant] does not come forward as something that they push."

Our interviewees included people in the health sector whose organisations had heard about the Covenant and had decided to sign it because of the activities of NHS Employers and its Step into Health Programme. Despite this work, however, our health sense-making event revealed that a significant proportion of directors of Human Resources in health trusts were not aware of the Covenant or the Step into Health Programme.

Awareness of the issues facing members of the Armed Forces Community and the factors influencing that awareness

Less than a third of the organisations we surveyed had an understanding of the potential disadvantage facing members of the Armed Forces Community in terms of obtaining or retaining employment, accessing services or incurring additional costs. A key factor determining an organisation's awareness of these potential disadvantages is whether or not they employ a member of the Armed Forces Community: for example, 62 per cent of organisations which do so say they are aware of the potential disadvantages in relation to employment.

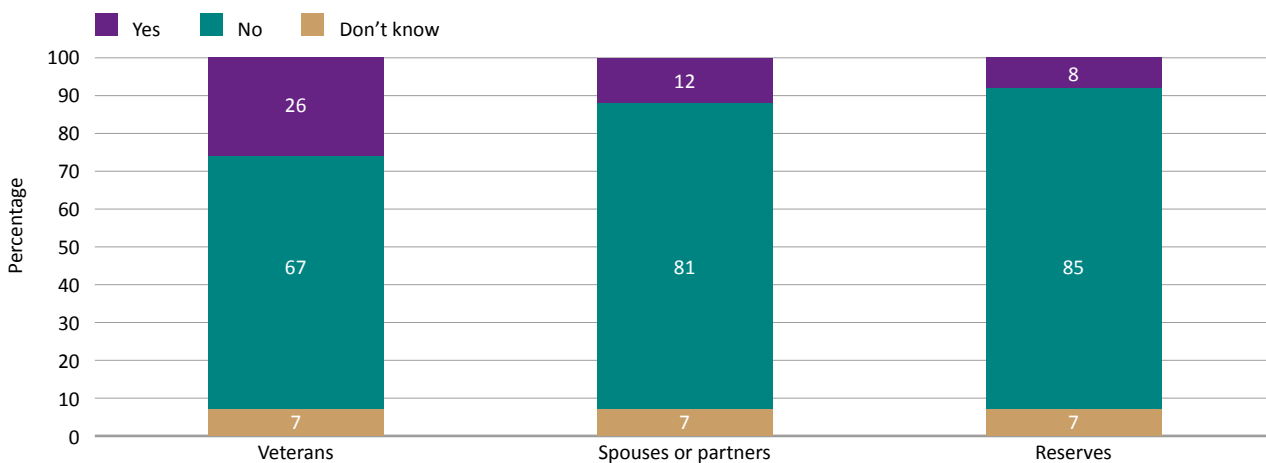
Yet, as figure 7 shows, only a small proportion of organisations employ people from the Armed Forces Community. A lack of contact with the Armed Forces Community could be one reason why many do not see these issues as being relevant. Figure 8 shows that respondents from organisations that employ a member of the Armed Forces Community were more likely to find issues of Armed Forces Community disadvantage as relevant.

Figure 9 shows that organisations which have signed the Armed Forces Covenant are far more likely than non-signatories to see the potential disadvantages faced by members of the Armed Forces Community as relevant to their organisation. For example, 81 per cent of Covenant signatories felt that the challenges members of the community face in obtaining or retaining employment was relevant compared with 28 per cent of non-signatories. It is important to note, however, that this does not necessarily mean that the Covenant was responsible for raising awareness. Organisations that are more aware may be more likely to sign.

In other organisations the lack of knowledge of the Armed Forces Community is a real barrier to even considering supporting them.

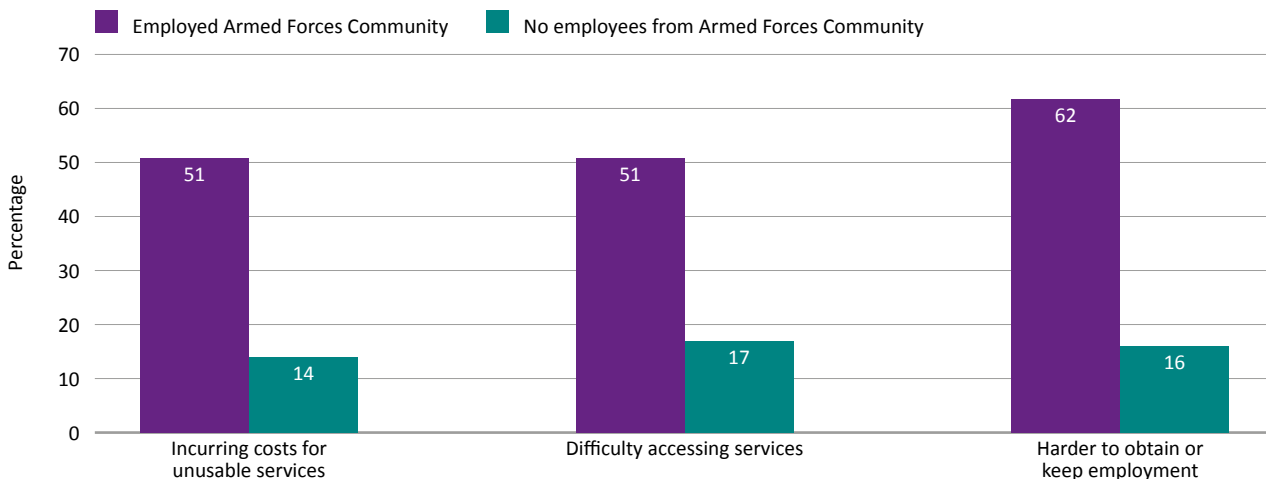
“...you don't know who they are, you don't know what their needs are and you don't know whether you need to meet those needs.”

Figure 7: Percentage of organisations currently employing people from different Armed Forces Community groups



Base: all respondents (548)

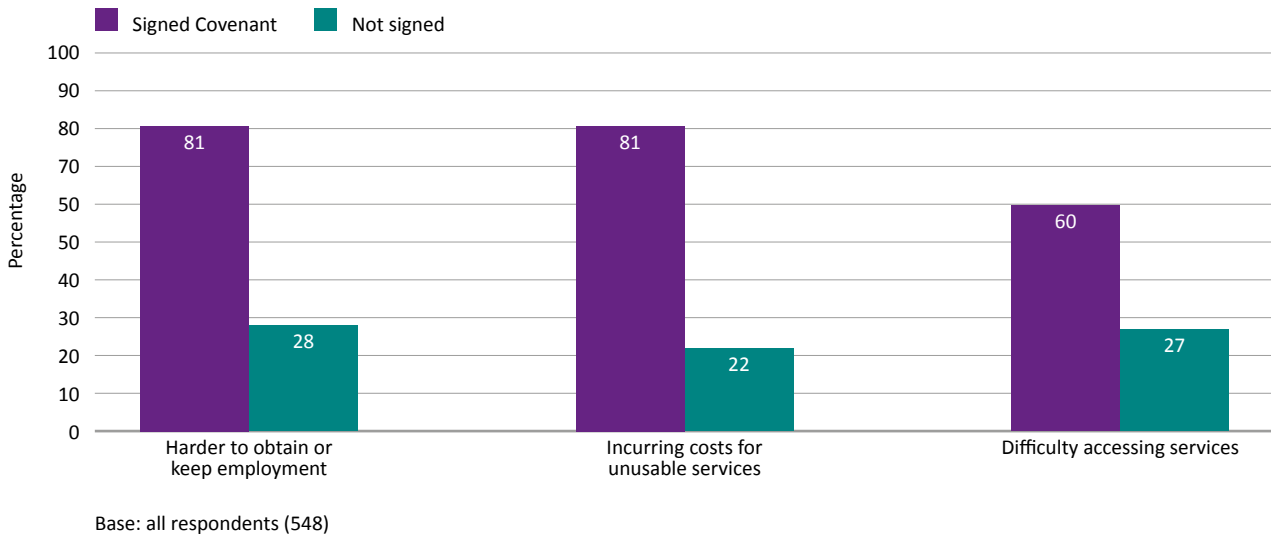
Figure 8: Percentage of respondents saying various types of Armed Forces Community disadvantage were relevant for their organisations, by whether or not they employed members of the Armed Forces Community



Base: all respondents (548)



Figure 9: Percentage of respondents who said that the various types of disadvantage faced by the Armed Forces Community was relevant for their organisations, by whether or not they had signed the Armed Forces Covenant



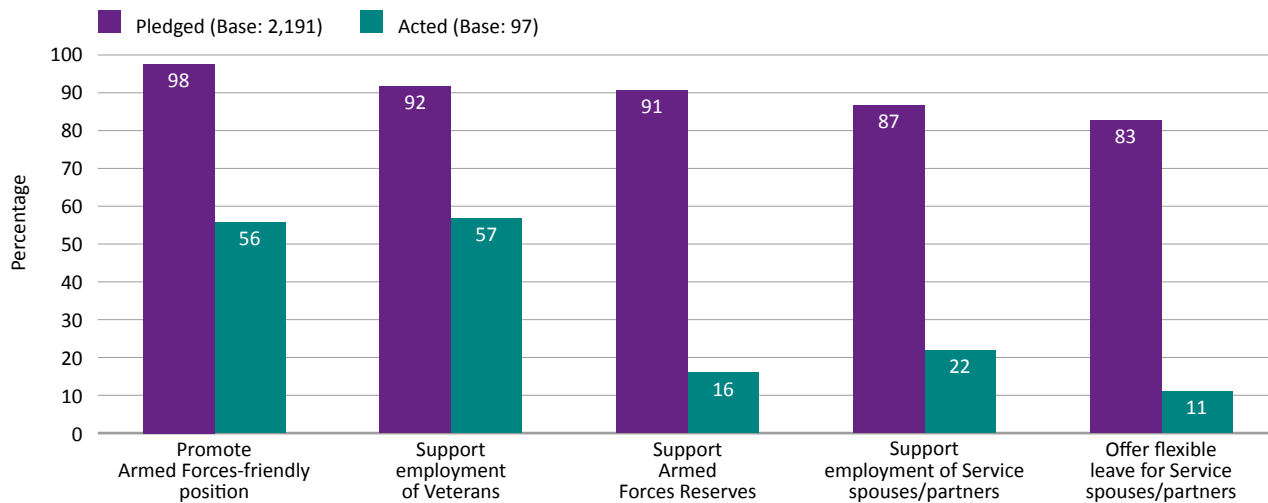
Drivers of action to support members of the Armed Forces Community and tackle potential disadvantage

Our research shows that organisations which sign the Covenant are far more likely than non-signatories to take action to address potential disadvantage faced by members of the Armed Forces Community. For example, 67 per cent of Covenant signatories say they have acted to tackle difficulty in accessing services compared with 12 per cent of non-signatories; 53 per cent of signatories have acted on employment compared with 19 per cent of non-signatories.

Figure 10 shows the percentage of signatories who have acted on their pledges. This number is inevitably lower than the number which have made pledges, illustrating the potential for encouraging more organisations which have signed the Covenant to translate their pledges into action. Figure 11 provides additional evidence on the potential for encouraging more organisations to act, in this case on employment. It shows that over a third of organisations would consider promoting themselves as Armed Forces-friendly in the future, with 16 per cent currently doing so. It also shows that 12 per cent of the organisations we surveyed currently act to support the employment of Service spouses, but that an additional 18 per cent are willing to consider doing so in the future.

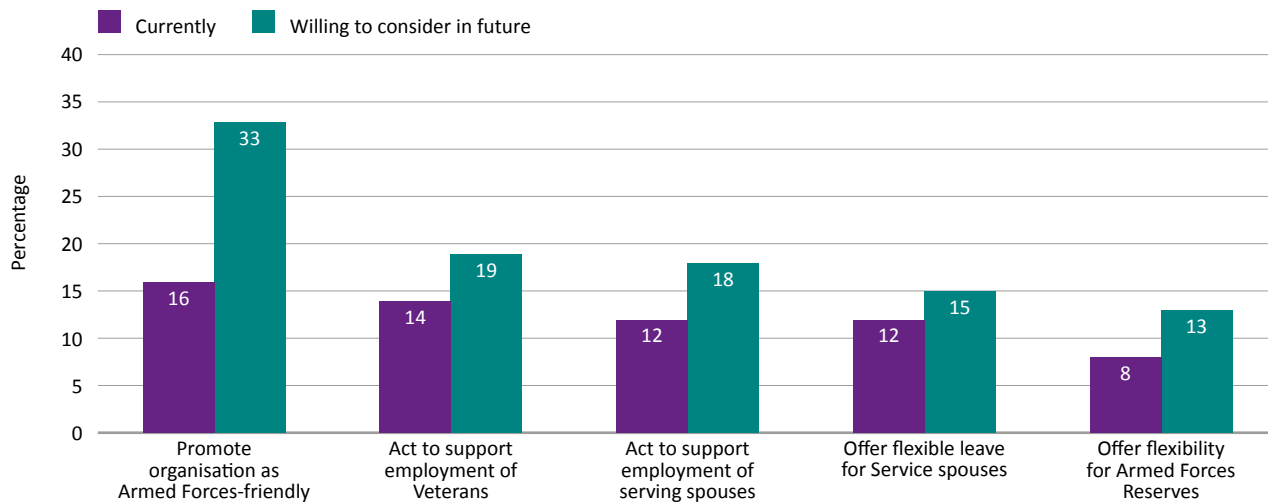
Our survey has revealed significant differences between the motivations for action identified by organisations which have signed the Covenant compared with the perceived advantages identified by our sample of organisations as a whole. Fifty four per cent of those organisations which have signed the Covenant said that they did so in order to meet a client or customer expectation, whereas only two per cent said they had done so because it was “the right thing to do”. This contrasts with the perceptions of our sample of organisations as a whole (see figure 12), a third of which perceived doing the right thing as a benefit. This shows that in practice, for those organisations which have signed the Covenant, it is more likely to be direct business imperatives which motivate them to act.

Figure 10: Percentage of Armed Forces Covenant signatories pledging to take various types of action to support employment of the Armed Forces Community (Covenant database), compared with percentage of signatories who took action in these areas (survey)



Bases: Covenant signatories from Covenant database (2,191) and Covenant signatories from NatCen survey (97)

Figure 11: Percentage of organisations currently taking and willing to consider taking various actions to support employment of Armed Forces Community

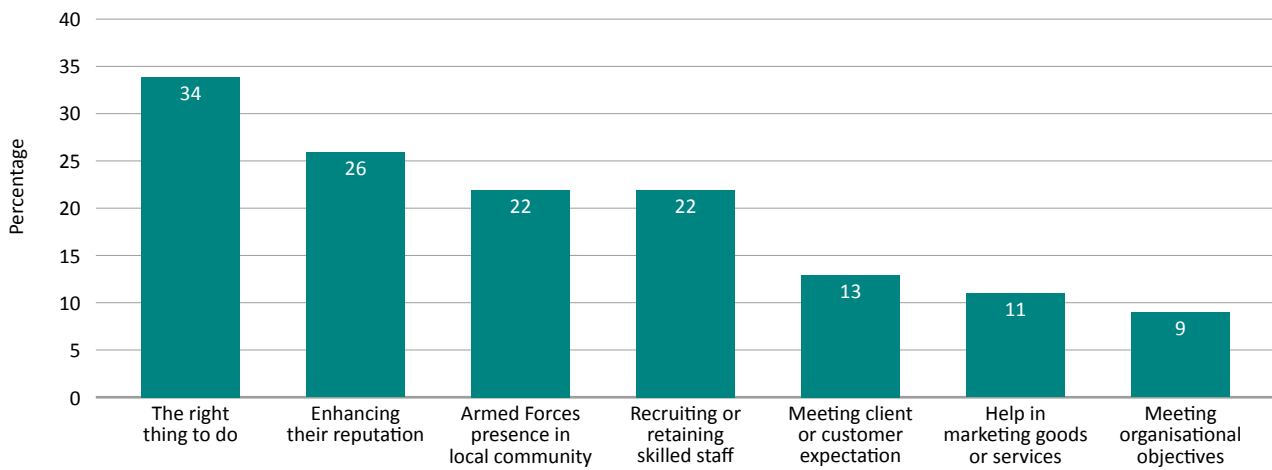


Base: all respondents (548)



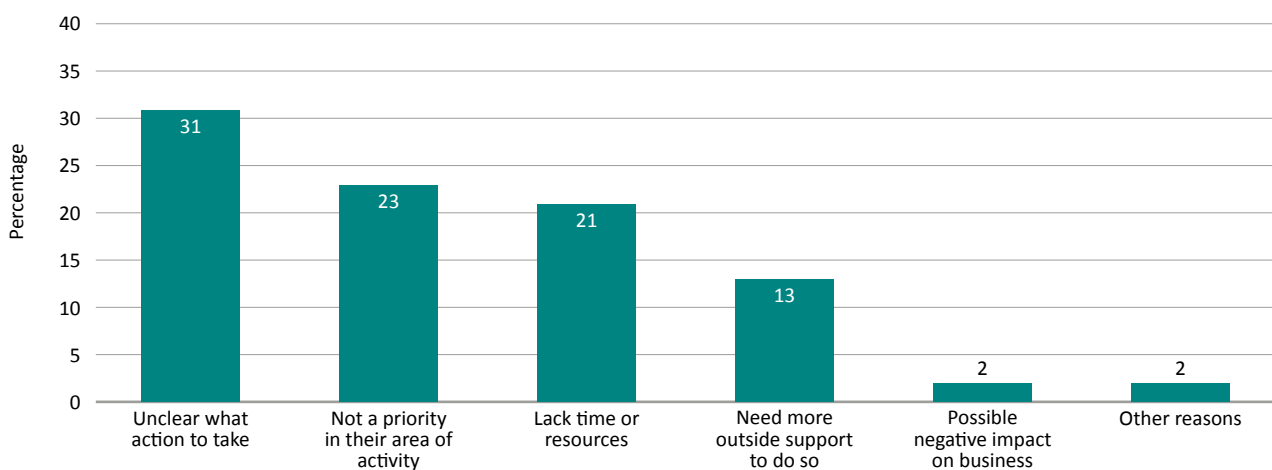
We have also explored the factors which inhibit organisations from taking action to support members of the Armed Forces Community. Of the organisations we surveyed which had signed the Covenant, 43 per cent said that they had not taken any action because it was not a priority in their area of activity. Ten per cent cited possible negative impacts on their business as a factor. Figure 13 shows the perceptions of the whole sample of organisations (whether or not they have signed the Covenant) on the factors that could prevent them from supporting the Armed Forces Community. Not being a priority in their area of activity was also a factor for this wider group of organisations, but so was a perceived lack of clarity about what action to take, which was cited by 31 per cent of respondents.

Figure 12: Percentages of respondents perceiving different potential benefits of supporting the Armed Forces Community for their organisations



Base: all respondents (548)

Figure 13: Percentages of respondents citing different factors that could prevent their organisations from supporting the Armed Forces Community



Base: all respondents (548)



Our qualitative research highlighted the importance of senior leadership support as a key factor in determining whether or not an organisation acts. Senior individuals can both demonstrate support “from the top” and empower individuals within the organisation to drive the agenda and act. These individuals may have a military background, as was the case with the founder of an engineering business.

“Because the founder was ex-military himself...he was well aware of what [Veterans] bring to the table, the discipline and the skills set.”

Interviewees stressed the importance of an alignment between business needs and the skills offered by members of the Armed Forces Community. This included specific skills and expertise as well as general competencies such as independent thinking. Some people in public sector organisations were spurred into action by the knowledge that businesses such as Amazon, JP Morgan and others had recruited for these specific skills to match their business needs.

“Why should all of that experience go into the private sector.... when it could really be put to great use in the public sector in general and the NHS in particular?”

Interviewees also referred to a sense of duty and obligation as a motivator for acting to support the Armed Forces Community.

“It’s giving back to the local community. It’s getting some of our staff involved with these projects, you know... it’s a feel-good factor.”

Radian Housing Association

Radian is a housing provider that offers a variety of housing tenures including social housing, affordable housing and the Help to Buy scheme across 32 local authority areas in the south of England. They also invest in a number of social enterprise schemes that seek to provide employment, support and training services to their customers and communities.

Although Radian are at the beginning of their journey in taking action to support members of the Armed Forces Community, they:

- host a Veterans Breakfast Club twice a month at Café 1759, a café that Radian converted from the Quebec Barracks in 2017
- are researching ways to support veterans into social housing through programmes such as the Veterans Nomination Scheme

In keeping with their holistic approach to supporting the communities they reach, Radian are exploring what more they can do for the Armed Forces Community. They have already started conversations with the Poppy Factory and intend to start conversations with local MPs to see how Radian’s resources can be developed in partnership with others to meet the needs of the Armed Forces Community. They are also beginning to explore how, as an organisation, they can meet the needs of their employees who are members of the Armed Forces Community.



It is clear that partnerships and collaborative relationships were instrumental in enabling organisations to act. Interviewees said this took several forms including:

- liaison with government, including the MOD and associated organisations such as DRM and CTP;
- working with sector bodies such as NHS employers;
- activity at a national level including national funding bodies;
- at a local level, such as contact with local garrisons;
- at a professional level through professional networks.

“The Step into Health initiative came to our attention, and we are keen to get involved with that... their approach is very similar to the Covenant, so it seemed like a natural progression.”

Step into Health: a membership organisation in action

The NHS has long been an important organisation in supporting members of the Armed Forces Community, in particular Reservists. Step into Health¹⁰ is a programme which has been developed by Health Education England, The Royal Foundation, Walking With The Wounded, NHS Employers and 5 NHS regional areas since 2014. It is a programme which recognises the transferable skills of members of the Armed Forces Community and provides them with career development opportunities within many areas of the NHS, including catering, communications, and roles within the clinical services. It was launched on a national basis through NHS Employers in January 2018.

The Step into Health programme appears to have helped drive action by health organisations in at least three ways. For some organisations it provided a springboard from which it could act. For others it created the conditions in which they could do more. In some organisations it was a combination of the Covenant and Step into Health which galvanised action.

The role of the Covenant in galvanising action

One of the objectives of this research has been to understand the role the Covenant plays in encouraging and enabling organisations to act to benefit members of the Armed Forces Community. The evidence, particularly from the qualitative research, suggests that in different circumstances the Covenant can act as:

- a springboard, helping organisations to focus on precise actions;
- a co-influencer, acting alongside other programmes to drive action;
- a form of validation.

Organisations that used the Covenant as a springboard were aware of the potential disadvantage facing the Armed Forces Community, but prior to signing the Covenant they had no action in place to address that potential disadvantage. The requirements of the Covenant, including pledges, enabled them to identify specific actions and serve as a point of reference for individuals within the organisation.

In some organisations the Covenant has been used as a driver of action in tandem with other schemes, most notably Step into Health and the Employer Recognition Scheme. The perceived similarities between the different schemes meant that they dovetailed and complemented each other.

¹⁰ For more information see www.nhsemployers.org/stepintohealth

Some organisations have signed the Covenant as a way of validating the action they were already taking. This seems to have happened most frequently in small and medium-sized organisations in places with a significant military presence.

The table below summarises other internal and exterior facilitators and barriers to action to support the Armed Forces Community identified by our interviewees.

Internal barriers and facilitators	External drivers and facilitators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • realistic pledges that are deliverable within an organisation’s resources; • the availability of sufficient time and capacity; • an action plan with designated roles and responsibilities; • a senior person with responsibility for ensuring that the actions are delivered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sectoral frameworks such as Step into Health; • a mechanism for sharing best practice; • connections with the Armed Forces Community; • a monitoring mechanism which means that some organisations sign the Covenant but do not take any concrete action.

“It is one thing to sign up to something, show the badge and say that you are doing things. It’s quite another thing to walk the walk.”

What does good look like?

While organisations are invited to adopt specific pledges when signing the Covenant, further detail relating to how organisations will adopt these pledges in practice is not required. This is to enable the organisation to develop its own programme of support which can be effectively carried out within its own structure. This is also to recognise that expectations vary for different types of organisation. For example, an SME would not be expected to match the kind of support provided by a multi-national company.

Our research has found that there is a range of action that has been developed by organisations to either deliver their Covenant pledges or to act in support of the Armed Forces Community. This includes the types of action summarised below. More information can be found in annex 2.

- offering additional leave or flexible working for Reservists and spouses/partners;
- developing relationships with local Armed Forces;
- providing support to members of the Armed Forces Community seeking employment;
- organising or attending events, such as recruitment or awareness raising events;
- running specific projects to support members of the Armed Forces Community;
- creating networks for Armed Forces Community members within organisations; and
- creating an Armed Forces Champion position.



Making sense of our findings

How do these findings help us to identify ways to improve the delivery of Covenant pledges?

One of the most significant findings from our research is the potential to encourage more organisations to sign the Covenant and take action to meet the needs of the Armed Forces Community. It is clear that organisations which have signed the Covenant are more likely to act than those which have not. Twenty eight per cent of the organisations we surveyed are likely or quite likely to sign it; and figures 11 and 10 show the high proportion of organisations that are willing to consider taking various forms of action and have pledged to do so but have not yet acted.

The key challenge is how to exploit this potential: raising awareness of the Covenant is an essential first step. Our research shows that lack of awareness is a significant barrier to organisations signing the Covenant and acting. This applies to knowledge of the Covenant, understanding of the potential disadvantage facing members of the Armed Forces Community and knowing what type of action an organisation could take. Our research also shows that the smaller the organisation, the less likely it is to be aware of the Covenant, to have signed it or to have taken any action. This is particularly important as 48 per cent of private sector employees in the UK are employed by a small or micro organisation (under 49 employees)¹¹. We have also found that public sector and arts organisations are more likely to have signed the Covenant than other sectors.

In order to address this challenge, we need a good understanding of how those organisations which are aware of the Covenant heard about it. As figure 4 shows the most frequently cited sources were a customer, an individual in the organisation or another organisation in the supply chain. This helps to explain why smaller businesses have less awareness of this area of activity, particularly as only three per cent of organisations heard about the Covenant from a trade association. The crucial role of individuals in raising awareness of the Covenant and of the potential disadvantage facing members of the Armed Forces Community, and encouraging organisations to sign it and act having done so, is another important theme.

Our research shows that organisations which have signed the Covenant are far more likely than other organisations to see direct business benefits from supporting the Armed Forces Community. This highlights the potential contribution of supply chain and other business relationships and networks to improving the delivery of Covenant pledges.

Our research has also highlighted the potential importance of the synergy between the Covenant and the ERS. Delivered by DRM, the ERS encourages organisations to be Armed Forces-friendly employers, with three levels of recognition: bronze, silver and gold. Each level of recognition has a broad criteria of action which an organisation would be expected to be carrying out. The ERS provides a means of meeting the appetite among some of our respondents for follow-up action once they have signed the Covenant and for some form of validation of the action they are taking. The impact in the health service of the Step into Health programme shows the contribution that membership bodies can make to the delivery of Covenant pledges.

In the next section we develop a set of recommendations, drawing on these findings, to raise awareness of the Covenant and the Armed Forces Community, encourage more people to sign the Covenant and improve the delivery of Covenant pledges.

¹¹ House of Commons Library Briefing Paper (Dec 2017) 'Business statistics'. Available at: <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN06152>

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section we set out a series of recommendations for ways of increasing the number of organisations which have signed the Covenant and improve the delivery of organisational pledges made under the Covenant. Our research has highlighted the challenge of raising awareness of the Covenant and the importance of addressing the potential disadvantage faced by members of the Armed Forces Community. It has also identified the opportunity to exploit the large numbers of organisations which have indicated an interest in signing the Covenant and in delivering organisational pledges.

Our recommendations, which are intended to respond to these challenges and opportunities, are grouped into seven areas of activity:

- achieving greater coherence nationally between the organisations responsible for supporting the delivery of the Covenant and between the Covenant and the ERS;
- motivating trade associations, membership bodies, chambers of commerce and other organisations to increase awareness of the Covenant and encourage their members to sign it;
- mobilising the voice of the Armed Forces Community to raise awareness of the Covenant;
- more effective promotion of the benefits to businesses and other organisations of signing the Covenant and implementing Covenant pledges;
- providing networking and support opportunities for organisations which are keen to do more to support the Armed Forces Community;
- using public sector procurement to encourage suppliers to sign the Covenant and deliver organisational pledges;
- maintaining the database we have established for this research.

Three steps to encouraging more organisations to sign the Covenant	Three steps to encouraging more organisations which have signed the Covenant to deliver Covenant pledges and act to support the Armed Forces Community
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage and support trade associations and membership bodies to promote the Covenant and the benefits of signing it with their members. 2. Mobilise the voice of the Armed Forces Community to encourage the organisations they work with and for them to sign the Covenant. 3. Encourage local authorities, other public bodies and large businesses to use their supply chains and procurement processes to encourage businesses and other organisations to sign the Covenant. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote a succinct and compelling description of the pathway from signing the Covenant through the bronze, silver and gold stages of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. 2. Ensure that all new Covenant signatories are automatically alerted to the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme and the business benefits that it offers. 3. Encourage chambers of commerce, local authorities and the regional structures of trade associations and membership bodies to support networks of Armed Forces-friendly businesses and organisations to disseminate good practice.



Two other issues have arisen during the course of our work:

- The contribution that one or more toolkits could make to improving the delivery of Covenant pledges;
- The value of a better understanding of the impact of the Covenant and how best to measure that impact.

One of the features of our earlier report *Our Community, Our Covenant* was the development of a toolkit to help local authorities to deliver Covenant pledges. There is a demand for a similar toolkit in this report. It is important to recognise, however, that the scope and audience for this report is far wider and we do not believe that a single toolkit would help the full range of organisations. If further toolkits are to add value there would need to be a suite of them, with toolkits aimed at different sectors and different sizes of organisation. There would also be a need to distinguish between organisations which provide services where there is a risk of disadvantage, and those organisations for which employment is the key issue.

We recommend that the MOD should consider further whether a suite of toolkits could improve the delivery of the Covenant.

This research has focussed on the delivery of the Covenant in terms of the numbers of organisations signing it and delivering Covenant pledges. We have not looked at the impact of that action on the Armed Forces Community. In research terms we have focussed on outputs, not on outcomes or impact. One of the conclusions of the St George's House Consultation was that there would be merit in evaluating the impact of the Covenant. We believe that an impact evaluation would complement this research and help to inform policy nationally and locally on the most effective ways of achieving the Covenant's over-arching objectives. We agree with the conclusions of the St George's House discussion on this subject that a first step should be to develop a Theory of Change and logic model for the Covenant. This would explore the links between the objectives of the Covenant, the outputs (Covenant signatories), the outcomes (action by Covenants signatories) and impact (on the Armed Forces Community). This process would also contribute to the discussion which began at St George's House about the purpose of the Covenant.

We recommend that MOD and FiMT should consider the potential of further research to evaluate the Covenant in order to understand the impact pledges have had on the Armed Forces Community beginning with a Theory of Change workshop of interested parties (MOD Covenant team, DRM, CTP and others).

Greater coherence nationally

The over-riding challenge is to do more to raise awareness of the needs and skills of the Armed Forces Community, the existence of the Covenant, the types of action that can be taken under the Covenant and the potential benefits of doing so. We have heard that one of the barriers to signing the Covenant and delivering pledges is the perceived lack of follow-up once an organisation has signed. There is no pressure or encouragement to act. We have also identified an appetite for more visible validation of action to support the Armed Forces Community.

Responsibility nationally for action to drive take up of the Covenant and subsequent action is split between the MOD and DRM. CTP also has an important part to play. The Covenant website is managed by the MOD Communications Team.

We are aware that DRM actively promotes the Covenant and the ERS through its national and regional account managers. Inevitably, however, their focus is on larger organisations. We are also aware that the broadening of the DRM's focus beyond Reservists and the tighter requirements in the ERS on the Covenant have created an opportunity for a more integrated approach.



The primary way in which most organisations can support the Armed Forces Community is as an Armed Forces-friendly employer. Signing the Covenant, seeking bronze level ERS recognition and potentially progressing to silver or gold represents a sensible pathway for many organisations. There would be significant benefit in crafting and communicating a compelling narrative which reflects this link. New signatories of the Covenant should receive an automated message which refers them to the ERS scheme.

The advantages of this approach would be that:

- a single message would be communicated rather than two, enabling better use to be made of limited resources;
- Covenant signatories would have a clear message about what they could do next in terms of action under the Covenant;
- the gold, silver and bronze awards would fulfil the appetite of some of the people we have spoken to for some form of validation for delivering their Covenant pledges.

There may be scope for this to be built on with signatories being pointed to other sources of advice and support, including the suite of toolkits referred to above.

We recommend that:

The MOD and DRM should ensure that there is a coherent and compelling description of the relationship between the Armed Forces Covenant and the Employer Recognition Scheme and that it is communicated effectively and consistently.

The MOD and DRM should put in place arrangements to ensure that, as a minimum, organisations which sign the Covenant are automatically pointed to the Employer Recognition Scheme. They should also develop ways in which signatories could be referred to:

- sources of advice on action to avoid potential disadvantage where that is relevant;
- the ERS Gold Alumni who are prepared to mentor organisations seeking ERS recognition (building on the already existing relationship between DRM, the Reserve Forces and Cadets association and the Gold Alumni)¹².
- the Career Transition Partnership for access to a pool of employees.

Closer alignment of the resources available nationally would help to deliver these recommendations. It is important that the right structures are in place to support the delivery of the Covenant, reducing duplication and opportunities for confusion and friction.

We recommend that the roles, responsibilities and working arrangements of the MOD, wider Government DRM and CTP should be reviewed with a view to ensuring:

- the most effective use of limited resources;
- effective communication of the Covenant, the case for signing it and good practice in terms of the delivery of Covenant pledges;
- a wider role for CTP in linking employers to individuals;
- wider ownership and promotion of the Covenant across Government;
- ensuring an appropriate level of engagement with Covenant Signatories.

¹² The Gold Alumni do a considerable amount that goes above and beyond their ERS Gold minimum pledges. In their current relationship with MOD, the MOD supports and facilitates their action as opposed to directing the Alumni's activity and initiatives.



Mobilising trade associations, membership bodies, local chambers of commerce etc

Our recommendations in this area have been prompted by two aspects of our findings.

First, the evidence that smaller organisations and businesses are less likely than larger ones to have heard about the Covenant, signed the Covenant or taken any action relating to it. This is in part explained by the fact that most people who have heard of the Covenant did so through either a member of staff, a client or customers or another organisation in their supply chain. Smaller organisations are, by definition, less likely to have opportunities of this type.

Second, very few organisations heard about the Covenant through a trade association. This contrasts with the impact we know that a trade association or membership body can have. As we noted in the findings section, a number of our interviewees in the health sector heard about the Covenant through the Step into Health programme. We also know from our previous research into the delivery of the Covenant by local authorities that the Local Government Association has played an important role in raising awareness of the Covenant among its members and encouraging them to act. In contrast a number of social housing providers we spoke to noted that they had not heard about it through their representative body, the National Housing Federation.

We have concluded that trade associations and membership bodies nationally and chambers of commerce at a local level have a potentially important role to play in encouraging organisations to sign the Covenant and deliver Covenant pledges. The St George's House consultation confirmed our conclusion that collectively SMEs can have a bigger role to play in delivering the Covenant given they make up the majority of organisations across the UK. In order to tap into this potential, it is important to encourage chambers of commerce, local councils and existing Covenant signatories to adopt a place-based approach to mobilise SMEs to sign the Covenant and play their part in meeting the needs of the Armed Forces Community.

It is clear from our sense-making event with a number of business organisations that some of them have signed the Covenant and they have an appetite for playing a bigger role in raising awareness and improving the delivery of Covenant pledges. They made two important points:

- first, they are seeking a longstanding relationship with DRM and a sustained drive to raise awareness rather than a one-off burst of activity. There would be support for a national forum bringing together DRM, the Covenant Team and membership organisations which could meet twice a year to review progress and plan a programme of activity;
- second, many membership associations have strong regional structures. These structures have varying degrees of autonomy, but are often the level at which most engagement with their members takes place. It is important that the DRM works with trade associations and membership bodies at a regional level as well as nationally.



Black Country Chamber of Commerce: a local network in action

The Black Country Chamber of Commerce (CoC) signed the Covenant back in 2014 and is an excellent example of how local businesses can be supported to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant and reduce potential disadvantage the Armed Forces Community may face in accessing their services. In its commitment to carrying out their Covenant pledges, the Chamber of Commerce developed an Armed Forces Champion role to coordinate Covenant activity. This has led to a selection of actions and accomplishments, including:

- effectively engaging local businesses in Covenant activity;
- attending local authority run Covenant boards across the Black Country;
- working towards an ERS award, achieving Silver in 2018;
- running an event as part of the Black Country Business Festival which focuses on the Covenant;
- introducing the Black Country Military Network, a series of events supporting the Armed Forces Covenant. A local and online military business networking group is also due to start in January 2019;
- facilitating Remembrance Sunday events in Dudley with other local businesses;
- hosting the Enterprising Women lunch with inspirational speakers from the Armed Forces Community;
- working with local schools around Service pupil premium and the Covenant.

The Black Country CoC also run the training and mentoring of the University of Wolverhampton's Supporting the Unsung Hero project which began in 2012. This project is a 10-month business start-up programme aimed at spouses and partners of serving personnel, Reservists and Veterans looking to start their own business. It has supported over 700 people across the country and overseas.

We understand that DRM has already recognised the importance of trade associations and this area is firmly on their agenda. It is developing a new approach to working with them, with its national account managers (NAMs) establishing relationships with the key organisations in the sectors they focus on. NAMs already manage a number of these relationships, for example with the Institute of Directors (IoD), the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and more recently the Confederation of British Industry. DRM also recognise the importance of broadening their sector reach and are currently working to develop relationships in the not-for-profit sector.

DRM are also exploring how best to work with chambers of commerce. One of its regional employer engagement officers in Scotland is working with five chambers in the Highlands Region, the main objective of which is to build better relationships between the Armed Forces Community and local businesses. The Black Country Chamber of Commerce also plays an active role in promoting the Covenant in collaboration with the DRM's regional account manager and the local authorities. A member of staff from the Black Country Chamber of Commerce (joint with the University of Wolverhampton) sits on a number of Covenant boards in the area. More information on the type of action the Black Country Chamber of Commerce is undertaking can be found in the good practice box above.

Although local government was not in the scope of this research we know from our previous work and from our research for this report in the Black Country, Greater Manchester and elsewhere that councils have a potentially important role to play in raising awareness of the Covenant among the local business community either with the local chamber of commerce or directly.



We recommend that:

DRM should continue to progress with their plans to work with trade association and membership bodies¹³ nationally and regionally to increase awareness of the Covenant, to encourage organisations to sign it and to promote good practice in terms of the delivery of Covenant pledges.

DRM should work with the British Chambers of Commerce, the Local Government Association (LGA) and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and other local, regional and national organisations (including local Chambers of Commerce) to enable the creation of local networks to develop a place-based approach to the delivery of the Covenant, to encourage organisations, particularly SMEs, to sign it and to promote good practice in terms of the delivery of Covenant pledges.

Mobilising the voice of the Armed Forces Community

One of the most striking features of our research is the impact on the delivery of Covenant pledges of individuals within organisations, particularly Veterans or other people with some personal connection to the Armed Forces Community. The evidence suggests that they can be instrumental in making an organisation aware of the Covenant, signing it and delivering Covenant pledges.

We understand that not every Veteran will have the motivation, desire or capacity to act as an advocate for the Covenant. The objective is to identify and mobilise champions for the Covenant within the wider Armed Forces Community. This will include Veterans, but could also include family members, partners, friends and colleagues.

We are aware that people leaving the Armed Forces are briefed on the Covenant in terms of what it means for them. There would, however, be significant benefits in extending this briefing to encourage them to raise awareness of the Covenant with their new employers and with other contacts and colleagues.

We recommend that the MOD should ensure that when the Covenant is communicated to members of the Armed Forces Community, reference is made to the role they can play in raising awareness of it in their workplaces and with clients and suppliers.

It is also significant that very few organisations heard of the Covenant via one of the military charities. The large military charities have links with major businesses and all military charities have links of various types with members of the Armed Forces Community. There is potential for them to play a bigger, and more important role in raising awareness of the Covenant generally, in encouraging businesses and other organisations to sign the Covenant and in helping to mobilise the voice of the Armed Forces Community to raise awareness of the Covenant.

We recommend that DRM should discuss with the military charities how they could play a bigger role in raising awareness of the Covenant with businesses, other organisations directly and via the Armed Forces Community¹⁴.

More effective promotion of the benefits

An important theme running through our findings is that businesses and other organisations point to a lack of clarity about what action they could take as a reason for not signing the Covenant and for not taking action to benefit the Armed Forces Community. This is particularly so for small organisations many of which say that they are too small to take any action. Our research also suggests that organisations are far more likely to be alert to the business benefits to them of supporting the Armed Forces Community once they have begun to act.

¹³ Such as the FSB, EEF, the Association of Colleges, the National Housing Federation

¹⁴ DRM are currently in the process of seeking financial approval to increase the number of DRM National Account Managers (NAM) in order to broaden their reach into the not-for-profit arena and increase awareness of the Covenant



Action to promote the benefits of the Covenant must reflect the fact that it is a UK-wide cross-Government initiative. It is not just a matter for the MOD, which has a very focused remit and engages with a niche area of industry. Promoting awareness of the Covenant with business and other organisations requires a whole Government effort.

It is also important to establish a widespread understanding that signing the Covenant and delivering Covenant pledges is about more than “doing the right thing” or carrying out a charitable act. There are tangible reasons for and benefits from doing so, most notably:

- where relevant, to help tackle disadvantage; and
- an opportunity to derive tangible business benefits either through recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce or obtaining market benefits from supporting an important part of the national and/or local community and being seen to do so.

DRM has begun to assemble material on the benefits to organisations of supporting the Armed Forces Community. It is also developing a package of benefits for organisations which sign the Covenant and go on to participate in the ERS. This is likely to range from discounted fees for military attractions to accessing the Armed Forces’ training and development capacity. This could form a useful element of a refreshed drive to raise awareness of the Covenant and encourage organisations to sign it.

There would be considerable benefit in a more concerted drive to present the direct business benefits to organisations of supporting the Armed Forces Community – in terms of, for example helping to address pressing recruitment and retention challenges – supported by a portfolio of case studies demonstrating both the types of action that organisations are taking and the benefits they are realising by doing so.

Our recommendation on greater coherence nationally would help to create the capacity to do this. Material of this type would help trade associations and membership bodies to raise awareness of the Covenant and the organisations we have spoken to are happy to provide a “translation service” to ensure that the material is produced in business-friendly language. This material could also help members of the Armed Forces Community to act as advocates for the Covenant.

We recommend that the MOD should produce, regularly update and maintain a comprehensive resource information pack with examples of the type of action organisations are taking and the tangible benefits to their organisations from doing so. This information should feature prominently on a refreshed Covenant website.

In addition to this we note that the Covenant website should be refreshed with DRM fully immersed in keeping this website up to date.

Building a network

One of the key opportunities that must be exploited if the delivery of Covenant pledges is to be improved relates to significant proportion of organisations which have signed the Covenant but not acted and which have made pledges but not delivered them. A key barrier they point to is not knowing what action they could take or how to take it.

We have also found that some people who signed the Covenant did so in the expectation that they would be joining a community or network of organisations which are Armed Forces-friendly. They report having found that this is not the case, and say that this is a factor which has caused them not to make or deliver Covenant pledges. Our earlier recommendation about improving the links between the Covenant and the ERS could help to fill this gap but there is scope for exploring other opportunities to build networks or communities of practice. There is also a demand for access to mentoring to help organisations to identify what steps they could take to support the Armed Forces Community and to help them deliver.



There are at least three avenues which could be pursued:

- trade associations and membership bodies could be encouraged to support networks of organisations which have signed the Covenant within their membership;
- networks at a local level could be facilitated by chambers of commerce and local authorities;
- DRM could explore with ERS award winners what part they could play in contributing to networks of this type.

We recommend that DRM should continue to work with the ERS Gold Alumni through the steering group which the Director of DRM and the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association are on, to explore more ways in which they could help:

- raise awareness of the Covenant;
- build a network of Covenant signatories;
- mentor organisations about the action they can take to deliver Covenant pledges and secure ERS recognition.

Public procurement

Our research revealed that a significant number of organisations had heard about the Covenant from customers or clients or through their supply chain. It also showed that organisations which had signed the Covenant were more likely than other organisations to see a direct business benefit in taking action to support the Armed Forces Community. A business imperative is clearly an important driver of action.

Given the high level of commitment to the Covenant within central and local government, one mechanism for mobilising this business imperative is through the public sector procurement process.

We recommend that the MOD and DRM should work with other government departments, the LGA, COSLA, NHS Providers and other national organisations to consider how best to use the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 within public sector procurement to encourage suppliers to sign the Covenant and deliver Covenant pledges.

Database

As part of this research we have built a database of 2191 organisations which had signed the Covenant by March 2018 merged with data on the same organisations from other publicly available databases including the ERS, organisations which employ Armed Forces Reserves, and organisations which are members of the Defence Discount Scheme. Given the need for closer links between the Covenant and the ERS, and the opportunities for creating pathways from signing the Covenant to the ERS, or from employing a reservist to signing the Covenant, it would be useful to maintain the database in order to measure progress.

We recommend that DRM and the MOD should consider maintaining the database we have built for this research and, within GDPR constraints, make it publicly accessible.



Summary of recommendations:

Greater coherence nationally: We recommend...

1. The MOD and DRM should ensure that there is a coherent and compelling description of the relationship between the Armed Forces Covenant and the Employer Recognition Scheme and that it is communicated effectively and consistently.
2. The MOD and DRM should put in place arrangements to ensure that, as a minimum, organisations which sign the Covenant are automatically pointed to the Employer Recognition Scheme. They should also develop ways in which signatories could be referred to:
 - sources of advice on action to avoid potential disadvantage where that is relevant;
 - the ERS Gold Alumni who are prepared to mentor organisations seeking ERS recognition (building on the already existing relationship between DRM, the Reserve Forces and Cadets association and the Gold Alumni);
 - the Career Transition Partnership for access to a pool of employees.
3. The roles, responsibilities and working arrangements of the MOD, wider Government DRM and CTP should be reviewed with a view to ensuring:
 - the most effective use of limited resources;
 - effective communication of the Covenant, the case for signing it and good practice in terms of the delivery of Covenant pledges;
 - a wider role for CTP in linking employers to individuals;
 - wider ownership and promotion of the Covenant across Government;
 - ensuring an appropriate level of engagement with Covenant Signatories.

Mobilising trade associations, membership bodies, local chambers of commerce etc : We recommend...

4. DRM should continue to progress with their plans to work with trade association and membership bodies nationally and regionally to increase awareness of the Covenant, to encourage organisations to sign it, and to promote good practice in terms of the delivery of Covenant pledges.
5. DRM should work with the British Chambers of Commerce, the Local Government Association (LGA), the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and other local, regional and national organisations (including local Chambers of Commerce) to enable the creation of local networks to develop a place-based approach to the delivery of the Covenant, to encourage organisations, particularly SMEs, to sign it and to promote good practice in terms of the delivery of Covenant pledges.

Mobilising the voice of the Armed Forces Community: We recommend...

6. The MOD should ensure that when the Covenant is communicated to members of the Armed Forces Community reference is made to the role they can play in raising awareness of it in their workplaces and with clients and suppliers.
7. DRM should discuss with the military charities how they could play a bigger role in raising awareness of the Covenant with businesses, other organisations directly and via the Armed Forces Community.



More effective promotion of the benefits: We recommend...

8. The MOD should produce, regularly update and maintain a comprehensive resource information pack with examples of the type of action organisations are taking and the tangible benefits to their organisations from doing so. This information should feature prominently on a refreshed Covenant website.
9. The MOD should consider further whether a suite of toolkits could improve the delivery of the Covenant.
10. We recommend that MOD and FiMT should consider the potential of further research to evaluate the Covenant in order to understand the impact pledges have had on the Armed Forces Community beginning with a Theory of Change workshop of interested parties (MOD Covenant team, DRM, CTP and others).

Building a network: We recommend...

11. DRM should continue to work with the ERS Gold Alumni through the steering group which the Director of DRM and the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association are on, to explore more ways in which they could help:
 - raise awareness of the Covenant;
 - build a network of Covenant signatories;
 - mentor organisations about the action they can take to deliver Covenant pledges and secure ERS recognition.

Public procurement: We recommend...

12. The MOD and DRM should work with other government departments, the LGA, COSLA, NHS Providers and other national organisations to consider how best to use the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 within public sector procurement to encourage suppliers to sign the Covenant and deliver Covenant pledges.

Database: We recommend...

13. We recommend that DRM and the MOD should consider maintaining the database we have built for this research and, within GDPR constraints, make it publicly accessible.

ANNEX 1: ADDITIONAL QUANTITATIVE CHARTS

Below are the additional figures from the quantitative evidence base which do not feature in the report, but which informed our findings.

Figure 14: Percentage of respondents who felt that different types of Armed Forces Community disadvantage were relevant for their organisations

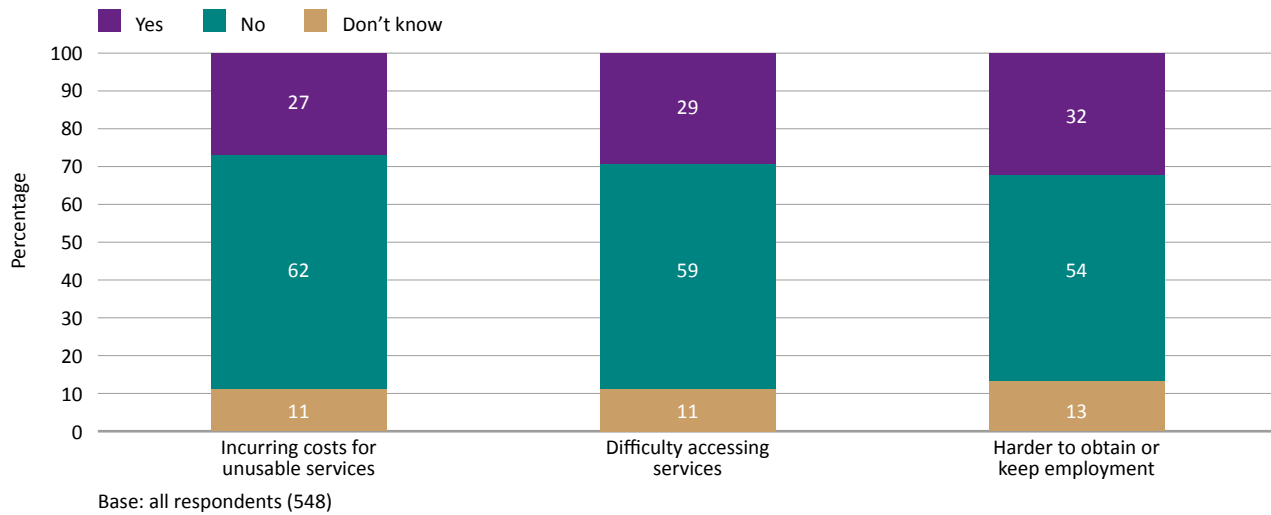


Figure 15: Percentage of organisations who had taken action to address different types of Armed Forces Community disadvantage, compared with the percentage for whom they were relevant

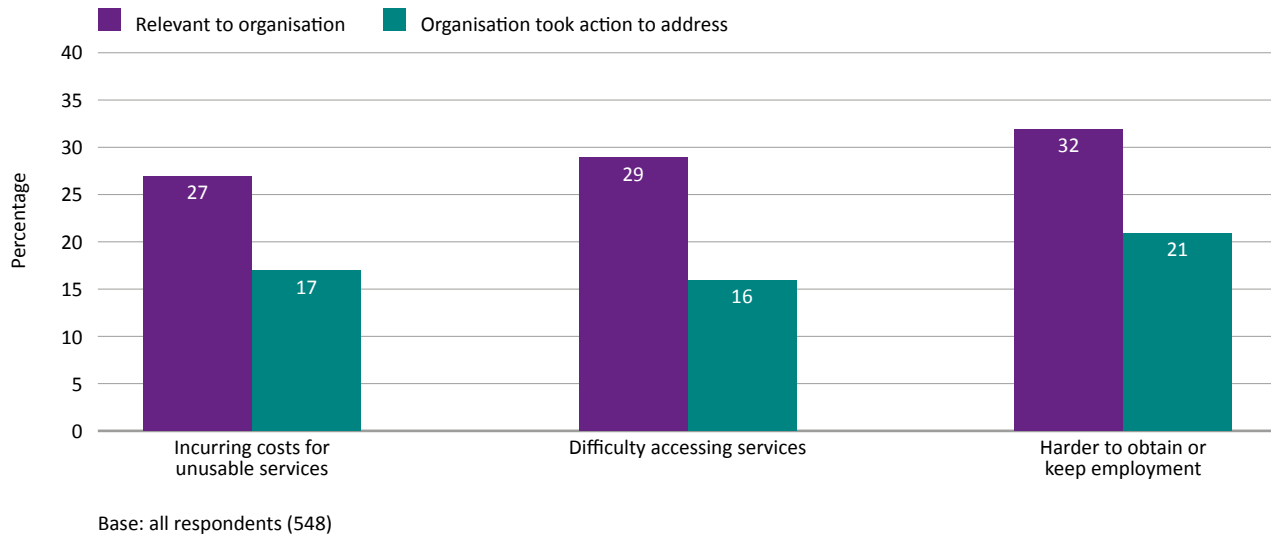




Figure 16: Percentage of organisations taking or willing to consider various other actions to support the Armed Forces Community

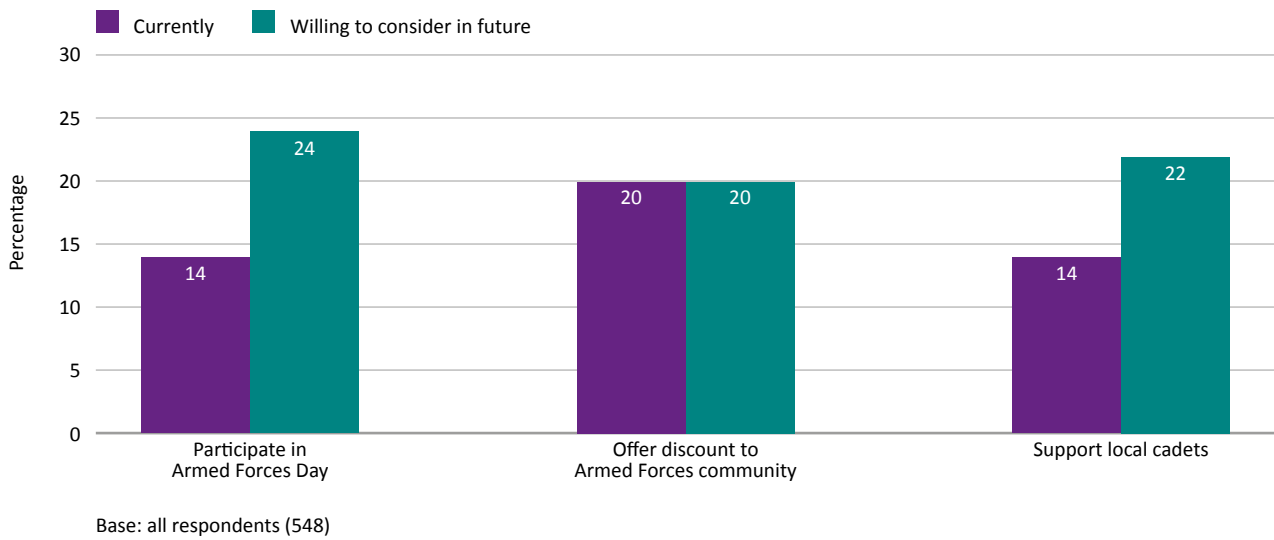


Figure 17: Percentage of organisations publicising their support for the Armed Forces Community in various ways

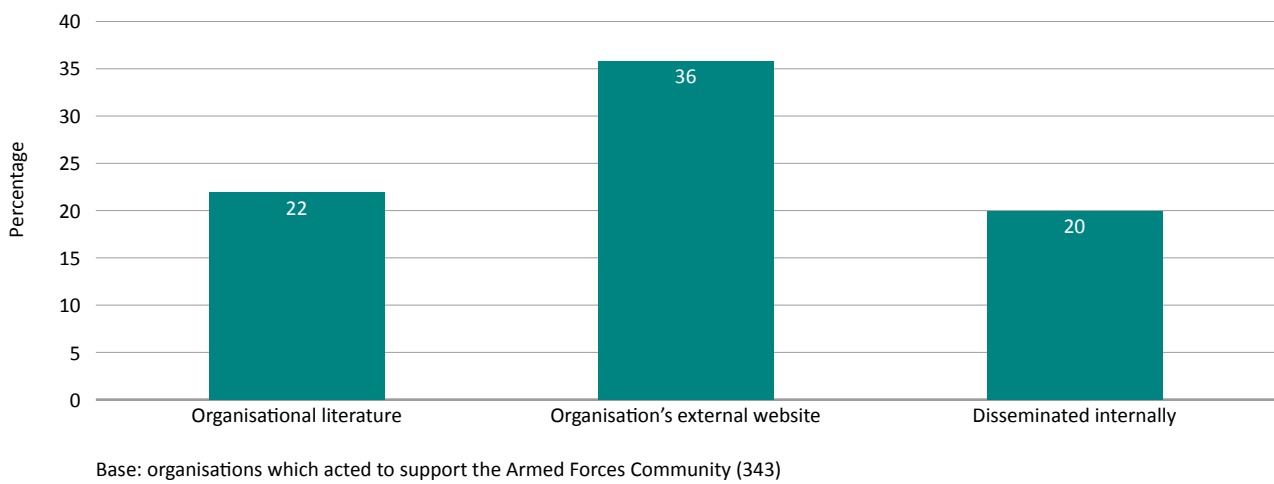
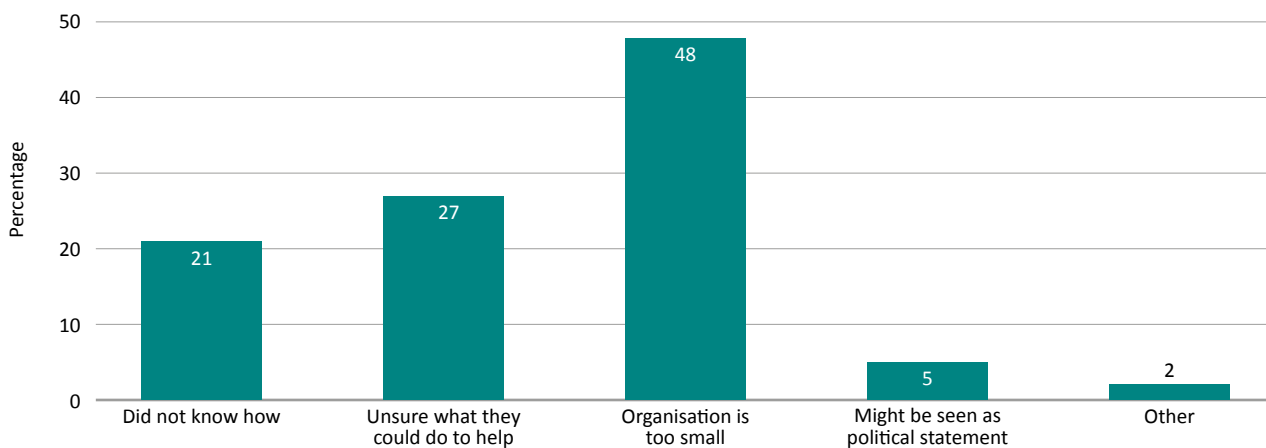
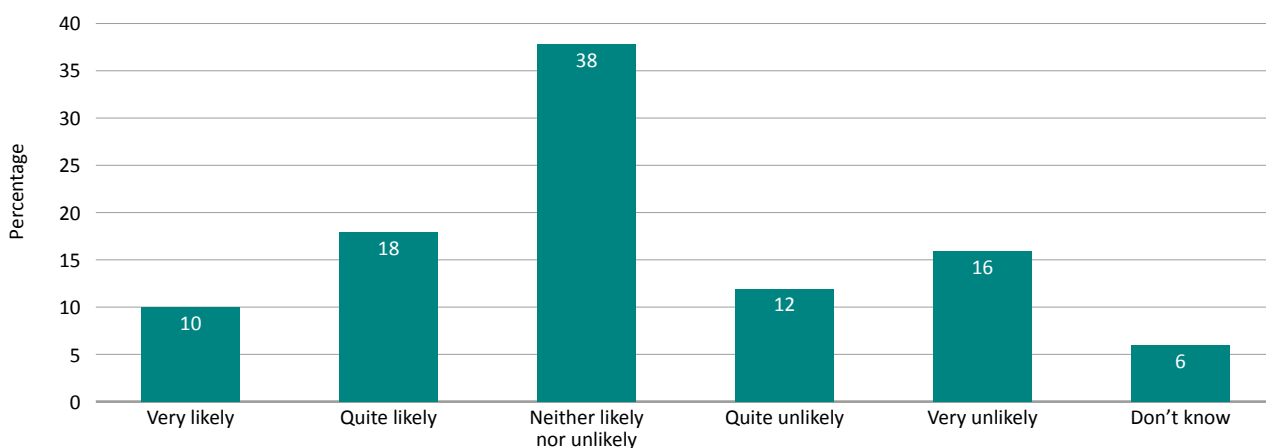


Figure 18: Percentage of organisations giving different reasons for not signing the Armed Forces Covenant



Base: organisations which had heard of but not signed the covenant (63)

Figure 19: Percentage of organisations saying they were likely or unlikely to sign the Armed Forces Covenant in the next year



Base: organisations which had heard of but not signed the Covenant (63)



Figure 20: Percentages of organisations in the different size categories, comparing all organisations in Great Britain, Armed Forces Covenant signatories, and ERS award holders

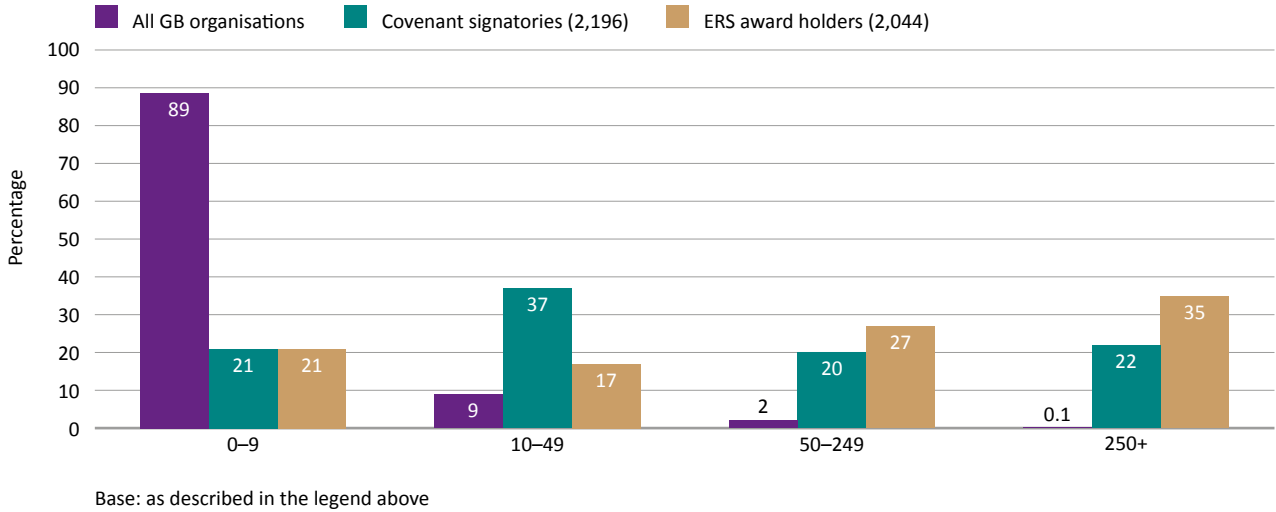


Figure 21: Percentages of organisations in the different size categories, comparing bronze, silver and gold ERS award holders

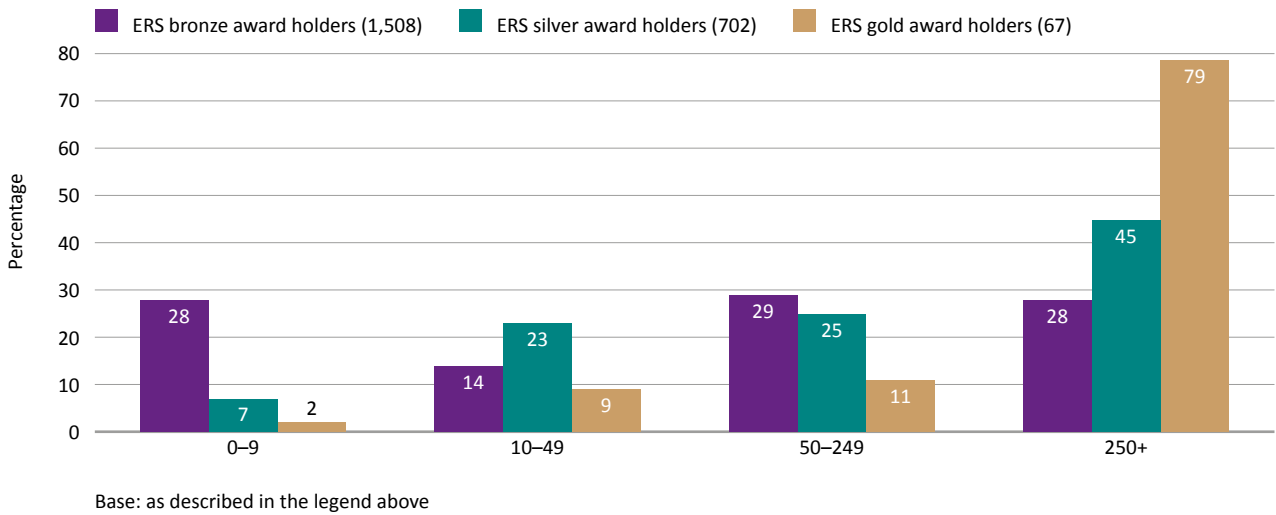
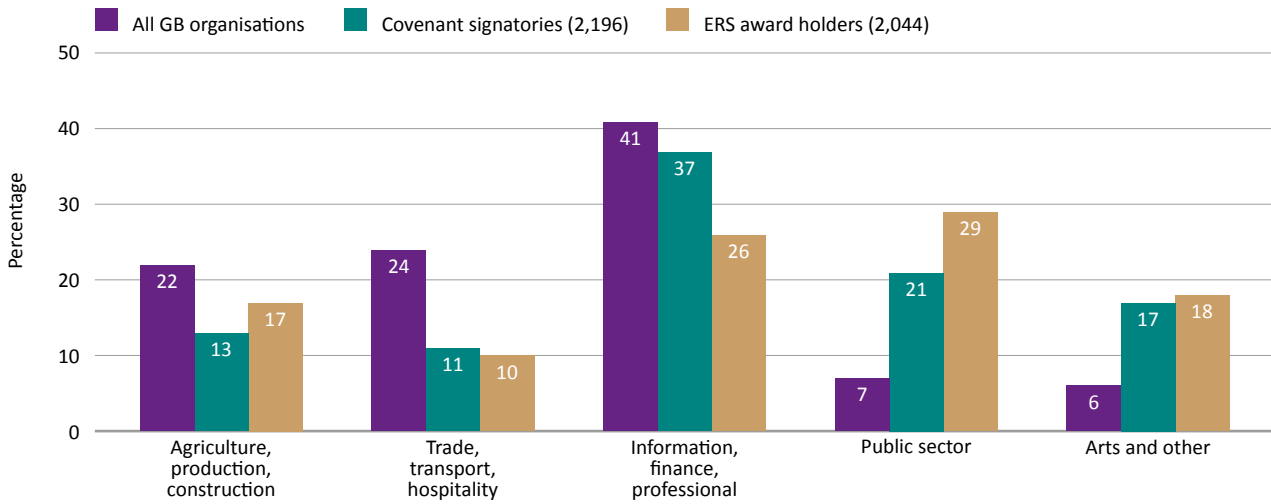
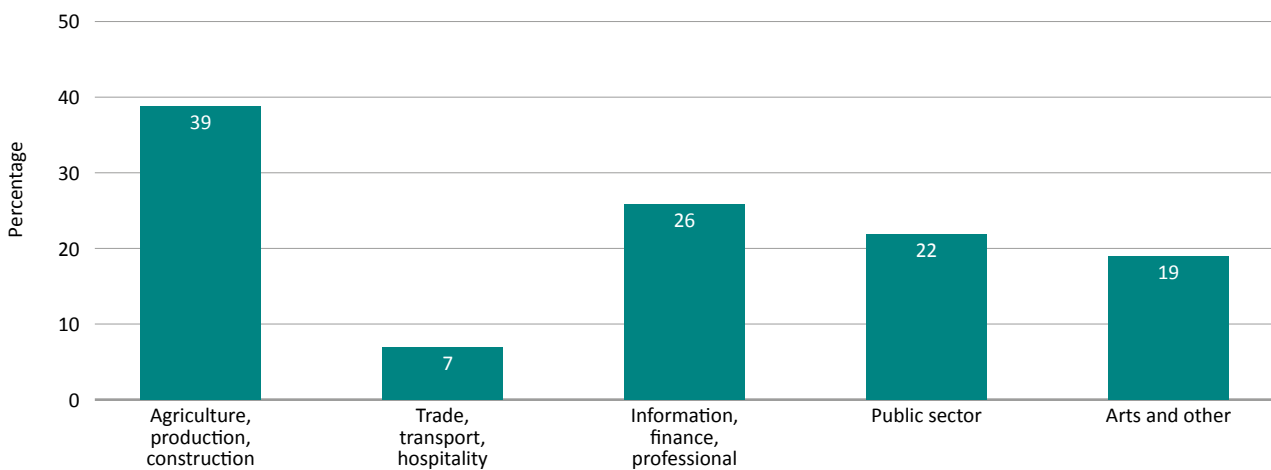


Figure 22: Percentages of organisations in the different industrial sector groups, comparing all organisations in Great Britain, Armed Forces Covenant signatories, and ERS award holders



Base: as described in the legend above

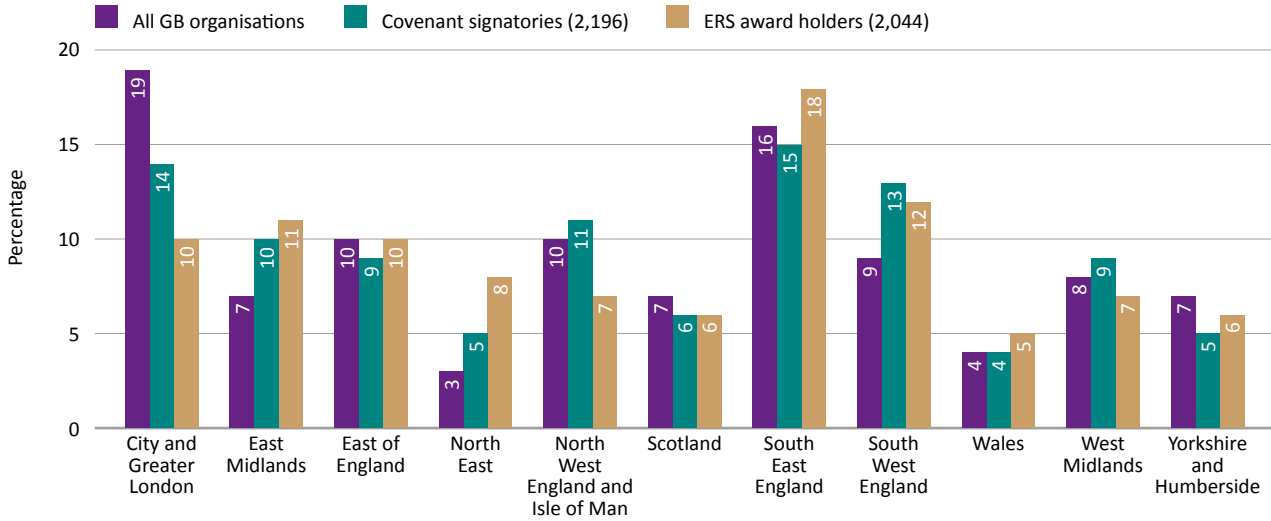
Figure 23: Whether respondents had heard of the Armed Forces Covenant, by industrial sector group of their organisation



Base: all respondents (548)

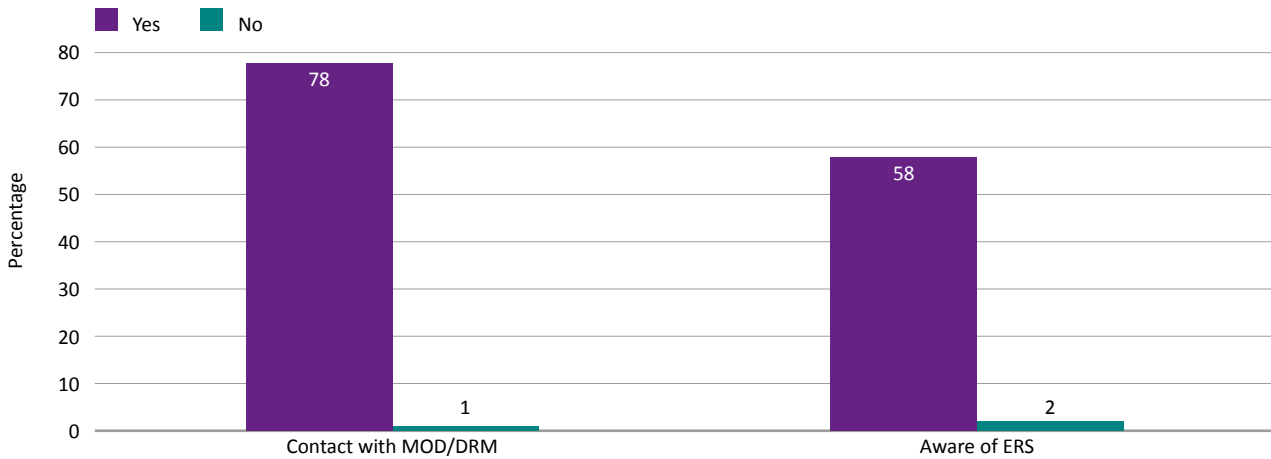


Figure 24: Percentages of organisations in the different regions of Great Britain, comparing all organisations in Great Britain, Armed Forces Covenant signatories, and ERS award holders



Base: as described in the legend above

Figure 25: Whether organisations had signed the Armed Forces Covenant, by whether or not they had contact with the MOD or DRM, or were aware of the ERS



Base: all respondents (548)

Figure 26: Percentage of respondents saying their organisations took action to counter various types of Armed Forces Community disadvantage, by whether or not they had signed the Armed Forces Covenant

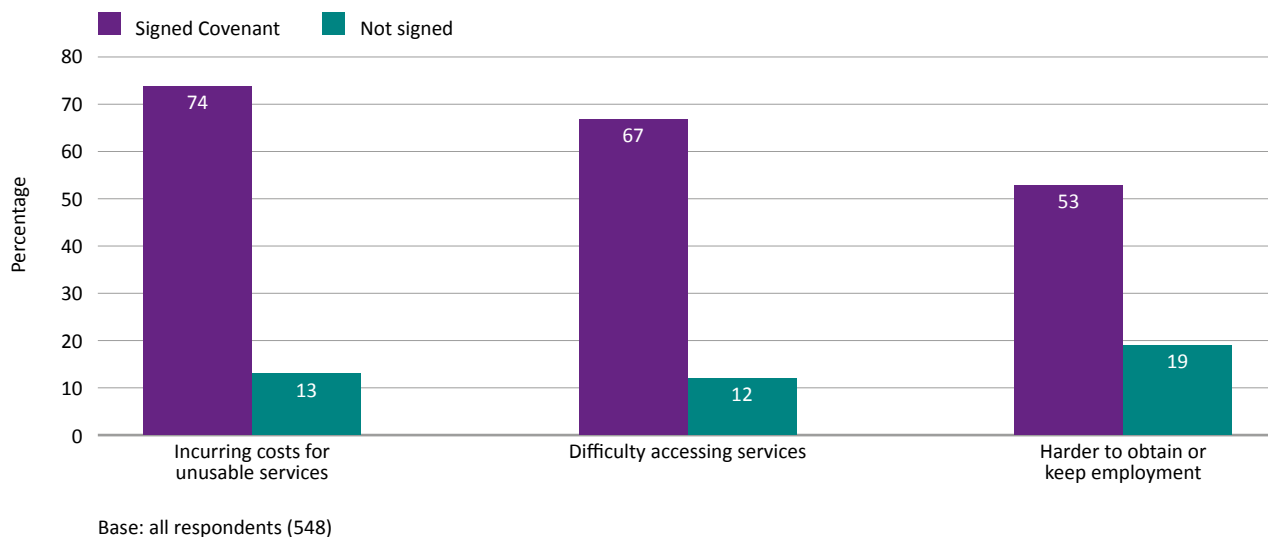


Figure 27: Percentage of organisations currently employing people from different Armed Forces Community groups, by whether or not they had signed the Armed Forces Covenant





Figure 28: Percentage of organisations taking action to support employment of Armed Forces Community groups, by whether or not they had signed the Armed Forces Covenant

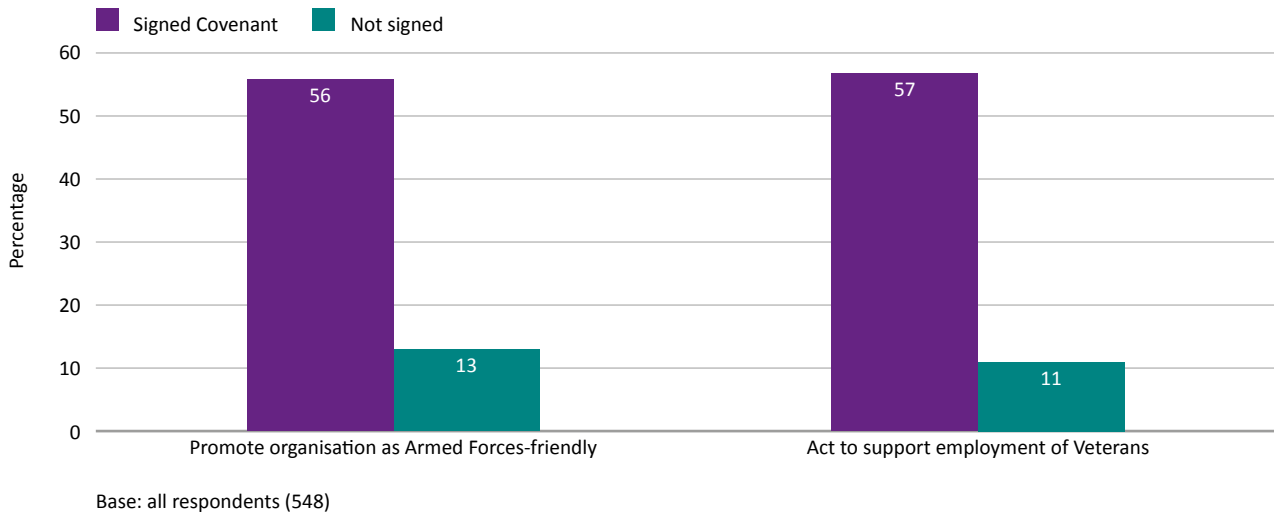


Figure 29: Percentage of Armed Forces Covenant signatories pledging to take various other types of action to support the Armed Forces Community (Covenant database), compared with percentage of signatories who took action in these areas (survey)

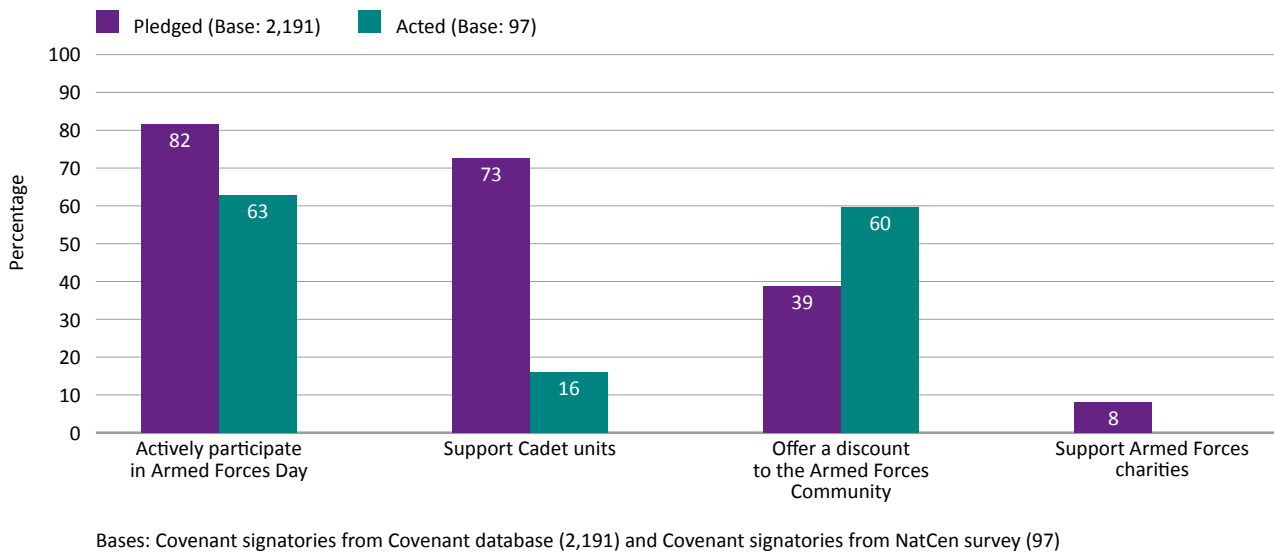


Figure 30: Percentage of organisations taking other actions to support the Armed Forces Community, by whether or not they had signed the Armed Forces Covenant



Figure 31: Percentage of organisations publicising their support for the Armed Forces Community in different ways by whether or not they had signed the Armed Forces Covenant

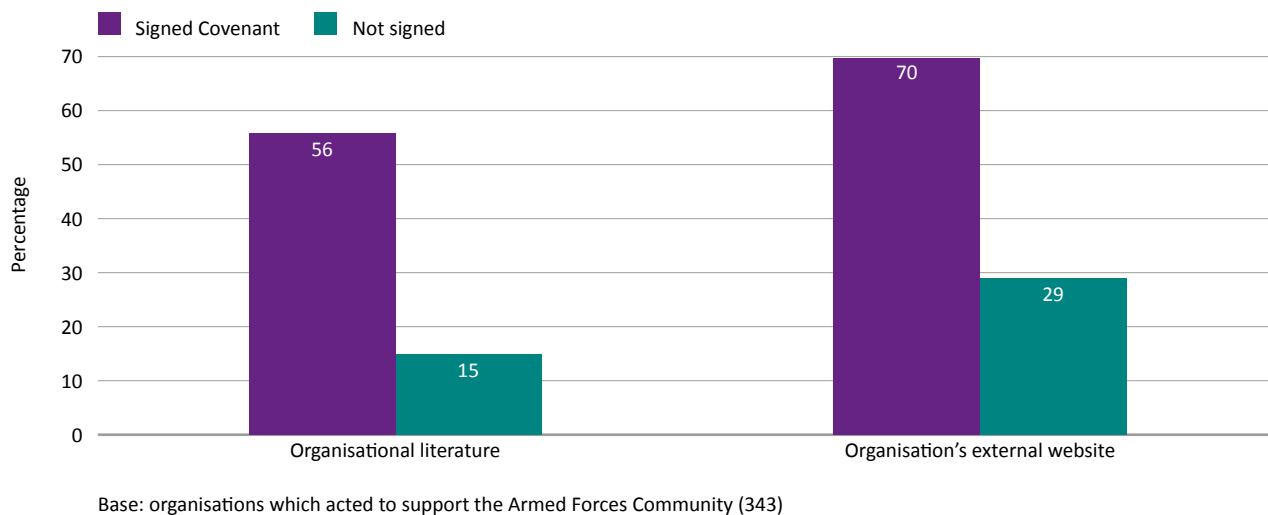




Figure 32: Percentages perceiving different potential benefits of taking action to support the Armed Forces Community, by whether or not they had signed the Armed Forces Covenant

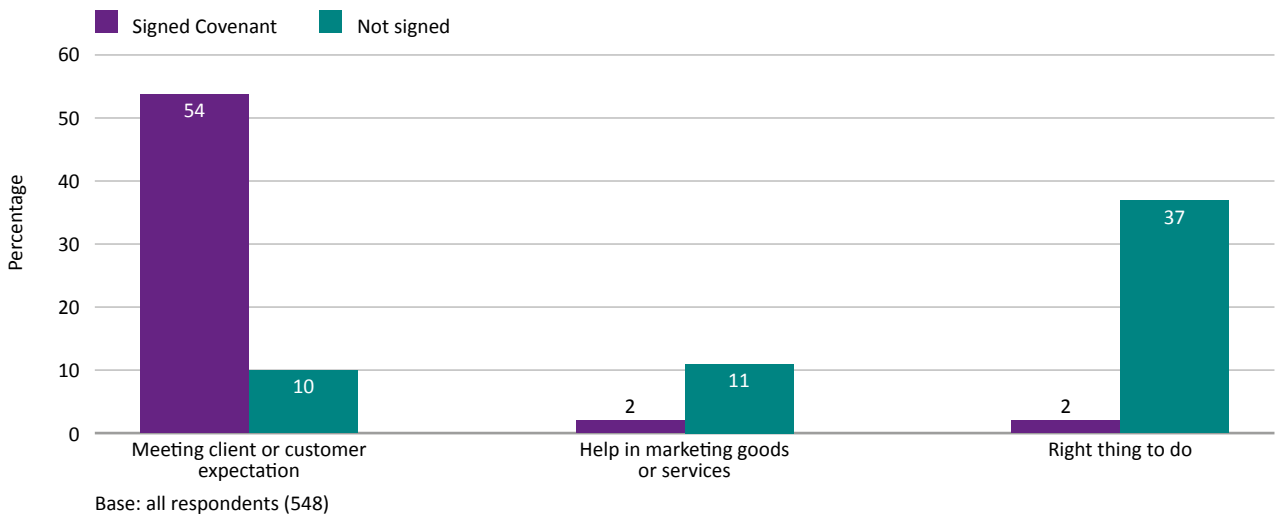
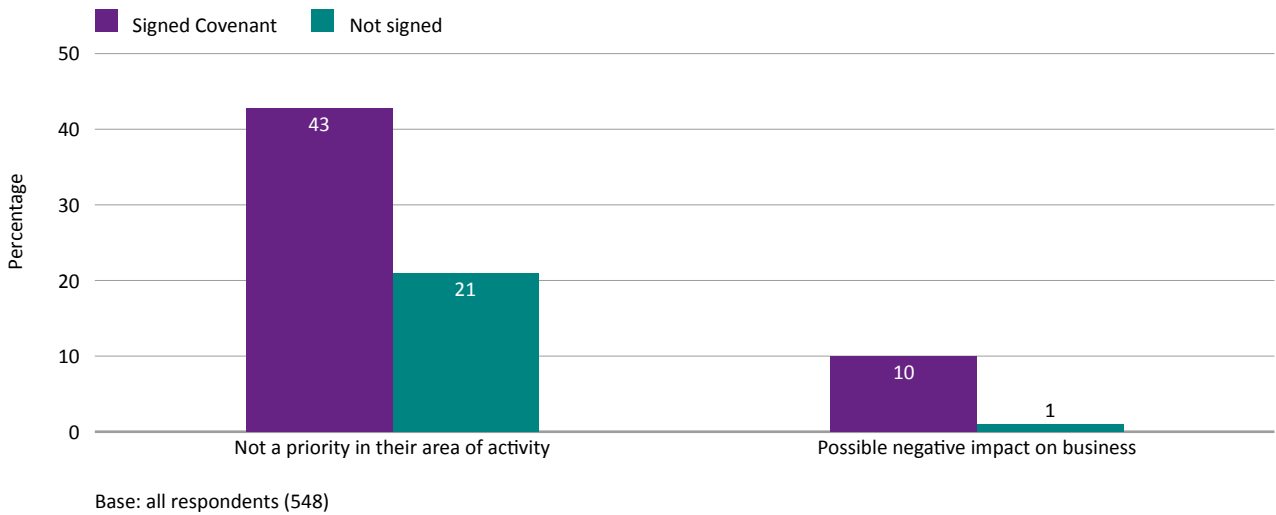


Figure 33: Percentage of respondents saying that various factors might prevent their organisations taking action to support the Armed Forces Community, by whether or not they had signed the Armed Forces Covenant





ANNEX 2: EXAMPLES OF ACTION

The grid below has compiled examples of the types of action organisations from the research interviews and focus groups have implemented.

Organisation size	Construction	Transportation and storage	Real estate	Business, administration and support services	Education	Human health and social work	Arts, entertainment and recreation	Other service activities
Micro: 0-9				Offering Reservists extended leave and encouraging clients to do the same.				Work with local Armed Forces to help develop opportunities for Armed Forces personnel to find a role in the third sector. Offers CV writing and job search help with Armed Forces personnel in transition. Work with DRM to develop a third sector focused event to raise awareness.
Small: 10-49		Holds a fun day for ex-Service personnel.					Provide information to members of the Armed Forces Community about: where they can do more activity, how to be involved in volunteering, and how to develop their transferable skills. Running projects which support ex-Service personnel amongst other demographics. Development of accredited course for ex-Service personnel.	
Medium: 50-249								
Large: 250+	Offer training to help translate military skills and qualifications to ones that employers will recognise. Offer a good leave package for Reservist training. Attend local regiment's open days.	Ensuring interview questions are asked in a way which will draw out skills rather than experience. Focus recruitment on ex-Service personnel and Reservists. Have a staff support network of ex-Service and Reservists which meet regularly and hold events. Run insight days and CV workshops. Work with Armed Forces charities and the CTP to ensure jobs are advertised with them.	Hosting a Veterans Breakfast Club Regeneration and building of properties for Veterans and their families.		Created Forces Learning Partnership, a mechanism to upskill ex-Service personnel and maximise their potential. Creation of a Veterans' community within the university. Supporting Reservists who are staff members and students. Being involved in CTP transition day events. Advertise roles on CTP website. Educated those in recruitment to look at transferable skills. Offers additional leave for spouses and Reservists. Set up Armed Forces network meetings. Communication of Armed Forces support work through internal system. Promotion of positive local initiatives. Supports Armed Forces Day and encourages members of the Armed Forces Community to wear their uniform. Looking to make links with local RAF unit so students can undertake work placements. Target local Armed Forces when recruiting.	Development of partnerships to increase Reservist employment. Ensure correct policies and procedures are in place to support Armed Forces Community. Include the Armed Forces Community in Equalities Act. Raise awareness during events and training opportunities. Establishment of an Armed Forces staff network. Have an action plan on supporting ex-Service personnel into employment and support relating to housing, education, welfare and access to health. Offer volunteering opportunities for members of the Armed Forces Community. Promote Armed Forces Day. Has an Armed Forces Champion. Encouragement of members of staff to join the Reserve Forces. Developed relationships with organisations which support spouses and partners employment. Provides additional annual leave for Reservists. Works with local Armed Forces to provide support for people transitioning out of the military. Development of a peer group to support spouses. Encourages other organisations to offer more support to the Armed Forces Community. Signed up to Step into Health. Training frontline staff so that they understand the issues the Armed Forces Community may face and to ask the right questions.		



ANNEX 3: CONSULTATION

FiMT held a consultation event which was designed to explore ways to improve the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (though Northern Ireland is out of scope for this piece of research). The consultation was attended by stakeholders from government, public sector organisations, and military charities.

The consultation was designed to further the discussion on:

- The purpose of the Covenant and what it aims to achieve;
- The findings of this research project and whether anything has been overlooked;
- The barriers to effective delivery of the Covenant;
- The solutions to overcome the barriers to delivery.

Key points from the discussions which related to this research have been included in the findings and recommendations.

A report on the Consultation at St George's House is available on the FiMT website at: <https://www.fim-trust.org/reports/>.



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