



Somerset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership

Quarterly Update - October 2025

Welcome to the October Update

This Update aims to keep Partner organisations up to date with our work to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant in Somerset. We hope it will also help to better connect Partner organisations across the Partnership and improve our communication.

If you have a news item, information and events to be included, feedback, or wish to be added to the mailing list to receive this update please email: communities@somerset.gov.uk

You can sign up to receive the newsletter by visiting: <https://service.somerset.gov.uk/somerset-armed-forces-partnership-newsletter-sign-up>

You can also unsubscribe at any time by selecting the 'remove me' option from the above link.

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Digital Version of Veteran Card Launched

Nearly 2 million veterans can now benefit from a digital version of the [Veteran Card](#), which will make it easier and quicker to access key services and discounts via their smartphones.

This will give veterans a seamless way to confirm their status in person and will include information already featured on their physical card - displaying their name, photo, latest service, and date of birth with the security features that protect their personal information.

By downloading the optional card on their smartphones, former Service Personnel can show their veteran status to access everything from housing and mental health support to reduced entry at museums and money off their shopping – all at the touch of a button.

Once application is approved, downloading the card takes minutes – far quicker than waiting for a physical card to arrive by post. Just like a digital bank card or rail card, it puts convenient proof of service directly in veterans' pockets, highlighting which service of the Armed Forces they last served in to unlock service-specific support and ending the need to carry a physical copy whilst maintaining the highest security standards.

Veterans can download it via the GOV.UK One Login app, which, like banking apps, uses passcodes, Face ID, or Touch ID, providing the security veterans deserve whilst creating new opportunities to access services more conveniently. Once set up, veterans simply open the app and show their digital card.

Find out more: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/digital-version-of-veteran-card-launched-for-quicker-and-easier-access-to-support>

New memorial to LGBT veterans unveiled

King Charles III has unveiled a memorial to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender military personnel after a decades-long campaign against a ban on being gay in the armed forces.

The memorial is dedicated to those from the LGBT+ community now serving in the forces, as well as those who served at a time when it was illegal to be gay in the military.

During the ban, which lasted until the year 2000, those who were gay - or were perceived to be - faced intrusive investigations, dismissal and in some cases imprisonment.

Affected veterans, many of whom attended the ceremony on Monday, said the monument signified closure after years of campaigning first to change the law, and then to push the government to make reparations.

The LGBT+ Veterans Memorial is one of 49 recommendations made by The Etherton Review, an independent report commissioned by government which looked at the treatment of LGBT+ veterans who served under the ban.

Find out more: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cr7m8kzgy77o>

Service Children's Progression Alliance Conference

The SCiP Alliance Annual Conference 2025 will bring together practitioners, researchers, policymakers, and funders to explore a whole person, whole journey approach to supporting Service children. This vital theme recognises the need for collaboration across education, youth work, health, and wellbeing, ensuring seamless support from early years to adulthood. Hosted in Glasgow, the event will highlight Scotland's pioneering work while fostering cross-border learning through practical workshops, expert panels, and keynote insights.

This conference is an opportunity to connect, learn, and contribute to the future of Service children's education and wellbeing. Attendees will gain valuable insights, hear from leading experts, and explore best practices from across the UK. Whether you're shaping policy, delivering services, or supporting children directly, your voice matters. Join us in Glasgow to help shape the future and support thriving lives for Service children.

Find out more <https://www.scipalliance.org/news/2025/whole-person-whole-journey-the-scip-alliance-annual-conference-2025>

Welcome refreshments, hot drinks, snacks and water will be provided throughout the day, with lunch also included.

Secure your place today!

Access the booking link <https://store.winchester.ac.uk/conferences-and-events/faculty-events/events/scip-alliance-annual-conference-2025-whole-person-whole-journey>



Whole Person, Whole Journey

SCiP Alliance Conference 2025

Join us for our annual conference for the community supporting thriving lives for Service children.



26 November
Wednesday



Glasgow
Voco Grand Central
99 Gordon St, G1 3SF



Tickets
scipalliance.org

Secure your place



£165

Book by 14th November

Connect. Equip. Inspire.

Update on ARK at Egwood Armed Forces Hub

The Armed Forces Hub continues to receive a steady stream of referrals from individuals and health professionals. Sam and Lyndsay continue to build their presence in the Mendip and Sedgemoor localities respectively. As well as hosting the Armed Forces Outreach Sessions (AFOS) they are also linking in with local services and promoting their role at local coffee mornings.

The team have had a lot of requests in this quarter to provide briefings on the role of hub, and we have just spent three days at Hinkley Point C as part of their 'Zero Harm Fortnight' Health Fair talking with their workforce, which included a number of ex-Armed Forces personnel. The outreach element of this was important as a number of the Veteran community working there stay locally during their time on shift, and often have little to do during their down time, if they are not able to go home due to the travel involved. We were able to promote the Outreach Sessions, particularly in the Minehead, Bridgwater and Highbridge areas, as these are closest to where most are accommodated.

In addition to the three areas above, we continue to run Outreach Sessions in Yeovil, Chard, Wells, Wellington and Taunton. Below is an update from Sam on the development of the remaining two sessions in Frome and Glastonbury.

With the continued opening of hubs and AFOS across the Mendips, community development is progressing well. Support for the Armed Forces Community (AFC) in Frome is firmly established, with two-hour 1:1 support sessions taking place every Monday at Frome Medical Practice. These sessions are held in a private, glass-walled room that offers confidentiality while allowing natural light and a welcoming environment for sensitive conversations and external referrals.

On the first Monday of each month, we host the Frome AFOS, complete with bacon butties. These sessions have been well attended, providing valuable support to vulnerable veterans through the presence of organisations such as the RBL, SSAFA, Help for Heroes, the DWP, and the RNA, ensuring a wide range of tailored assistance.

Following the opening of St Dunstan's House in Glastonbury, the first AFOS there will be held on 13th November, offering a chance to socialise, meet representatives from various organisations, and enjoy tea, coffee, and bacon butties. Looking ahead, plans are in place to support the AFC in Glastonbury by developing life skills through upcoming cookery, wellbeing, and "living with pain" courses, among others, so keep an eye out for these opportunities in the near future.

If you are in Frome or Glastonbury and one of the sessions is running, please drop in and say hello.

In September, Jon and Lyndsay took the ARK minibus and members of the ARK Armed Forces Community up to the National Memorial Arboretum. For some, this was a first-time visit, however, all that went had a day of emotional reflection as we remembered lost loved ones and fallen comrades.

Next, we are planning a visit to the Fleet Air Arm Museum later in November where we will also be joined by Veterans from the Wells area, which has been arranged through one of our Outreach sessions. This is a lovely opportunity to bring together Veterans from other areas to increase their peer networks.

Finally, we are really pleased say that ARK and Jon were nominated and went through as finalists at the English Veterans Awards, in the categories of 'Veteran's Group of the Year' and the 'Community Award' respectively. ARK's achievements were recognised with a silver award which is a fantastic accolade for ARK and the Armed Forces Team.



ARK at Egwood CIC
Creating Lives Within Our Community

Arc
INSPIRING LIVES

Royal Air Force Roundel

NHS
Somerset

Are you a member of the Armed Forces community?

NHS Somerset is delighted to be working in partnership to deliver two Armed Forces hubs

ARK@Egwood

ARK at Egwood, Egwood House, Merriott, Somerset, TA16 5QN

Jon
07759 005067
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sam@arkategwood.com

Lyndsay
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lyndsay@arkategwood.com

Arc

Arc, 7 The Crescent, Taunton Somerset, TA1 4EA

Samantha
07376 090383
armedforces@arcinspire.co.uk

We are here to support you!

<https://nhssomerset.nhs.uk/armed-forces/>
facebook.com/groups/nhssomersetarmedforcescommunity

If you live in Somerset and are either currently serving, a reservist, a veteran, a family member and need support, we can help

Introducing: SSAFA Regional Mentoring Coordinator

I'm pleased to introduce myself as the Regional Mentoring Coordinator for SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, covering the South West region, including Somerset.

In this role, I oversee the delivery of SSAFA's mentoring service, which provides structured, one-to-one support for service leavers, and their families, as they transition into civilian life. Delivered by trained volunteer mentors, the programme offers confidential guidance, encouragement, and practical assistance tailored to individual needs.

Our mentoring support covers a wide range of challenges, including:

- Housing and accommodation
- Employment and career development
- Debt and financial wellbeing
- Mental health and emotional resilience

The programme is designed to foster independence, build confidence, and support individuals in achieving their personal and professional goals post-military service.

As Regional Mentoring Coordinator, I am responsible for:

- Supporting and developing our volunteer mentors
- Ensuring consistent, high-quality mentoring across the region
- Strengthening relationships with local organisations and stakeholders
- Advocating for the needs of service leavers, veterans, and their families in Somerset

I am passionate about ensuring that those who have served, and their loved ones receive the support they need to thrive in civilian life. I look forward to working collaboratively with you to enhance the reach and impact of SSAFA's mentoring service across Somerset.

If you would like to learn more, explore partnership opportunities, or discuss how we can work together, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

My contact details are as follows:

Patricia.darke@ssfa-fhs.org.uk Mobile: 07856 671351

Service Children South West Virtual Event

Join our Virtual SCiP Alliance South West Hub Event: Voices, Vision & Action

Connect with colleagues across the region for an inspiring and informative online session dedicated to supporting those working with Service children.

You'll:

- **Connect** with professionals working to help Service children thrive
- Get **support** for your work through training and opportunities for collaboration
- Be **inspired** by first-hand insights into Service children's lives

This interactive event offers the chance to hear first-hand stories from children and young people in Armed Forces families, gain practical tools to enhance your knowledge, and contribute to shaping the vision and future of the South West Hub.

It also marks an exciting step in the relaunch of the SCiP Alliance South West Hub - opening up new opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and collective action across the region.

Sign up <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/virtual-scip-alliance-south-west-hub-event-voices-vision-action-tickets->

Thursday, 13th November
3:30 – 4:30pm | Main Session
(+ optional networking until 5:00pm)

Sign up by scanning the
QR code or clicking here

Virtual South West Hub Event:
**VOICES, VISION
& ACTION**

Supported by
Ministry of Defence

Led by
**UNIVERSITY OF
WINCHESTER**

Carers Information Session: Frome

Anyone looking after a friend or family member in an unpaid capacity (even if you are receiving Carers Allowance) is welcome to come along to the next Carers Information Session for information and advice.

As well as Somerset Carers Agents, Village Agents and Adult Social Care workers, other organisations will be on hand to talk about the services they offer and answer questions; organisations such as:

- Alzheimer's
- Healthwatch
- Medequip
- Somerset Foundation Trust Carers
- Somerset Independent Living Centres and more.

Next Session:

Tuesday 18th November, 10am to 1pm, Frome Town Hall, Christchurch West, BA11 1EB

Community Employment Hubs

The Employment Hubs are a free employment support service covering Taunton, West Somerset, Wellington, Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea, Yeovil, Chard, Shepton Mallet, Highbridge, Frome, Wells, Glastonbury, Langport and Wincanton. Your pathway towards work.

Our friendly team can help you with:

- guidance on opportunities for learning, training and work
- confidence building and enhancing your skills to return to work
- help with job searching, job applications, covering letters, CVs and interview skills
- referral for further support, including IT support, apprenticeship advice, Citizens Advice, and positive mental health
- links to volunteer work
- identify any other barriers that stop you from progressing towards work regular one to one support for as long as you need it.

Find out more: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/business-economy-and-licences/community-employment-hubs/>

The Somerset Festival of Remembrance

The Somerset Festival of Remembrance is taking place at Wells Cathedral on Saturday 1 November 2025, marking the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

Book your tickets now: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/somerset-festival-of-remembrance-tickets-1502585075409?aff=odddtcreator> or **scan the QR** code on the poster for easy booking.

Spread the word – share with family, friends, local groups, and on your community Facebook pages. Let's come together to honour those who served and make this a truly memorable event.



Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge Town Council

On Sunday 9th November , starting at 10.30 am there will be a Remembrance Day Parade through Burnham-on-Sea, culminating at the War Memorial Hospital for a service outside there.

On Tuesday 11th November, starting at 10.50am there will be a short service and raising of the flag at the flagpole in Burnham-on-Sea, at the corner of Abingdon Street and Pier Street. There will also be a flag raising ceremony held at the flagpole in Highbridge at 11am.

Taunton Town Council

- Wednesday, 5 November – Dedication of the Field of Remembrance in Taunton Minster churchyard, guests are asked to gather at 10:50hrs for a prompt 11:00hrs start
- Sunday, 9 November – Remembrance Sunday Civic Service, 09.30hrs at Taunton Minster followed by the marching parade and Wreath Placing in Vivary Park at 11:00hrs
- Tuesday, 11 November – Armistice Day (two-minute silence), 11:00hrs outside of the Market House in Taunton Town Centre

Maidenbrook Country Park

There are two upcoming services which will take place in the Somerset Wood area of Maidenbrook Country Park:

1st November 10am - unveiling and dedication of the new Service Headstone

7th November 2pm - Annual Remembrance Service

Please arrive on foot if possible, only limited parking is available on site, accessed from Maidenbrook Lane, TA2 8JT. We would also ask all attendees to dress for the weather as both of these events are in the open air.

For queries, please contact our Maidenbrook Park Coordinator Candy: maidenbrookcountry-park@westmonktonparishcouncil.gov.uk



Employer Engagement Programme

The Wessex Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association (RFCA) engages with local employers on behalf of the MoD and alongside Defence Relationship Management, based in London.

Wessex RFCA raises the awareness of employers, businesses and business people of the Armed Forces, and builds relationships with them. The Employer Engagement programme is delivered by Regional Employer Engagement Directors (REED), based at Wessex RFCA in Taunton.

This programme builds on the successful SaBRE (Supporting Britain's Reservists and their Employers) campaign that assisted businesses with a range of employment matters for Reservists (part-time military personnel). This includes the benefits of having Reservists as employees and the financial assistance that is available during periods of mobilisation. Wessex RFCA is building on this campaign by promoting supportive behaviours towards the whole of the Armed Forces Community, including:

- reservists; service leavers and Veterans;
- cadets and Cadet Force adult volunteers;
- spouses of Service personnel;
- wounded, injured and sick Service personnel.

If you are an employer, one-to-one advice or more information on how supporting the Armed Forces Community can benefit your business is available from Jon Beake – wx-reed@rfca.mod.uk and Rachael Brannagan – wx-reed2@rfca.mod.uk

Many Somerset businesses have already signed up and received Bronze, Silver or Gold recognition.

Covenant Fund Update

Further information is available via: <https://covenantfund.org.uk/> and the [Covenant Fund Newsletter](#).

If you have specific queries about the Fund or are unsure whether your organisation or project is likely to be funded, please contact enquiries@covenantfund.org.uk

Other Funding Sources

Armed Forces Education Trust

The Armed Forces Education Trust is a charity working for children and young adults whose education has been compromised or put at risk because of parents' past or current service in our Armed Forces. It helps to fund the education of the Service children and ensures that children do not miss out because of their parents' service. It can also provide schools with funding for additional resources to support the education of Service children.

You can find out more about its work and about how to apply here: [Home - Armed Forces Education Trust](#).

Royal British Legion Grants

Royal British Legion Grants For further information regarding Royal British Legion Grants visit: <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/finance/grants/>

Grants for War Memorials – War Memorials Trust

Grants are currently available for 50% of eligible costs with a normal maximum grant of £20,000. The War Memorials Trust is looking to streamline the application process to make it easier for applicants and further information will be uploaded to: [War Memorials Trust](#)

Partner Newsletters

Wessex Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Newsletter

<https://www.wessex-rfca.org.uk/news/newsletters/>

The Ripple Pond

The Ripple Pond is a self-help support network across the UK for the adult family members of physically or emotionally injured service personnel and Veterans. Their latest newsletter is available [here](#).

Families Federations

Families Federations are there for Serving families. Magazines are free to subscribe to:

Navy - [Naval Families Federation | Royal Navy & Royal Marine Charity \(nff.org.uk\)](#) and magazine [Homeport](#)

Army - [Army Families Federation - Supporting Army families worldwide \(aff.org.uk\)](#) with their magazine [Army&You](#)

RAF - [Support for RAF personnel and families < RAF Families Federation \(raf-ff.org.uk\)](#) with their magazine [Envoy](#)

Further Information about the Armed Forces Covenant

The Covenant is about more than grants. More importantly, it reaches out to those who serve, or have served, who need help. It also helps integrate our Armed Forces into our communities. We want to increase awareness throughout the wide range of services that may come into contact with Armed Forces personnel, young and old, serving and retired, and their families. These services range from education to housing, healthcare to employers, adult and children's social care to parishes and voluntary organisations.

To help this, please cascade this information across your own organisation.

Further information on the Somerset Armed Forces Partnership can be found via: [Somerset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership](#)

How you can help

- Review your existing policies to look for any disadvantage for Armed Forces families.
- Help raise awareness with your front-line staff of the Armed Forces Covenant and the issues affecting Armed Forces families.
- Promote the [Somerset Armed Forces Hubs](#) and [Somerset Armed Forces Outreach Services](#)
- Tell the SAFC Partnership of any concerns you have or ideas to help deliver the Covenant in Somerset.
- Nominate and support an Armed Forces Champion in your organisation.
- Raise awareness of the many support services that exist to help Armed Forces families and encourage organisations to register on Somerset Choices.
- Get your organisation to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme and promote it to like-minded organisations.
- Promote the Gov.uk [online support guides](#) that provide information for veterans based on life stages
- Promote the Gov.uk [searchable directory](#) that lists both government and charity support available to veterans and their families
- Further information is available via: www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk
- Further information regarding cadets, reservists and guides for employers employing reservists is available via: wessex-rfca.org.uk



Proudly
supporting
those
who serve

#SilverERS2020