



2024 Annual Report
Implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent

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Chairman's Forward

Bryan Sweetland - Chairman of Kent and Medway Civilian-Military Partnership Board

When I became Chairman of Kent and Medway CMPB last May, I had no idea just how much I was going to enjoy this new role or just how eventful this year would be for me with so much happening! I would highlight the really successful 10th Annual Kent & Medway Armed Forces Covenant Conference at 1RSME Brompton



Barracks with top speakers and a record attendance of 185+ representatives including the Lord-Lieutenant of Kent. One special highlight of the day was the fast-moving Gurkha Kukri display at lunchtime. An occasion that I will never forget.

Events over Armed Forces Week including our very well-attended AFD Flag-Raising event at County Hall occurred all across Kent. But I was very privileged to be a VIP Guest at Medway Council Official Armed Forces Day 2025 Celebrations. It took place at the Historic Dockyard Chatham on a blazing hot day. Brigadier Andrew Wood represented the Lord-Lieutenant and made a most moving speech on D-Day 80. This was followed by a Military Marchpast by the Royal Engineers, many Veterans and Cadets. It was really special to me to be part of this special day and to then tour all the many stands meeting many Service Charity Volunteers including the RNA, RBL and RBLI as well as SSAFA Kent. During the tour which involved meeting a number of Regulars and Reservists based in Kent, I was really pleased to bump into Craig Mackinlay- then MP for South Thanet on one of his first outings since his serious illness. He was so very positive and that was inspiring to all those who met him there.

The icing on the cake for me was attending the Kent RBL Festival of Remembrance sell-out Concert at Rochester Cathedral. to commemorate Remembrance and the D-Day Landings. It was an awe-inspiring occasion with wonderful music by Eynsford Concert Band and special guest appearances by both the Canterbury for Ukraine Ladies Choir and the Brompton & Invicta Military Wives Choir. The whole evening was brilliantly put together with an outstanding MC in the shape of Vince Maple - Leader of Medway Council. A career on the stage definitely awaits him!

The other military event of note was the 3PWRR Christmas Carol Service in Canterbury Cathedral with the PWRR Band playing wonderful carols sung by school children from

Spring Grove and Wickhambreaux CE Primary Schools, as well as Shorncliffe Military Wives choir. This was followed by a reception in the Chapter House.

Here in Kent, we are most fortunate to enjoy excellent and enduring 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 2 Royal Gurkha Regiment and its Commanding Officer - Lt Col Peter Houlton-Hart and of course, Col David Kenny - Commander and Lt Col Tim Petransky - HQ SE as well as now with Lt Col Rod Gray from SERFCA.

We also work closely with 3 Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and its Commanding Officer - Lt Col Nathan Horsman; 579 Field Squadron (EOD) and Major Duncan Wood and more recently with 220 Medical Squadron, 256 Multi Role Medical Regiment Reserves based in Ditton and Major Richard Webber and it has been a real privilege to get to know most of them. In all cases, 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 and am really getting to know and to understand the Military. It has made me 'armed forces aware' and given me the confidence 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 officer here at County Hall.

With just three months left, I continue to be filled with pride and with all that has been achieved to date including Kent CC proudly receiving its revalidated Employers Recognition Gold Award in Full Council. It is a privileged role that I have played in working closely with all our partners. Our partners like me as your Chairman 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 an ever more dangerous world 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 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.



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. A view reinforced by the MoD Covenant Lead at the Kent CC Armed Forces Conference at Brompton Barracks in June 2024. 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 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



Since May 2024 the Kent & Medway CMPB has been chaired by Cllr Bryan Sweetland - KCC Chairman and along with the Vice-Chairman Cllr Vince Maple Leader of Medway supported by their Armed Forces Champions. During 2024 the Board membership has been further strengthened by the new membership of the:

- Royal British Legion Kent Chairman
- 220 Medical Squadron, 256 Multi Role Medical Regiment Reserves - based in Ditton
- new SERFCA Deputy Chief Executive (East)

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
- Health and wellbeing
- Employment and Skills
- Unit Welfare Officers - a Joint Task Group involving KCC Departmental Lead Officers and Medway Lead Officers

At the 20 February 2024 meeting, the Kent & Medway CMPB said goodbye to Cllr Gary Cook the outgoing Chairman of Kent County Council. Along with, Lt Col Peter Ellis who retired from the position of SERFCA Deputy Chief Executive (East).



On the 20 February 2024 the Kent & Medway CMPB - endorsed Kent & Medway CMPB's Strategic Aims under four key headings:

- 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



EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

GOLD AWARD 2023

Proudly supporting those who serve.

Kent and Medway are still performing outstandingly well under the scheme. On the 23 October 2023, Kent County Council received notification that it had successfully retained its MoD Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award following a rigorous re-validation process. On 28 March 2024 the award was presented to Full Council Lt Col Nathan Horsman with Brigadier Andrew Wood DL.



Armed Forces Covenant signing

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 2024 as a 'military friendly' employer of choice. The Kent Covenant Lead Officer is pleased to advise that in June 2024 Ashford Borough Council were awarded the Employers Recognition Silver award and is committed to working towards Gold. The Annual Gold Awards took place on 3 October 2024 on HMS Warrior in Portsmouth and Kent's EC Safety Solutions and the Royal Engineers Association both received the Gold Award from Maj-Gen Lord Lancaster of Kimbolton TD VR PC Director of Reserves at the MoD.



SILVER & GOLD Employer Recognition Scheme Award Holders		
Organisation	Date Awarded	Award Level
Absolute Military	2022	Gold
Ashford Borough Council	2024	Silver
Armoured Engineering Ltd	2023	Silver
BJF Group	2022	Silver
Canterbury City Council	2023	Gold
Challenger Troop	R2023	Silver
Dover District Council	2020	Gold
EC Safety Solutions Ltd	2024	Gold
FM Conway Ltd	2023	Gold
Folkestone and Hythe District Council	2021	Gold
Forces Family Finance	2020	Silver
Gravesham Borough Council	2021	Silver
Henderson Facilities Management Ltd	2023	Silver
InvictaK9	2021	Silver

SILVER & GOLD Employer Recognition Scheme Award Holders		
Organisation	Date Awarded	Award Level
Joint Security Services Ltd	2023	Gold
Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust	2023	Silver
Kent County Council	2018 & 2023	Gold
Kent Fire and Rescue Service	2020	Gold
Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust	2023	Silver
Kent Police	2022	Gold
Laing O'Rourke	R2022	Gold
Lifesaver First Aid Services	2022	Silver
Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust	2024	Silver
Medway Council	2020	Gold
Medway NHS Foundation Trust	2019	Silver
MKC Training Services Ltd	2023	Gold
MTS Cleansing Services Limited	R2022	Silver
NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board	2022	Gold
NPC Tree Surgery	2021	Silver
Pantera Group	2021	Silver
Priority Freight	R2023	Silver
Royal British Legion Industries Ltd	2020	Gold
Royal Engineers Association	2024	Gold
Royal Engineers Central Charitable Trust (RECCT)	2022	Gold
Securitem Consultancy Ltd	2023	Silver
Thanet District Council	2023	Silver
The Education and Skills Partnership LTD	2021	Silver
The Rift Group	2020	Gold
Vistry Group (formally Bovis Homes Ltd)	2019	Gold

2024 Events

National Armed Forces Covenant Conference 2024

'Crown Copyright, MOD Covenant team'

A delegation from Kent joined more than 240 delegates who gathered at Winchester University on the 23rd and 24th October for the Armed Forces Covenant Conference 2024 where Forces Connect had a stand. The aim of the Conference was to discuss issues affecting the Armed Forces community and build on the opportunities for further co-operation and shared ambitions. The theme of the Conference was 'The Covenant Through Life'.



Col (Retd) Alistair Carns DSO, OBE, MC, MP, Minister for Veterans and People, delivered the keynote speech. The Minister thanked delegates for all their work in supporting the Armed Forces community and took questions from the audience on his vision for the Covenant.



The first day began with a presentation from the Forces in Mind Trust, Rand Europe and Shared Intelligence on their research on Covenant delivery. This was followed by a presentation on Service children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities, with a focus on the challenges encountered during service moves, and then a talk and Q&A with James Greenrod, Deputy Director and Head of Armed Forces People Support at MOD.

For the first time, an evening reception provided an opportunity for informal networking and engagement in a relaxed environment. The highlight of the night was a talk from Mark Ormrod, a Royal Marine veteran and Invictus games athlete. Mark gave an incredible talk on overcoming adversity and rebuilding his life after a near-death experience in Afghanistan.

Guest speakers on the second day included representatives from the NHS and Portsmouth Council, and a serving Army officer spoke about the Commonwealth soldier experience. For the first time ever at the Covenant Conference, a representative of the bereaved community spoke about the pain of losing a loved one. The day also included presenters from the MOD outlining ongoing initiatives on improving mental resilience and tackling suicide. Three breakout sessions were available for attendees. These covered a diverse range of topics, from a discussion on disadvantage in the Commonwealth Armed Forces community, to 'identifying trends of disadvantage', and 'communicating the Covenant'.

The conference concluded with a stirring talk by Sqn Ldr John Peters, who detailed his experience as a POW in the first Gulf War. John spoke about his recovery after the war, the value of a military career, and the transferable skills he developed in uniform which translated into a successful career in the civilian world.

Kent Events



During 2024 a huge array of events took place across the county and included the Armed Forces Day Flag Raising on 25 June at County Hall.

Military children attended the 5-day summer Space Week 2024 event which took place at the University of Kent, Canterbury and was designed to ignite young people's passion for Space Science - A RE Service Children's Team were runners-up.



Kent County Council commemorated all those who lost their lives with the Kent Poppy Appeal launch taking place at County Hall in conjunction with the Royal British Legion on 25 October 2024.

The Festival of Remembrance Conference was held on 2 November 2024 at Rochester Cathedral, with all proceeds from the concert going to the Royal British Legion and military charities. A delegation from Kent attended The Tommy 105 birthday event at the RBLI. 3PWRR's Beating Retreat was held at Dover Castle on Armed Forces Day hosted by their CO - Lt Col Nathan Horsman. 36RE held their Annual Beating Retreat by the Band of Gurkhas in the Walled Garden in Invicta Park Barracks hosted by Lt Col Ryan Castro. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council held a Nuclear Veteran Medal presentation to recognise three local veterans who had received the medal. The Vice Chairman of the Kent & Medway CMPB Vince Maple was awarded honorary membership to the Chatham Branch of the Royal Naval Association during the annual memorial service held on the 3 September 2024 commemorating HMS Pembroke. The year was round off with the 3PWRR Carol Service that took place at Canterbury Cathedral on 3 December attended by the Chairman of KCC.



The Lord-Lieutenant's Awards Night was held on 7 November 2024 at Brompton Barracks with 28 awards being handed out and broken down into: Lord-Lieutenant Certificates of Meritorious Service x 15; Best Reservist x 1; Lord-Lieutenant Cadets of the Year x 12.



Kent & Medway Armed Forces Covenant Conference

Our 10th Annual Armed Forces Covenant Conference was held on 4 June 2024 at 1RSME Brompton Barracks in Chatham and was kindly sponsored by MKC Training. The conference attracted 150+ delegates and the theme for 2024 was 'Working Together'.



The conference was opened by Brigadier James Webster-Commandant and Lt Col John Newton – CO-1RSME. Speakers included HM Lord-Lieutenant - The Lady Colgrain; Capt Andy Balwah - from the Army Multicultural Network speaking on 'Diversity in the British Army'; Kent Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Scott and Chief Inspector Gary Woodward on 'Working with Veterans in Policing'. Major Andy Stubbs - 220 Sqn - Ditton spoke on 'Providing Emergency Medical Support out 'in the Field''. Lt Col Tim Petransky - SO1 HQ SE spoke on our Army commitments within Kent and MoD Covenant Team and Canon Peter Bruinvels spoke on the latest developments with the Covenant and how well Kent was responding to them. Delegates were wowed with a fast-moving Gurkha Kukri display at lunchtime.



Great Tommy Sleep Out



On the night of the 21 March 2024, a group of enthusiastic KCC and DWP staff slept out at the WW1 Trenches at Detling Hill, to support the Great Tommy Sleep Out and raised £3,335 for the charity.

Welfare Support

KCC Support

KCC and the Armed Forces Champions continue to provide case work support for both service personnel and ex-service personnel. 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 and housing requests which tends to be around Folkestone and Hythe, Maidstone, and Medway.

During 2024, KCC's Financial Hardship Programme allocated £46,100.00 to veteran homes via the Household Support fund, 461 awards in total: 236 energy only awards, 201 food only awards, and 24 food and energy awards. In addition, the programme also awarded 6 successful applications for technology from the Armed Forces via the hardware access scheme.

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 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.

During 2024 initial preparations commenced to support the Brunei Gurkha Unit move. Initial contacts have been made, and a number of the Brunei children have already registered with Kent schools and Kent County Council has nominated an officer to support the school admission process. Work to update a schools handbook also commenced in 2024 ahead of the full move that will take place in Summer / Autumn 2025, which includes approximately 1500 people.



Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy - KCC's resettlement programme has supported 200 ARAP individuals (40 families) to resettle and integrate into communities across Kent since the start of the scheme. Those arriving for resettlement under ARAP include former Afghan military personnel, interpreters who worked with the British military during operations in Afghanistan, as well as other professionals whose lives and those of their families were put at risk through their involvement with the UK Government and military operations. Due to the urgency and scale of the evacuation, a majority of these families were accommodated in temporary bridging hotels until settled accommodation could be found. KCC Refugee Resettlement Team provided the wraparound support in one of the three Afghan bridging hotels in Kent (with Canterbury City Council and Ashford Borough Council delivering support to the other two). All three Kent bridging hotels have now closed, with families moving on to settled accommodation. The support provided by the KCC's refugee resettlement programme helps the families restart their lives in the UK. It includes support to understand life in the UK, understanding their finances, access employment and education, sustain tenancies, improve health and wellbeing, develop social connections and learning English (ESOL).

Kent Police – The Forcer Protocol

Kent Police who are members of the Kent and Medway CMPB, launched The Forcer Protocol on 1 November 2024. The purpose of the protocol is to protect and safeguard vulnerable veterans. The protocol effectively sets up an agreement between Kent Police and partner Safe and Found online to enable Kent Police to get information about veterans and service personnel that are vulnerable so that when they go missing Kent Police have a good chance of putting in quick time actions that can help to find them. [Kent Police The Forcer Protocol](#).

GP Veteran Friendly Practices

There has been a significant improvement over the past year with every Primary Care Network being Veteran Friendly - moving from 67% to 100% over the past year. There has been a steady increase in the number applying for Veteran Friendly accreditation. The target of 40% of practices being accredited has been met. The system is currently at 55% a minimum of 60% and overall aim is of 80%. There is variation across the system with from Dartford, Gravesham and Swale at 45%, through to East Kent at 65%. The Armed Forces Network has been working with Veterans and the community to take their I AM cards to the GP to ensure that they are registered. All Tracts needed to have achieved Veterans Aware Accreditation by March 2024 (Extended to then by NHS England) as part of the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan. Part of this includes signing up for Step into Health and working through the Armed Forces Employers Recognition scheme. Kent and Medway have moved forward significantly in meeting the standard. All Tracts are now compliant and have steering groups set up to continue the delivery. All Tracts have stepped up the number of staff who have been trained as Service Champion over the past year except Medway NHS Foundation Trust. A number of care homes have been trained as Service Champions as part of their application to become Veteran Aware Accredited.

Forces Connect APP



Forces Connect APP is a free resource which was first developed in Kent continues to go from strength to strength across the UK 24/7, with over 40k downloads and 32 Regions signed up from Cumbria to Cornwall. During 2024 work begun on making it available for all MoD personnel and it went live on Defence Gateway via MODNet in November 2024. The desktop online version launched in July 2024

www.ForcesConnect.co.uk and Surrey County Council paid £12.5k towards the desktop version development.

Training



KCC through its Covenant Lead Officer supports all its Councils, including their Armed Forces Champions and Covenant Lead Officers which includes attending Civil-Military Partnership Panels such as Dover and Medway. During 2024 the KCC Covenant Lead Officer continued to ensure that many more front line and contact centre staff, as well as, Adult Social Care Staff were trained, along with middle managers and other senior staff. A training session for Armed Forces Champions and Covenant Lead Officers took place on 3 December 2024 at 36RE and a later one for Tonbridge & Malling had 42 attending. In total over 5,250 people have been trained by him across Kent & Medway

Training material has now been filmed and has been BSL signed and is available to all Local Authorities and was sponsored by Kent County Council.

Armed Forces Champions

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

Area	Armed Forces Champions	Contact email
<u>Kent County Council Deputy AFC</u>	<u>Cllr Oliver Richardson</u> <u>Cllr Derek Crow-Brown</u>	Oliver.Richardson@kent.gov.uk ; Derek.crow-brown@kent.gov.uk ;
<u>Covenant Lead</u>	<u>Canon Peter Bruinvels CC</u>	Peter.Bruinvels@kent.gov.uk ;
<u>Officer</u>	<u>Tim Woolmer</u>	Tim.Woolmer@kent.gov.uk ;
<u>Medway Council Lead AFC</u>	<u>Cllr Vince Maple</u> <u>Cllr Chrissy Stamp</u>	vince.maple@medway.gov.uk ; chrissy.stamp@medway.gov.uk
<u>Ashford BC</u>	<u>Cllr Peter Feacey</u>	Peter.feacey@ashford.gov.uk ;
<u>Canterbury CC</u>	<u>Cllr Pip Hazleton</u>	Pip.hazleton@councillor.canterbury.gov.uk
<u>Dartford BC</u>	<u>Cllr Peter Whapshott</u>	Peter.whapshott@dartford.gov.uk ;
<u>Dover DC</u>	<u>Cllr Gordon Cowan</u>	cllr-gordon.cowan@dover.gov.uk ;
<u>Folkestone & Hythe DC</u>	<u>Cllr Jim Martin</u>	Jim.martin@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk ;
<u>Gravesham BC</u>	<u>Cllr Peter Scollard</u>	Peter.scollard@gravesham.gov.uk ;
<u>Maidstone BC</u>	<u>Cllr David Naghi</u>	DavidNaghi@Maidstone.gov.uk
<u>Sevenoaks DC</u>	<u>Cllr Larry Abraham</u>	Cllr.abraham@sevenoaks.gov.uk ;
<u>Swale BC</u>	<u>Cllr Richard Palmer</u>	richardpalmer@swale.gov.uk ;
<u>Thanet DC</u>	<u>Cllr Helen Whitehead</u>	Cllr-helen.whitehead@thanet.gov.uk ;
<u>Tonbridge & Malling BC (Joint AFCs)</u>	<u>Cllr Steve Hammond</u> <u>Cllr Dave Davis</u>	Steve.hammond@tmbc.gov.uk ; Dave.davis@tmbc.gov.uk ;
<u>Tunbridge Wells BC</u>	<u>Cllr Beverley Palmer</u>	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.

The Nepalese Community Centre exclusively in Cheriton, Shorncliffe - continues to do well and 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.

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
- Cheriton (Nepalese Community)

Data

Armed Forces and Veteran Community in Kent 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. It looks at the Armed Forces Covenant, governance in Kent and Medway, and the support structures that connect various organisations.

As well as serving personnel, reservists and cadets, the assessment details the veteran population in Kent, which is over 52,000. Notably, 58% of these veterans are over 65 years old and live in the eastern coastal areas of Kent.

There are 410 serving UK armed forces personnel in the County along with 900 Gurkha soldiers. There are 340 reservists (including Rochester) as well as the cadet community. The Kent veteran population make up over 52,000. A substantial number (58%) are over 65 years of age and reside in the eastern coastal fringes of Kent.

Mental health disorders are similar to those rates found in the general population. Kent veterans are statistically more likely to attend substance misuse treatment services for treatment for alcohol rather than opiates or nonopiates compared to non-veterans. Over the period 2020 to 2023 there have been seven service/veteran recorded suicides in Kent.

Consultations with the veteran community highlights that employment, housing, mental health and finance are the main issues raised by veterans.

The needs assessment identified that 418 applicants expressing a need for local authority housing. Ashford (71) and Dover (70) have the highest numbers whilst Tunbridge Wells (9) and Gravesham (0) have the lowest numbers. There were 19 cases of veteran homelessness in the County over a year in 2024.

Data on service personnel and their circumstances is provided by the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey which cites that more family support is needed.

Veterans who enter the Justice System exhibit similar risk factors to offending as do nonmilitary civilians. Experiences resulting from deployment and mental health issues such as Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and alcohol misuse can increase the risk of offending. Veterans in the Kent prison estate range from 2% (Standford Hill) to 5% (Maidstone). Nationally they tend to be male (98%) and within the age ranges 30-39 and 40-49 with almost 7% aged 70+.

The Criminal Justice Liaison and Diversion Service scheme via OpNOVA operates in Kent and all offenders are asked to disclose their veteran or serving member status. Since late 2022 to late 2023 114 veterans/serving members have been listed in Police Custody (92 veterans and 22 serving members) with ages ranging from 18 to 87.

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: 8529
- 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 \(kent.gov.uk\)](https://www.kent.gov.uk/2021-census-veterans)

Looking to 2025

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:

- By holding the 11th Annual Armed Forces Covenant contributes to achieving this aim on 17 June 2025 Maidstone Campus, University of Medway.
- 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 2025 and Kent Reservists and Cadets Day on 25 February 2025 and as well as commemorating Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday 2025 and encourage KCC Members to support all the local events.
- Support Space Week 2025.

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 invite 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 CCs HR Policy to ensure that KCC remains 'Military friendly' and does now offer guaranteed interviews to appropriately qualified ex-service personnel and Veterans, as well as offering mentoring.
- Consider giving paid time off for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers who are employed by Kent CC.
- Ensure that KCC continues to offer Armed Forces Awareness Training, especially to Adult Social Care Staff.
- Consider conducting another Councillor and Staff Survey at KCC in late 2025 on whether they served and any links with the Armed Forces.
- Build on the successful Revalidation of KCC's Employers Recognition Gold Award which was received in October 2023.
- 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 2025.
- Make the most of the benefits of being an Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award holder by sending KCC staff on the Sandhurst / Longmoor Leadership Challenge training and developing the feedback groups to be part of KCC Civil-Military Peer Support Panel.

- 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