



2025 Annual Report

Implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent



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Report Date: 18 December 2025

Email: ArmedForces@kent.gov.uk

Chairman's Forward



Cllr Richard Palmer - Chairman of Kent and Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board

As Chairman of Kent and Medway CMPB, I am really pleased and proud of all the successes that have been achieved across Kent. It has been a very eventful 8 months since I took over the Chair with so much happening!

I would highlight the really successful 11th Annual Armed Forces Covenant Conference which was held at Medway Campus, Mid-Kent College in Maidstone where we had over 140+ representatives attend. Guest Speakers included HM Vice Lord-Lieutenant - Sir Hugh

Robertson; Cllr Linden Kemkaran - Leader KCC and Cllr Vince Maple - Leader Medway Council. Claire Lilly Founder - The Forcer Protocol spoke movingly of on Suicide Prevention. A tool used by the Police to ensure key information is available to them when searching for serving and ex-service veterans who are lost or have gone missing. Cdre Tim Green ADC Naval Regional Commander - London and South East gave a fascinating brief on the Strategic Defence Review and how the next battles will be fought under the sea!! He warned of generational challenges with the UK under daily attack particularly from cyber-attacks. Lt Col Tim Petrinsky - SO1 HQ SE - Aldershot spoke on our Army commitments within Kent and how nearly 50,000 Ukrainian Recruits had been taught basic soldiering skills including weapon handling, marksmanship and self-defence in and around Kent under Op INTERFLEX.

It has been a year of commemorations with VE Day 80 and VJ Day 80 Flag Raising Events, as well as Armed Forces Day Flag-Raising; Armed Forces Day in Chatham, the Kent Official Poppy Launch and the Kent RBL Festival of Remembrance Concert in Rochester Cathedral, Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day. A time for silence and to remember with thanks those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. We will never forget them.

Here in Kent, we are most fortunate to enjoy excellent working relationships with 36 Royal Engineers and especially its Commanding Officer - Lt Col Ryan Castro; 1 Royal School of Mechanical Engineering and Lt Col John Newton - Commanding Officer and 1 Royal

Gurkha Regiment and its Commanding Officer - Lt Col Jon Jeffcoats and of course, Col David Kenny - Commander, HQ SE as well as with Lt Col (Retd) Rod Gray from SERFCA.

We also work closely with 3 Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and its Commanding Officer - Lt Col Nathan Horsman and with 579 Field Squadron (EOD) and Major Duncan Wood. These are excellent and fruitful partnerships which really underline the fact that Kent is very much a Military county, widely respected by the Ministry of Defence.

As Chairman of Kent County Council, I have been privileged to get out and about in the County and meet many people. One of the undoubted benefits of being Chairman is that I am automatically Chairman of Kent & Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board and I must say that it has been one of the most enjoyable parts of the role as I attend and participate in so many Military activities as an ex-serviceman and I am really getting to know and to understand the Military from a different perspective. It has made me even more 'armed forces aware' and increased my enthusiasm to represent them and their interests at the highest level of Government. I am also grateful for the trust that they have put in me and also for the advice that I receive from our officers here at County Hall

With four months left, I continue to be filled with pride and with all that has been achieved to date including Kent CC having its MoD Employers Recognition Gold Award revalidated. It is a privileged role that I have played in working closely with all our partners and now especially HMS Kent. Our partners like me, stand committed to ensure that no member of the armed forces community is disadvantaged because of their service. If anything, all our partners and our Board Members are now even more aware of the ultimate sacrifice that our armed forces are prepared to pay in these uncertain times to keep Britain and Kent in particular safe and free.

The Armed Forces Act 2021 and Covenant Legislation

The Armed Forces Act 2021 and Covenant Legislation having had a smooth passage through both the House of Commons and the House of Lords resulted in new Statutory Guidelines being published. To remind Members of Kent County Council - as public bodies, Local Authorities now need to show 'due regard' when considering applications from Service Personnel seeking School Admissions, Housing Accommodation and Healthcare and thereby ensure that no one is disadvantaged because their Service to the Nation.



On 28 June 2025, the Prime Minister announced that new legislation will be brought forward to deliver the manifesto promise to bring the Armed Forces Covenant fully into law, placing the armed forces community at the heart of government decision-making. [Written Ministerial Statement](#) Find out what the Legal Duty extension means for you by using one of the Toolkits below:

- [What it means for the Armed Forces Community](#)
- [What it means for Bodies in scope](#)
- [What it means for Armed Forces Families](#)

KCC and Medway are well placed to handle such requests as they already do it as it is "the right thing to do" without the need for any new legislation. The plan was to 'tighten up' the Armed Forces Covenant having had it enshrined in law - by Statutory Guidelines with Employment, Naturalisation and Social Benefits next for consideration. One recommendation already coming through is that the armed forces community should also be trained along with frontline staff on what the Armed Forces Covenant does and does not do in support of them. 'Managing expectations' has become even more important with an increase in demand from regular and ex-service personnel seeking for example the best school or one of the best houses in their local area across Kent and Medway. Read more about the Kent and Medway [Armed Forces Community Covenant document \(PDF, 150.3 KB\)](#).

Kent & Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board



In May 2025, we welcomed Cllr Richard Palmer as our new Chairman of Kent CC. Richard has been a Councillor for Swale for a number of years and a County Councillor since May 2025 is a Veteran himself. He has been a strong supporter of the Armed Forces. As Chairman of Kent CC, he automatically becomes Chairman of Kent &

Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board and Armed Forces Champion. Having already chaired his first Recognise & Remember Task Group, Richard has been attending a number of military related meetings across Kent and beyond.

In October 2025, the Kent & Medway CMPB welcomed Lt Col (Retd) Peter Conn MBE who took over the Chairmanship of the Employment and Skills Task Group following the retirement of Richard Lavender.

The Kent & Medway CMPB continues to oversee the implementation of the Covenant and meets twice a year and is supported by Task Groups covering the following themes:

- Recognise and Remember
- Employment and Skills
- Unit Welfare Officers - a Joint

Task Group involving KCC Departmental Lead Officers, Medway Lead Officers, District Council Housing, the NHS Armed Forces Community Support Lead and Regular and Reservist Unit Welfare Officers.



During 2025, the Kent & Medway CMPB wrote two separate letters to relevant Ministers:

1. Supporting a fast-track process for the Commonwealth Military requesting that due consideration should be given in the processes in both length of time it takes and the associated cost.
2. Outlining the difficulties that Military Spouses experience in obtaining employment because of the gaps in their CVs - brought about by their frequent moves across the UK and Overseas with their partners, every two years. The Kent & Medway CMPB urged Ministers and the Defence Select Committee to consider extending the Covenant to include Spousal Employment in the UK and Overseas as these Military Spouses are clearly being disadvantaged through their Partner's service and with potential employers knowing that they will move on within 2 years.
3. Both letters were well received by the Veteran's Minister, who offered his personal support for both the requests and concerns.

The Kent & Medway CMPB's Strategic Aims are:

- I. Increase visibility of the armed forces community to the civilian population
- II. Continue to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant plus the new legislation.
- III. Raise awareness amongst schools of the specific needs of service children and their families.
- IV. Support and promote recruitment of volunteers, Regulars and Reservists.

MoD Employer Recognition Awards Scheme

KCC has been very much at the forefront in supporting and mentoring Councils and other bodies wishing to apply for MoD Employers Recognition Gold Awards in 2025 as a 'military friendly' employer of choice. There are now 263 organisations in Kent that have signed the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Silver Awards were held on 3 September at Admiralty House, HMNB Portsmouth. The Silver recipients in Kent were:

- Chatham Grammar School
- Charlie Charlie One Ltd
- Integrated Estate Management

- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
- Royal Engineers Vocational Education & Training Trust
- MDCV UK

The Gold Awards were held on 23 September at The Army Flying Museum, Middle Wallop. The Kent recipients were:

- Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust
- Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust

One of the benefits of being an Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award holder is that KCC were able to send six members of staff from the KCC Dynamic Support Service to the 2025 Army Leadership Challenge Day in October. Feedback received from the staff that attended was that it pushed them out of their comfort zones, built their confidence, and strengthened their skills, all of which are transferable skills they have brought back to the KCC workplace.

The table below lists current Kent Employer Recognition Scheme Gold and Silver Award Holders

Organisation	Date Awarded	Silver	Gold
Ashford Borough Council	2024		
Armoured Engineering Ltd	2023		
BJF Group	2022		
Canterbury City Council	2023		
Challenger Troop	R2023		
Chatham Grammar	2025		
Dover District Council	2020		
EC Safety Solutions Ltd	2024		
FM Conway Ltd	2023		
Folkestone and Hythe District Council	2021		
Forces Family Finance	2020		
Gravesham Borough Council	2021		
Henderson Facilities Management Ltd	2025		
Integrated Estate Management Ltd	2025		
InvictaK9	2021		
Joint Security Services Ltd	2023		
Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust	2023		
Kent County Council	R2023		
Kent Fire and Rescue Service	2020		
Kent & Medway NHS & Social Care Partnership Trust	2025		
Kent Police	2022		
Laing O'Rourke	R2022		

Organisation	Date Awarded	Silver	Gold
Lifesaver First Aid Services	2022		
Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust	2025		
MDCV UK	2025		
Medway Council	2020		
MKC Training Services Ltd	2023		
MTS Cleansing Services Limited	R2022		
NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board	2022		
NPC Tree Surgery	2021		
Pantera Group	2021		
Priority Freight	R2023		
RE CPD	2025		
Royal British Legion Industries Ltd	2020		
Royal Engineers Association	2024		
Royal Engineers Central Charitable Trust (RECCT)	2022		
Securitem Consultancy Ltd	2023		
Thanet District Council	2023		
The Education and Skills Partnership LTD	2021		
The Rift Group	2020		
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council	2025		
Vistry Group (formally Bovis Homes Ltd)	R2024		
ERS Gold and Silver Award Totals in Kent		21	22

ERS Breakdown by County in the South East	Bronze	SE Silver	SE Gold	AFC
Berkshire	73	14	14	170
Buckinghamshire	60	13	9	157
East Sussex	50	6	8	111
Hampshire	226	42	35	571
Isle of Wight	18	2	3	33
Kent	136	21	22	263
Oxfordshire	64	14	6	148
Surrey	77	20	17	167
West Sussex	51	10	8	118

2025 Events

National Armed Forces Covenant Conference 2025

'Crown Copyright, MOD Covenant team'



The 2025 Covenant Conference was held on the 2nd and 3rd of July at the Ibrox Stadium in Glasgow, marking a milestone in the evolution of Covenant delivery across the UK.

This year's event followed a [major announcement](#) by Prime Minister Keir Starmer that legislation will be brought

forward to bring the Armed Forces Covenant fully into law. The conference was the first opportunity to formally explain these changes and engage with stakeholders to help shape the proposals for the extended Covenant Legal Duty.

Plenary sessions focused on a wide range of topics, including:

- Armed Forces demographics and needs
- Delivery insights from Greater Manchester
- Developments in Service Children's services
- New findings from the Our Community, Our Covenant report
- Overviews of Op Valour and a new NHS Covenant training team
- An explanation of the current and extended Covenant Legal Duty.
- Day two featured three targeted breakout sessions aimed at gathering insights from those directly involved in Covenant delivery.



Alistair Carns OBE, MC, MP, Minister for Veterans and People, addressed the evening reception by sharing insights from his recent record-breaking ascent of Mount Everest. The Minister also led a plenary session, outlining his vision for the Covenant and the future of Defence, followed by an open Q&A with delegates.



Kent Events



It has been a very busy time after Armed Forces Flag-Raising -Days at County Hall and across Kent and Medway. On Armed Forces Day, Cllr Vince Maple - Leader, Medway Council hosted a superb Armed Forces Day event in Chatham Docks which the Chairman of Kent CC and Kent & Medway CMPB - Cllr Richard Palmer attended. Next followed a Cocktail Party and Beating Retreat at Loros Barracks, Canterbury by 3PWRR - hosted by their CO - Lt Col Nathan Horsman. KCC held a very meaningful VJ Day 80 commemorating Service including Flag-Raising and special VJ Day 80 Prayers at County Hall, led by the KCC Chairman, fresh from a BBC Radio Kent live interview. The event attracted more than 100 people, including many Veterans, Gurkhas, Councillors and Staff. Kent County Council commemorated all those who lost their lives with the Kent Official Poppy Appeal launch taking place at County Hall in conjunction with the Royal British Legion on 24 October 2025.



The annual Kent Reserves and Cadets Day held on 25 February 2025, brought together representatives from reserve units and cadets across Kent and Medway, to highlight the multitude of benefits to the armed forces, employers and the individuals themselves who serve.





Major Tim Cook. Helps keep the county safe as a risk manager for the Kent Resilience Team. He also serves as a reservist in the British Army and has taken his skills to Nepal to plan and prepare for an earthquake response. Major Cook, who joined the army from school and retired from Kent Police as a

superintendent, said: “My current role is part of the UK Ops Assurance Team. We go around the UK and also abroad to make sure that the military headquarters around the country and elsewhere can support civil partners in an emergency. I write and deliver exercises. It’s really interesting and has been of real benefit to my role in KCC. We have looked at wildfires in Wales, flooding in Northern Ireland, the COP26 climate conference in Scotland and I have been to Nepal four times to assure the British Army capability to survive following a devastating disaster like an earthquake. “I get two weeks additional leave from KCC to complete my training commitments with the army and both sides are flexible which ensures I can fit in my family and other life commitments around work and service without having to use all my annual leave for it. The Armed Forces Covenant means we know if need be, we can support our country, and your job is still there when you come back so you don't have to worry about all that.”

Military children attended the 5-day summer Space Week 2025 event which took place at the University of Kent, Canterbury and was designed to ignite young people's passion for Space Science - A Royal Engineers Service Children’s Team were runners-up.



The SERFCA Lord-Lieutenant Awards were held on 12 November 2025 at Tonbridge School, celebrated the achievements of outstanding individuals across the county. Lady Colgrain congratulated all award-winners for their remarkable dedication and service, praising the volunteer ethos demonstrated by Reservists, Cadets, and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers alike. The Lord-Lieutenant highlighted the vital role of the Reserves in national security and the importance of community and employer support in enabling their service. She also emphasised the need to encourage more Adult Volunteers to support the Cadet Forces, ensuring more young people can benefit from the opportunities they offer.



Kent & Medway Armed Forces Covenant Conference



Kent & Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board held its 11th Annual Armed Forces Covenant Conference at Mid-Kent College, Maidstone in June 2025. Our Guest Speakers included the Vice Lord-Lieutenant - Sir Hugh Robertson; Cllr Linden Kemkaran - Leader KCC and Cllr Vince Maple - Leader Medway Council. Cllr Richard Palmer was announced there as the new Armed Forces Champion for Kent CC.



Claire Lilly Founder - The Forcer Protocol spoke movingly of on Suicide Prevention. The Forcer Protocol is a tool used by the Police to ensure key information is available to them when they are searching for serving and ex-service veterans who are lost or have gone missing or at risk. It is named after Alan Forcer who suffered with complex PTSD and debilitating depression following service in Northern Ireland and Kosovo during the height of the conflicts, subsequently taking his own life. Service veterans, their informal and professional carers, family members and friends can complete a form which records vital information in relation to the veteran in case they go missing. Kent Police signed up to the Forcer Protocol in November 2024, with Ch Insp Gary Woodward speaking at the conference on Kent Police's complementary role in saving lives.



Cdre Tim Green ADC Naval Regional Commander - London and South East gave us a fascinating Chatham House rule brief on the recently published SDR Strategic Defence Review 2025 - Key Announcements and how the next battles will be fought under the sea!! He warned of generational challenges with the UK under daily attack particularly from cyber-attacks. He called for the need to reconnect

Defence with Civil Society. He concluded by saying that nothing happens without people.

Lt Col Tim Petransky - SO1 HQ SE - Aldershot spoke on our Army commitments within Kent and how nearly 50,000 Ukrainian Recruits had been taught basic soldiering skills including weapon handling, marksmanship and self-defence in and around Kent under Op INTERFLEX and the MoD Covenant Team and Canon Peter Bruinvelds spoke on the latest developments with the expansion of the Armed Forces Covenant and how well Kent was responding to them. The National Covenant Lead described KCC as an “exemplar” in just how well it delivered the Covenant.

We had over 140+ representatives attend with excellent speeches, and the 19 brilliant market stands, which provided excellent feedback and gave us all the priorities for the next 12 months.





Our thanks go to Mid-Kent College for sponsoring the event again and providing the excellent venue and staff support, where everything worked!



Welfare Support

KCC Support

The past 12 months have been busy for Canon Bruinvels, with a number of cases involving school admissions being raised, for example a new Military CO requested to register his child for a school before they moved into Kent. To enable this request KCC used the new HQ postal address that the Military CO will be based at, to support the school registration. KCC has received requests to speed up the SEND statements and push for their portability to or from another Local Authority without them losing their place in the Education Health and Care Plan queue for assessments.

KCC and the Armed Forces Champions continue to provide case work support for both service personnel and ex-service personnel and their families. In Kent there are currently 2170 serving personnel across Kent and Medway and the breakdown is 390 in Medway and 570 in Maidstone and 530 in Folkestone and Hythe, 150 in Dover. Therefore, it is not surprising that KCC receives on average one or two cases a week. Cases cover a range of topics such as obtaining a bus pass, school admissions, library fines whilst on active service, job introductions and housing requests which tends to be around Folkstone and Hythe, Maidstone, and Medway.

Other welfare cases are undertaken through the twice year Unit Welfare Officer Meetings which meet under Chatham rules under the chairmanship of Canon Bruinvels with all Regular and Reservist UWOs meeting with Education, Health, Adult Social Care and Housing practitioners.

Financial Hardship Programme

During 2025, KCC's Financial Hardship Programme allocated £29,350 in food and/or energy vouchers to veteran homes via the government funded Household Support Fund. There were 315 awards given during the summer scheme which provided supermarket vouchers to support with food costs, and 100 awards provided during the winter scheme which allowed beneficiaries to select food or energy vouchers. 41 veterans were supported through the Kent Advice Hub and Money and Mental Health projects, delivered in partnership with Citizens Advice North and West Kent.

KCC's ReferKent system has been established to enable secure and effective referrals between professionals and support organisations, ensuring no one falls through the cracks

when needing help. ReferKent continues to register organisations that offer support to the Armed Forces. For example, registrations include CAP Enterprise CIC, Mental Health Matters, Canterbury Safe Haven, Angy Care, Kent Fire & Rescue and the RBLI Lifeworks. The Armed Forces Network is also registered and is a multi-organisational group which includes members from the NHS, MoD, Armed Forces Reservists, Mental and Physical Health Clinicians, the Royal British Legion, SSAFA and other interested charities and organisations.

In the Business Workstream, KCC engage with prospective applicants to consider the impact their projects can have on ex-service residents. By leveraging our networking efforts, we connect with businesses and organisations about the Armed Forces Covenant. These discussions have subsequently led to a complete change in a project proposal, transforming them into applications involving the armed forces. Separately, a recent conversation with the Kent Foundation highlighted the benefits of the Armed Forces Covenant, which resonated with their CEO (a service child) and ultimately led to them signing the Armed Forces Covenant.



The Financial Hardship Programme has also supported events targeted at assisting veterans and their families. The team continues to work closely with RBLI, providing support through their jobs fair and contributing to mock interview sessions via staff volunteering. These activities have helped veterans with a range of needs, including individuals preparing for release from prison and seeking to rebuild their lives.

In June 2025, the programme partnered with East Kent Mind to

take part in the Veteran Recognition Awards and Information Fair in Canterbury - this was an impactful event that enabled the KCC Team to engage with veterans directly and the opportunity to share with them information about our available services, particularly around

digital inclusion. The team is also scheduled to attend the Veteran Group drop-in event in Gravesham December 2025, further demonstrating its ongoing commitment to supporting the veteran community across Kent.

Brunei Gurkha Unit Move

The tri-Annual Unit Move between Shorncliffe and Brunei took place in August 2025 and involved 2RGR swapping with 1RGR who then returned to Sir John Moore Barracks, Folkestone, which involved approximately 1500 people. Kent County Council appointed a nominated officer to support the school admission process, and the switch went really well, with only one child taking a while after



an appeal to get a SEND place in a Folkestone School. Work to update a school's handbook was completed ahead of the full move. The CO of 1RGR viewed the Unit Move to Folkestone as a great success, as was the partnership work between KCC, Dover District Council and Folkestone and Hythe District Council.

KCC Member and Officer Armed Forces Survey

On 17 November 2025, KCC invited both Members and Officers to take part in a survey to help KCC understand how many people within KCC as Councillors and Staff have an Armed Forces connection and what KCC may be able to do to connect or support them better. The results will be analysed by the Strategic Partnerships Team and reported in 2026.

Veteran Friendly Care Homes Initiative

The Veteran Friendly Care Homes initiative has recently been launched, and Grace Manor (part of Forest Health Care) was the first Care Home in Kent to be awarded the status in early February 2025.

Forces Connect APP



This free resource is going from strength to strength with over 46,500 downloads across the UK 24/7 - 'download now and do promote as appropriate!' Special thanks to Lt-Gen David Eastman - Deputy Chief of the General Staff, the British Army who has made it now available on MODNet and the Defence

Gateway. Not only is it now in Nepali, but it has recently been translated into Welsh.
www.ForcesConnect.co.uk.

Armed Forces Awareness Training Renewal and Refresher Sessions



These popular 1-hour in-person and online interactive Awareness Training sessions continue to be run throughout the year by Canon Bruinvels.

To date, over 16,500 have been trained across the UK from

Inverness to Plymouth including just over 5,000 in Kent. Recent in-house sessions included Tonbridge & Malling BC (55); Medway Council (61) involving their Leader, their Cabinet, their Chief Executive and all their Senior Leadership Team and 51 in two online sessions for our KCC Staff. But the icing on the cake was the recent online session with KCC's GET service where no less than 125 Staff members joined online!

The Armed Forces Covenant has been enshrined in law and there is now a legal requirement for local authorities such as Kent CC to ensure 'due regard' for the armed forces community in the provision of certain key services. They are Education, Housing and Health. This training is designed to increase / refresh Councillors' and Officers' understanding of:

- What is the Armed Forces Covenant and the new legislation for 2026/27
- Who are the armed forces community?
- What challenges are they likely to face? - are they on a war footing!?
- How can we understand their needs? - moving house every 2 years
- Where are the Military in your area? - not just at Maidstone and Chatham

Armed Forces Champions

The table below lists the Elected Member Armed Forces Champions across Kent and Medway

Kent County Council	Cllr Richard Palmer	Richard.Palmer@kent.gov.uk
Medway Council - Lead AFC	Cllr Vince Maple	vince.maple@medway.gov.uk
Medway Council	Cllr Chrissy Stamp	chrissy.stamp@medway.gov.uk
Ashford	Cllr Peter Feacey	Peter.feacey@ashford.gov.uk ;
Canterbury	Cllr Jean Butcher	jean.butcher@councillor.canterbury.gov.uk
Dartford	Cllr Peter Whapshott	Peter.whapshott@dartford.gov.uk
Dover	Cllr Gordon Cowan	cllr-gordon.cowan@dover.gov.uk
Folkestone & Hythe	Cllr Jim Martin	Jim.martin@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk
Gravesham	Cllr Peter Scollard	Peter.scollard@gravesham.gov.uk
Maidstone	Cllr David Naghi	DavidNaghi@maidstone.gov.uk
Sevenoaks	Cllr Larry Abraham	Cllr.abraham@sevenoaks.gov.uk
Swale	Cllr Richard Palmer	richardpalmer@swale.gov.uk
Thanet	Cllr Helen Whitehead	Cllr-helen.whitehead@thanet.gov.uk
Tonbridge & Malling - Joint AFC	Cllr Steve Hammond	Steve.hammond@tmhc.gov.uk
Tonbridge & Malling - Joint AFC	Cllr Dave Davis	Dave.davis@tmhc.gov.uk
Tunbridge Wells	Cllr Beverley Palmer	Beverley.Palmer@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Armed Forces Veterans Hubs

During the past 12 months, an increasing need for new Veterans Hubs and Drop-in centres has been identified with many Ex-Service and Veterans experiencing loneliness and depression. Veterans Hubs in Kent and Medway are based in:

- Ramsgate
- Sittingbourne
- Sheerness
- Faversham
- Canterbury
- Chatham
- Gillingham
- Ashford
- Tonbridge
- Dartford
- Romney Marsh

- Folkestone Sports Centre
- Shorncliffe Barracks
- The Nepalese Community Centre exclusively in Cheriton, Shorncliffe, is especially important because KCC played a part in supporting the local Nepalese Community taking on a lease from KCC to open and run the Community Centre, which is part of Cheriton Library. This Nepalese Community Centre is also supported by Folkestone & Hythe District Council.

Data

Healthwatch Kent

On 13 August 2025, Kent Healthwatch published a report on Kent and Medway veterans' experience of health and social care since their discharge from the Armed Forces. The project was undertaken following a 2024 update by Kent County Council Public Health to its Armed Forces Needs Assessment, which highlighted how previous engagement to understand veterans' experiences of health and social care had been limited. 115 UK Armed Forces Veterans that live in Kent and Medway completed our research survey. Reflections and learnings from the survey results are:

- **Physical Health** - The most frequently mentioned issue - difficulty in getting an appointment or seeing their GP - is a common experience within the wider population. However, by understanding that many veterans have a previous experience of healthcare access being fast and exclusive, a combination of signposting and reframing expectations would improve veteran experiences.
- **Mental Health** - Within the veteran community that we spoke to, there is an understanding that there is a set of unique needs, particularly in regard to mental health, whereby specially trained staff or staff with their own experience of the Armed Forces could help achieve better health outcomes.
- **Wider Social Issues** - Some Veterans link employment as an important part of their health and wellbeing, with a lack of support received around post discharge employment. Consideration of integrating employment support into signposting provided around general veteran health and wellbeing could be considered to address this.
- **Armed Forces Covenant and Veteran Friendly Accreditation** - There is an awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and Veteran Friendly accreditation, but with differing ideas of what accessing a 'Veteran Friendly' GP Practice or other health service is like for a veteran. Better communication from the surgery to its

veteran patients on how they benefit from the Veteran Friendly accreditation in the care they receive would help alleviate the difference in expectations.

[From Service to Civilian - A report on how support for veterans evolves after discharge | Healthwatch Kent](#)

KCC 2024 Needs Assessment

In 2024 KCC published [The Armed Forces and Veteran Community Needs Assessment](#) and [technical report](#) which focuses on the needs of armed forces and veterans living in Kent which found, a veteran population of over 52,000, with 58% over 65 and concentrated in coastal areas.

2021 Census figures

Following the publication of the 2021 Census figures, we now know that there were 1,853,112 people in England and Wales reporting that they had previously served in the UK Armed Forces (3.8% of usual residents aged 16 years and over).

- Medway: 8,529
- Thanet: 5,765
- Dover: 5,710
- Maidstone: 5,664
- Canterbury: 5,217
- Dartford: 2,328

Table 1: Residents who have previously served in the UK armed forces

	Usual residents aged 16+	Number previously served in UK armed forces	Percentage previously served in UK armed forces
2021 Census: UK Armed forces veterans			
England & Wales	48,566,373	1,853,112	3.8%
South East	7,554,580	317,082	4.2%
Kent	1,276,567	52,545	4.1%
Ashford	106,771	4,962	4.6%
Canterbury	132,774	5,217	3.9%
Dartford	90,698	2,328	2.6%
Dover	96,131	5,710	5.9%
Folkestone & Hythe	91,555	5,211	5.7%
Gravesham	84,555	2,351	2.8%
Maidstone	142,136	5,664	4.0%
Sevenoaks	96,603	3,344	3.5%
Swale	121,998	4,773	3.9%
Thanet	115,414	5,765	5.0%
Tonbridge & Malling	105,526	4,023	3.8%
Tunbridge Wells	92,403	3,194	3.5%
Medway Unitary Authority	222,757	8,529	3.8%

2021 Census - TS071 - Previously served in the UK armed forces

The Office for National Statistics (ONS), Table presented by Kent Analytics, Kent County Council

A full report is available on the Kent County Council website [2021 Census - Veterans \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)

Looking to 2026

Kent & Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board's Strategic Aims:

Promoting, publicising and co-ordinating events that increase the visibility of the armed forces community to the civilian population:

- Hold twice-yearly meetings with Task Force Commanders, Armed Forces Champions and Covenant Lead Officers.
- Recognise & Remember Task Group: publicise the military events calendar (including veterans' activities) in conjunction with the Lieutenancy Officer to celebrate Armed Forces Day 2026; the Kent Reservists and Cadets and as well as commemorating Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday 2026 and encourage KCC Members to support all the local events.
- Support Space Week 2026.

Continue to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant amongst public sector staff, and making it easier for the armed forces community to access information, advice and support:

- Continue to build on the legacy of Forces Connect SE, ensuring the work is embedded and built upon through regular in-person training and e-learning.
- Encourage the wider use of the Forces Connect App.
- Encourage Unit Welfare Officers to be more proactive in ensuring the armed forces community understand what the Covenant is (and what it is not) and how they are being supported across Kent.

Raising awareness amongst schools of the specific needs of service children and their families, including the Gurkha families:

- Work with Headteachers across Kent & Medway with the largest number of service children.
- Extend an invitation to a Headteacher representative to the Unit Welfare Officer meetings.

Maintaining a focus on how the most vulnerable within the armed forces community can be supported to access what they need to thrive in their future civilian life:

- Improve identification of those veterans who have greatest needs, via networking across public services and the voluntary sector and improving signposting to support vulnerable people.
- Increase signposting and support for financial and debt management services - and again, Kent Together and Refer Kent provides a basis for this.

Maintaining a strong focus on Recruitment, Staffing and Training on ex-service personnel:

- Support and promote the benefits of recruiting of Armed Forces Reservists and Military Spouses.
- Continue to monitor Kent County Council's HR Policy to ensure that KCC remains 'Military friendly' and continues to offer guaranteed interviews to appropriately qualified ex-service personnel, Reservists and Veterans, as well as offering mentoring.
- Consider giving paid time off for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers who are employed by Kent County Council.
- Ensure that Kent County Council continues to offer Armed Forces Awareness Training, especially to Adult Social Care Staff and other key front-line staff and their Managers.
- Develop a proposal for a Kent-wide campaign to encourage more Adult Volunteers for the Cadets, and case workers for the military charities (including targeting retired veterans).
- The Employment & Skills Task Group to take a lead in promoting the benefits of employing Reservists to the Private Sector and Cadets as Apprentices in conjunction with SERFCA.
- Encourage the appointment of an appropriately qualified service child to be appointed a Lord-Lieutenant Cadet.
- Plan and promote Kent Reserves and Cadet Day 2026.
- Make the most of the benefits of being an MoD Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award holder by sending KCC staff on the Sandhurst / Longmoor Leadership Challenge training.
- Work closely with local partners and the Military to ensure bids for Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund remain of the highest quality, maximising income into the County.

End