

**PWYLLGOR DIWYLLIANT, POBL A DATBLYGU SEFYDLIADOL
PEOPLE, ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT & CULTURE COMMITTEE**

DYDDIAD Y CYFARFOD: DATE OF MEETING:	19 May 2026
TEITL YR ADRODDIAD: TITLE OF REPORT:	Improving outcomes for Veterans and the Armed Forces Community – Annual Report 2025/26
CYFARWYDDWR ARWEINIOL: LEAD DIRECTOR:	Lisa Gostling, Executive Director of Workforce and Organisational Development/Deputy CEO
SWYDDOG ADRODD: REPORTING OFFICER:	Helen Sullivan – Head of Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion Beverly Davies – Strategic Partnership and Inclusion Manager

Pwrpas yr Adroddiad (dewiswch fel yn addas)

Purpose of the Report (select as appropriate)

Er Sicrwydd/For Assurance

ADRODDIAD SCAA

SBAR REPORT

Sefyllfa / Situation

The People, Organisational Development and Culture Committee (PODCC) is asked to receive this Annual Report 2025/26 which provides an update on the actions being taken by the Health Board to implement the Armed Forces Covenant and fulfil the requirements of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty.

The annual report offers assurance that a comprehensive and coordinated programme of activity is in place and as a result this is leading to improvements in access, experience and outcomes for veterans and the wider members of the Armed Forces within the workforce and in the community.

Cefndir / Background

The [Armed Forces Covenant](#) is a national commitment to ensure that those who serve, or who have served, in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly and with respect. A core principle of the Covenant is that members of the Armed Forces community should face no disadvantage compared with other citizens in the provision of public such as health and commercial services, with special consideration provided where appropriate as a result of service.

The [Armed Forces Covenant Duty](#) places a statutory obligation on specified public bodies, including health organisations, to have due regard to the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, members of the Armed Forces community. This Duty requires health bodies to systematically consider the impact of their policies, commissioning decisions and service delivery arrangements, and to take proportionate action to remove disadvantage or apply special provision where required.

In addition to meeting its statutory duties, the Health Board has proactively committed to nationally recognised accreditation schemes, including the [Defence Employer Recognition Scheme \(DERS\)](#), [Pride in Veterans Standard \(PiVS\)](#) and [Veteran Aware](#). These frameworks

provide external benchmarking and independent assurance of good practice, support continuous improvement, and help ensure that services are responsive to the needs of veterans, reservists, serving personnel and their families.

The Business, Partnerships and Inclusion (BPI) Team plays a central coordinating role in the Health Board's response to the Armed Forces Covenant and Covenant Duty, by coordinating actions across directorates and facilitating partnership working with external stakeholders.

Asesiad / Assessment

The Annual Report (Appendix 1) provides an overview of the actions undertaken by the Health Board during 2025/2026 to support implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant and the Duty to improve outcomes for veterans and members of the wider Armed Forces community. The report presents evidence of progress, impact and emerging themes, and is submitted to provide assurance to the Committee on delivery against statutory and organisational commitments.

Activity during the reporting period has focused on four agreed priority areas:

- Understanding the health care needs of our veterans and the Armed Forces community;
- Working collaboratively to reduce disadvantage for veterans and the Armed Forces community;
- Actively supporting veterans and the Armed Forces community through awareness raising events, staff training, and partnership working; and
- Promoting Hywel Dda as an employer of choice for veterans and the Armed Forces community.

The Health Board has seen a number of key improvements, including:

- Improved identification and support for veterans in primary, secondary and community care. **10, 099 (64.58%)** of the veteran population living in Hywel Dda are now registered in our GP practices, an increase by **729 (7.78%)** in the last year, and over **43%** since September 2023 when initiatives to identify and record veterans in our systems started. We have also doubled the number of Veteran Friendly GP practices (practices who have signed up to this scheme administered by Health Education Improvement Wales).
- Maintained Gold status under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme as part of our vision to be an employer of choice. **386** applicants in the last year have used the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, an increase by **169 (78%)** in the last year. Of the 386 applicants, 138 or 36% were invited to interview and 37 or 27% of those interviewed were offered roles.
- Increase in the self-identification of veteran and Armed Forces community status within the workforce. **151** staff have self-reported their status on ESR, an increase by **20 (15.27%)** in the last year with continued increases in the number of staff signing up to the Armed Forces staff network.
- Targeted research into veterans' mental health and substance misuse pathways to inform future service improvement.
- Sustained increases in the number of patients recorded on Wales Patient Administration System (WPAS) to support our pathways to ensure priority treatment eligibility is considered. **401** patients with veteran status were recorded in WPAS, an increase by **167 (71.37%)** in the last year, and **702%** since changes in the use of WPAS and the introduction of the WPAS Recording of Veteran Keynote staff guidance in June 2024.

The progress made during this year demonstrates that Armed Forces Covenant principles are becoming embedded across governance, services and employment practice and has established a strong foundation for continued development. The Health Board remains fully

committed to upholding the Armed Forces Covenant and will build on this momentum through the revalidation of our DERS Gold Award in the Autumn of 2026. We will continue to strengthen our approach to ensuring that services, employment practices and support arrangements deliver positive and equitable outcomes for veterans and the wider Armed Forces community, both within our workforce and across the communities we serve.

Argymhelliad / Recommendation

The People, Planning and Organisational Development Committee is asked to:

- **RECEIVE ASSURANCE** from that the work presented in the Annual Report 2025/26 demonstrates that the Health Board is proactively implementing the Armed Forces Covenant.

Amcanion: (rhaid cwblhau) Objectives: (must be completed)	
Committee ToR Reference: Cyfeirnod Cylch Gorchwyl y Pwyllgor:	2.1.1 - Compliance with legislation, guidance and best practice around the workforce and OD agenda, learning from work undertaken nationally and internationally, ensuring the Health Board is recognised as a leader in this field.
Cyfeirnod Cofrestr Risg Datix a Sgôr Cyfredol: Datix Risk Register Reference and Score:	N/A
Parthau Ansawdd: Domains of Quality Quality and Engagement Act (sharepoint.com)	7. All apply 5. Equitable 6. Person-Centred
Galluogwyr Ansawdd: Enablers of Quality: Quality and Engagement Act (sharepoint.com)	6. All Apply
Amcanion Strategol y BIP: UHB Strategic Objectives:	4. The best health and wellbeing for our individuals, families and communities 1. Putting people at the heart of everything we do
Amcanion Cynllunio Planning Objectives	Not Applicable
Amcanion Llesiant BIP: UHB Well-being Objectives: Hyperlink to HDdUHB Well-being Objectives Annual Report 2021-2022	4. Improve Population Health through prevention and early intervention, supporting people to live happy and healthy lives 5. Offer a diverse range of employment opportunities which support people to fulfill their potential

Gwybodaeth Ychwanegol: Further Information:	
Ar sail tystiolaeth: Evidence Base:	Armed Forces Bill Armed Forces Covenant Duty 2022
Rhestr Termau: Glossary of Terms:	Included within the body of the report
Partïon / Pwyllgorau â ymgynhorwyd ymlaen llaw y Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Pobl a Datblygu Sefydliadol: Parties / Committees consulted prior to People, Organisational Development & Culture Committee:	Armed Forces Steering Group GP Clinical Lead Armed Forces Champion

Effaith: (rhaid cwblhau) Impact: (must be completed)	
Ariannol / Gwerth am Arian: Financial / Service:	Not applicable.
Ansawdd / Gofal Claf: Quality / Patient Care:	The effective implementation of the Priority Treatment guidance for veterans and parity of waiting times for Armed Forces family members will impact on the quality of patient care and experience.
Gweithlu: Workforce:	All staff have a role to play in implementing the Armed Forces Covenant Duty.
Risg: Risk:	Not applicable.
Cyfreithiol: Legal:	Armed Forces Bill Armed Forces Covenant Duty 2022
Enw Da: Reputational:	Implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant and compliance with the Armed Forces Duty is reviewed by Welsh Government and Veterans Commissioner for Wales. The Health Board also works in partnership with the local authorities, third sector providers and community champions who informally hold the Health Board to account for our progress and work to improve outcomes for veterans and the Armed Forces community.
Gyfrinachedd: Privacy:	Not applicable.
Cydraddoldeb: Equality:	An Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken as this is an update report. However, the actions being taken by the Health Board contribute to equity of wellbeing and inclusion for veterans and the Armed Forces community.



GIG
CYMRU
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WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Hywel Dda
University Health Board

Armed Forces Covenant Annual report 2025 / 2026

01 April - 31 March 2026



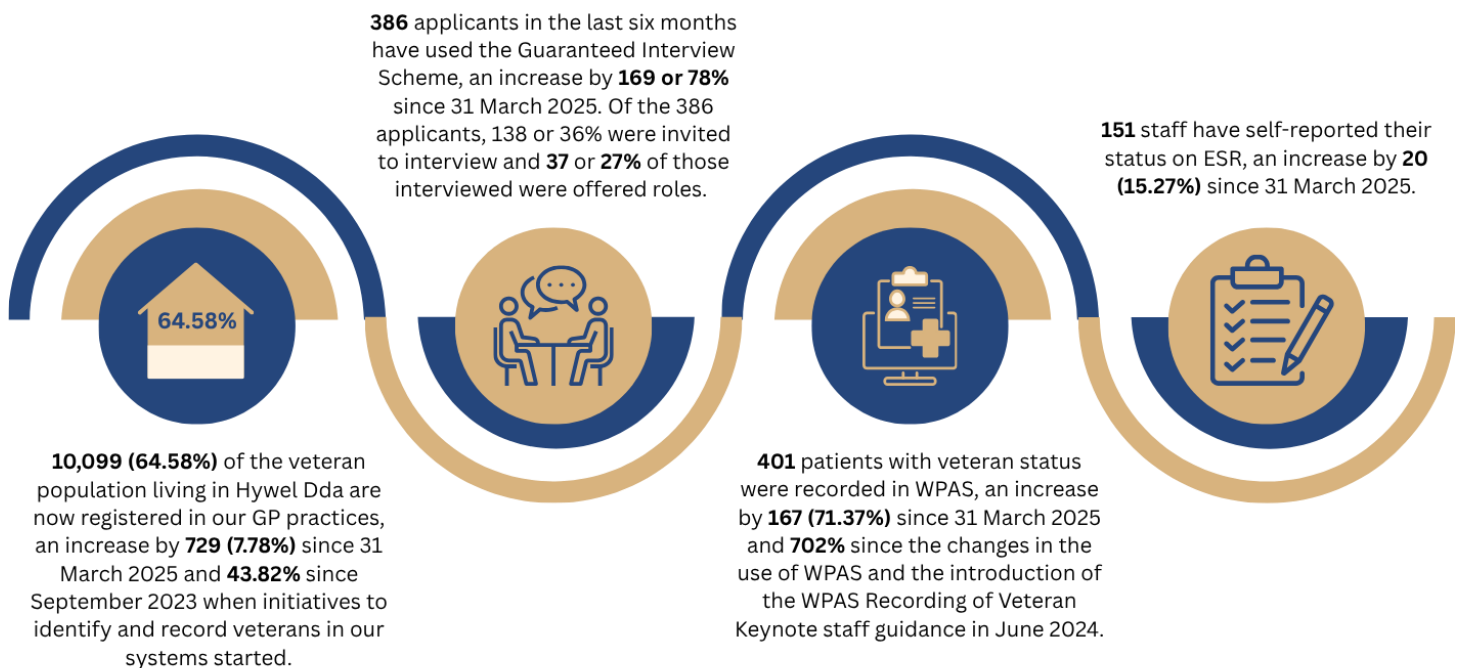
Executive Summary

During 2025–26, Hywel Dda University Health Board strengthened delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant through clear leadership, measurable progress and sustained organisational commitment. Coordinated by the Business, Partnerships and Inclusion team, achievements included:

- improved identification of veterans across care settings to support timely patient care
- enhanced workforce capability through refreshed national e-learning
- targeted research into veterans' mental health and substance misuse pathways to inform future service improvement
- doubled the number of Veteran-Friendly GP practices
- increased workforce self-identification as a member of the armed forces community and continued support through a growing staff network
- maintained Gold status under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme as part of our vision to be an employer of choice.

Together, these actions demonstrate that Armed Forces Covenant principles are becoming embedded across governance, services and employment practice, providing a strong platform for continued improvement in future years.

Our Staff



Our Service Users

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Introduction

The Business, Partnerships and Inclusion (BPI) team co-ordinates the Health Board's response to the Armed Forces Covenant (the Covenant). This includes work across a range of different areas, working collaboratively within the Health Board as well as with other public bodies and third sector partners.

This report provides an update on some of the key areas of work which have been on-going during the reporting period 2025–2026 aligned to each of our priority areas of focus to provide assurance that we are delivering our commitment to the Covenant. For more information about the Health Board's work, visit <https://hduhb.nhs.wales/healthcare/services-and-teams/armed-forces-covenant/>

Every year, the Health Board refreshes its Armed Forces Covenant Health Action Plan (Action Plan) outlining its key priority actions. The Action Plan is a dynamic document and is coordinated by the BPI team but continually shaped and informed by discussions within the Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group, Armed Forces Staff Network, and various local, regional and national partnership forums. Health Board actions align with the expectations of the Covenant and the Armed Forces Covenant Duty, relevant accreditation schemes and other Health Board's strategic objectives such as the Strategic Equality Objectives.

The Health Board priorities for 2025-26 were:



Accreditation Schemes

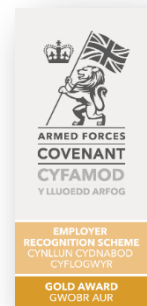
NHS Veteran Aware

NHS Veteran Aware is an accreditation programme designed to support NHS organisations in understanding and meeting the needs of the Armed Forces community. Accreditation is administered by the Veteran's Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA). As a Veteran Aware accredited organisation, the Health Board supports their aim to develop, share and drive the implementation of best practice that will improve Armed Forces Veterans' care, while at the same time raising standards for everyone based on the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.



The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS) Gold

The Employer Recognition Scheme encourages employers to support Defence and inspire other organisations to do the same. The Health Board currently holds the DERS Gold award in recognition of its work as a supportive employer for Defence personnel. The award is due for renewal in Autumn of 2026, and work has started to review activities and gather evidence for re-validation.



HEIW Veteran-Friendly Practices Scheme

The Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) Veteran-Friendly Practices Scheme was launched in early 2023 to enable GP practices to sign up voluntarily to undertake specialist training on veterans' health and wellbeing. The scheme promotes fair treatment and respect for people who have served in the UK Armed Forces and their families in order to be a registered a "veteran-friendly practice". Although the numbers are still low overall, we have seen a doubling of the number GP practices are participating in the scheme during the year.

The Pride in Veterans Standard (PiVS)

The Pride in Veterans Standard (PiVS) is a programme developed by Fighting with Pride, a trusted LGBT+ military charity. By signing up to PiVS, the Health Board aims to ensure that the whole veteran community feels confident in accessing its services and support. We continue to improve and demonstrate our commitment to being inclusive and welcoming to LGBT+ Veterans, serving personnel, and their families. The Health Board's recent submission has been highlighted as a best-practice example of a PiVS annual update return.



Priority 1: Understanding the health care needs of our veterans and the Armed Forces community

Population data

The consideration of needs of UK Armed Forces veterans is explicitly embedded within the Health Board's Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) processes to ensure that staff responsible for planning, redesigning and implementing service changes systematically consider the Armed Forces community, recognising the unique disadvantages some veterans may experience, and assessing the potential positive and negative impacts of proposals. Where impacts are identified, appropriate mitigation and actions are considered to ensure that veterans have equitable access to services and outcomes.

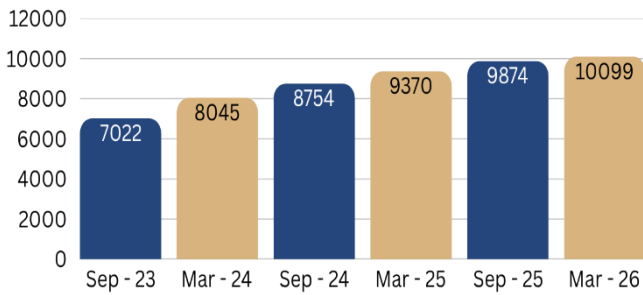
The Health Board continues to proactively monitor and improve the quality of data relating to UK Armed Forces veterans known to our services, including those registered with GP practices. A sustained programme of engagement, staff awareness and system improvements is supporting veterans to self-identify and ensuring veteran status is consistently and accurately recorded across Health Board data systems.

On 31 March 2026, **10,099** veterans are now registered with GP practices. This represents 64.58% of the veteran population recorded by the Census and represents an increase of 729 veterans (7.78%) since 31 March 2025, and an increase of 3,077 veterans (43.82%) since September 2023, when targeted initiatives to identify and systematically record veteran status were first introduced.



There are 382,800 people living in Hywel Dda and of these, 15,637 or 4.08% have previously served in the UK Armed Forces according to 2021 Census data.

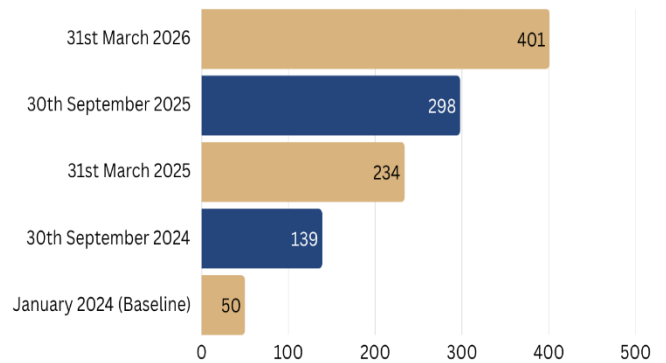
Total number of patients with veteran status in GP Practices in Hywel Dda UHB



This sustained upward trajectory demonstrates the effectiveness of the Health Board’s approach to improving veteran visibility within primary care, strengthening the foundations for equitable access, targeted support and informed service planning.

On 31st March 2026, 401 patients were recorded in WPAS with veteran status. This represents an increase of 167 patients (71.37%) since 31 March 2025, and a total increase of 351 patients (702%) since June 2024, following changes to WPAS usage and the introduction of the WPAS Recording of Veteran Keynote staff guidance.

Number of veteran keynotes on WPAS



Of the 401 patients with a veteran keynote recorded in WPAS, 7 individuals were identified and recorded as eligible for priority treatment. These improvements provide assurance that veterans are increasingly visible within Health Board systems, enabling staff to recognise entitlement, apply priority pathways where appropriate, and deliver more person-centred, equitable care.

Understanding of Substance Misuse Pathways for Veterans in West Wales

The Dyfed Substance Misuse Area Planning Board (APB) commissioned targeted research (April–July 2025) to strengthen assurance regarding the implementation of Welsh Government substance misuse and co-occurring mental health frameworks for UK Armed Forces veterans living in West Wales. The work aimed to improve understanding of how current pathways operate in practice for veterans and their families, recognising the distinct vulnerabilities associated with military service and transition to civilian life.

Using a mixed methods approach, including a literature review and wide stakeholder engagement, the research captured system and lived experience perspectives, with a strong emphasis on veteran and carer voices. Key findings highlighted barriers relating to visibility and stigma, service accessibility, inconsistent identification of veteran status, the availability of Welsh language provision, and variable understanding of veteran culture and service-related trauma.

The findings provide a strong evidence base to inform further pathway development. They identify areas of good practice and clear opportunities for

improvement, particularly around early identification, culturally informed care, consistent data capture and carer inclusive models. Phase two work is now underway to strengthen pathway design, workforce awareness and cross agency collaboration in partnership with the BPI team.

Patient Feedback and Veterans Experience

The Health Board's Patient Support Services (PSS) team continues to undertake engagement with people using NHS services, contacting approximately 20,000 individuals each year to capture feedback on their experiences of care. During the year only one feedback return was recorded as being from a patient with veteran status. In addition to the formal feedback via PSS, the BPI team received a total of six veteran-specific enquiries. While limited, relative to the size of the veteran population, these sources of intelligence provide valuable insight and highlight the ongoing challenge of capturing veteran-specific experience through standard feedback mechanisms alone.

The focus of the feedback was:

- Variable staff awareness and confidence in identifying patients with a military background and understanding how to apply appropriate considerations.
- Concerns about the accuracy of recording veteran status and priority treatment eligibility.
- Dissatisfaction with waiting times within Trauma and Orthopaedics, reflecting both the relevance of planned surgical pathways for veterans and the importance of clear application of Covenant principles at key points of the patient journey.

These insights have highlighted where training gaps and inconsistencies in practice persist and where targeted intervention is required to improve operational delivery.

In response to the themes which emerged proactive steps were taken to strengthen awareness, capability and consistency among clinical and operational teams. This included:

- Delivery of a targeted presentation and resource pack titled "Improving support for clinical teams in managing planned care for veterans", The resource is aimed at clinical staff to help them to more confidently identify veterans and appropriately apply Covenant considerations within planned care pathways.
- Development and dissemination of a "Veteran Patient Journey Map", setting out best practice for the identification, recording and management of veterans requiring surgery, including clear guidance on priority treatment eligibility.
- Active engagement with the Armed Forces community through local Armed Forces forums, to promote awareness of Health Board processes and strengthen two-way communication. This has been essential as the definition of priority treatment is often misunderstood within the veteran community.

Patients' Journey

At your GP

- Tell your GP that you are a veteran and whether your condition may be related to your time in Service.
- Ask your GP to include your veteran status and whether you may be eligible for priority treatment in your hospital referral letter.

Consultant Review

Consultants confirm eligibility for priority treatment

Consultation Outcome

Clinical decision made:
You are listed for surgical procedure flagged as priority treatment on surgical performance



Health Records

Receive referral from GP and record your veteran status keynote on your patient record. If the referral includes information about eligibility for priority, this will be recorded in the system, too.

Outpatient Waiting List

If eligible, you are offered the earliest outpatient appointment according to clinical priority

Waiting List Support Service/Screening

You are identified and recorded as eligible for priority treatment

Pre-assessment appointment

You are offered the earliest pre-assessment appointment according to clinical priority to assess fitness for surgical procedure

Healthboard Outcome

We are confident that there is a process in place to implement "Priority Treatment" for veterans.



Surgery date

If considered fit for surgery, you will be prioritised over those with the same level of clinical need.

Patient/ Veteran outcome

You are confident that steps have been taken to remove disadvantage resulting from their Service life.

Priority 2: Working collaboratively to reduce disadvantage for veterans and the Armed Forces community

Working in partnership to implement the Armed Forces Covenant

The Health Board adopts a collaborative, whole-system approach to fulfilling its responsibilities under the Armed Forces Covenant, with a clear focus on improving outcomes for veterans and the wider Armed Forces community. This approach ensures that the needs of veterans are visible, embedded and routinely considered across strategic planning, service delivery and organisational decision-making. This commitment is explicitly reflected in the Health Board Strategic Equality Plan (SEP), and under Objective 2: “Working together to improve health and well-being for all”, the Health Board has committed to *“Work in partnership to implement the Armed Forces Covenant Duty and improve access to priority treatment for eligible Veterans.”*

This objective provides a strong strategic mandate for partnership working and acts as a clear driver for action across services. Progress against this commitment is subject to regular oversight and discussion through established governance and leadership structures, including the Strategic Equality Plan Implementation Group and relevant Senior Leadership Team meetings.


The BPI team continued to promote the Health Board WPAS Recording of Armed Forces Keynote staff guide which was developed in partnership with the Health Board Data Standards Manager. To strengthen the impact of this, the delivery of bespoke, bite-size information sessions with key frontline staff such as those working in Patient Support Services and Outpatient departments, has commenced alongside work to ensure information is more visible and accessible to staff who will not have access to emails on a regular basis.

Community outreach support for veterans

The Community Development Outreach Team (CDOT) continued to work very closely with charities that support veterans including Woody’s Lodge, Links, and the VC Gallery to proactively identified opportunities for partnership working. Working very closely with Public Health services advice, information, and support provided by CDOT to veterans have included:


- Health information relating to cancer screening, smoking cessation, healthy eating, and mental health support,
- Accessing generic health services including GP registration,
- Signposting to services that can provide support to veterans who are socio-economic disadvantaged and with unpaid caring roles,
- Signposting to respite and recuperative activities.

Last year, a total of 53 veteran related activities were undertaken by the Community Development Outreach team, which is a significant increase from 2024-25.



“I met up with veteran who was recently made homeless and who had health concerns. Following our chat, I referred him to smoking team and helped him get in to the community dental service. He has finally seen a dentist and had his teeth out. He has also been taking the tablets to give up smoking and is now only on 2 cigarettes a day. I am privileged to be able to help our veterans in the community.”

Reflections from a CDOT staff member on their work with a veteran who was previously homeless.



Veterans NHS Wales (VNHSW)

Veterans NHS Wales (VNHSW) is a specialised service for individuals living in Wales who have served in the Armed Forces and who are experiencing mental health difficulties related specifically to their military service. The VNHSW develop the service drawing on expertise from within the national service and advance initiatives that fit local needs such as those living in Hywel Dda region through staff development days which also helps the team network with other organisations and service users. The team have also appointed a volunteer Veterans Representative offering a lived experience perspective to service development. This contributes to ensuring best practice and up-to-date knowledge and skills in meeting the needs of veterans accessing VNHSW.

The service provided appointments via a range of delivery formats - telephone, video conferencing, clinic-based and outdoor appointments. Building on treatment outcomes and service user feedback, outdoor psychological therapy is now standard practice in VNHSW in HDUHB. Client feedback remains overwhelmingly positive in respect of this method.

Membership of the Health Board VNHSW closed Facebook group continued to grow during the year. Members include veterans, family members of veterans and organisations who work with veterans. VNHSW continue to use service user feedback at a number of points throughout the care pathway (triage, assessment, at the end of treatment) to review its service delivery works and closely with VNHSW spokes and hub across the health boards in Wales to ensure service provision is in line with the national agenda whilst simultaneously being suitable for the local population.

Waiting List Support Service (WLSS)

Proactive identification of veterans is built into WLSS assessments. Last year, the Health Board added the questions: “Have you ever served in his Majesty’s Armed Forces?” and “Are you happy to be identified as a veteran on your medical record?” in the Waiting List Support Service (WLSS) call handlers’ script. This enables the team to update WPAS records to highlight patients where priority treatment considerations by clinical teams may be needed. Where identified and needed, the WLSS team signpost patients to services that are available within the community which may support them with health and wellbeing management.

Planned care for veterans

The Health Board initiative to improve support in managing planned care for veterans has continued using different forums and platforms such as e-newsletters and the Health Board Effective Clinical Practice Roadshow. Our work continues to prioritise the importance of timely identification and recording of veteran status within our clinical systems to ensure that any entitlement to priority treatment consideration for veterans is actioned promptly. We are continuing to:

- Promote the WPAS Recording of Armed Forces Keynote: a Staff Guide.
- Encourage health staff to record patients who self-identify as veterans in their patient data system and in referral letters where appropriate.
- Promote information and improve implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant - Healthcare Priority / Special Consideration for Veterans / Ex-Armed Forces Personnel (WHC (2023) 022).

Priority 3: Actively supporting veterans and the Armed Forces community through awareness raising events, staff training, and partnership working

Regional and National Partnership Working

The Health Board actively participates in partnership working in a variety of forums including:

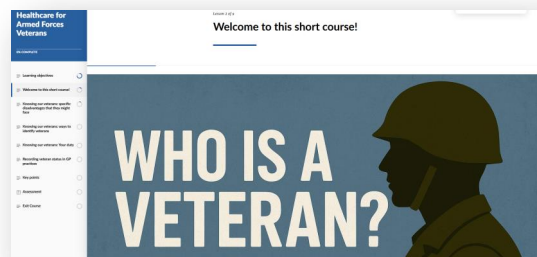
- Local Armed Forces Covenant groups (led by Local Authority partners and focused on operational action and networking between professionals)
- Regional Armed Forces Covenant groups (jointly chaired by the Health Board and Local Authority Champions on a rotational basis). This group meets quarterly and is attended by the Health Board Independent Board Member Champion.
- All-Wales Armed Forces Lead Officer group, an informal forum to provide peer support to lead officers. The group meets online monthly to share good practice and identify opportunities for joint working. This has been particularly beneficial during national celebrations, such as Armed Forces week, when each Health Board took a lead in organising on-line awareness raising sessions which were made available to NHS staff across Wales.
- All-Wales Veterans and Armed Forces Health Champions forum. This is chaired by Welsh Government and brings together Independent Board Member Champions and strategic officer leads. This group meets bi-annually. As a result of discussions at a national level, our Health Board has been working with Welsh Government colleagues to consider the development of a benchmarking survey which could be used by Health Board's across Wales to highlight their progress with implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant responsibilities.

Review and refresh of the Armed Forces Covenant e-learning module

Hywel Dda, in partnership with NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership and the All Wales Armed Forces Leads led a comprehensive review and refresh of the Armed Forces Covenant e learning module hosted on the NHS Wales Electronic Staff Record (ESR) platform. This programme of work was undertaken to ensure that the national training offer is current, consistent, and fit for purpose across NHS Wales, and that it effectively supports the statutory Armed Forces Covenant Duty.

The e-learning module:

- Explains veterans' health needs and how the Covenant principle of 'no disadvantage' applies in healthcare settings
- Clarifies what veteran status means within NHS Wales and provides clear guidance on how to identify and record veteran status accurately in NHS data systems
- Sets out what priority treatment is, who is eligible, and how to apply WHC (2023) 022 consistently across services
- Builds staff confidence and competence in supporting veterans, signposting appropriately, and seeking specialist advice where needed
- Is intended to support both clinical and non-clinical staff, recognising that identification and appropriate support for veterans often occurs at multiple points along the patient journey.



Work is currently underway for a soft launch the refreshed e learning module, allowing early uptake and feedback, with a formal launch is planned during Armed Forces Week 2026. This work reinforces organisational commitment and maximising visibility and engagement across NHS Wales.

This e learning module is a significant step forward in standardising staff knowledge and practice in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant. By aligning learning content to Welsh policy, local services and NHS Wales systems. It strengthens workforce capability, improves consistency in application of priority treatment, and supports delivery of equitable, veteran informed care across Wales.

Improving visibility of Veteran and Armed Forces community support and services information within the Health Board website

During the year the Health Board has received feedback and queries from multiple partnership forums seeking clarification about how information about Armed Forces veteran-related services is stored, maintained and shared with staff to support information sharing and signposting purposes. This led to a review of current arrangements and partnership working has commenced to:

- Promote Dewis Cymru as the primary platform access to information to support the signposting veterans to local services across health, social care and the third sector in Hywel Dda.
- Encouraging veteran-related service providers to register and keep information up to date.
- Establish arrangements to promote Dewis Cymru to veterans and their families, supporting self-directed access to accurate, local information.

Adopting Dewis Cymru as the primary signposting platform in the Health Board will provide a nationally aligned, locally maintained and sustainable solution, reduce the reliance on static documents, and improve access to accurate, up-to-date information for veterans, their families and staff.

Promoting HEIW Veteran Friendly Practice Scheme

The BPI team has been working with GP Practice Managers to promote the uptake of the Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) Veteran Friendly Accreditation Scheme. As a result of this engagement, eight GP practices within the Health Board area have now signed up to the scheme.

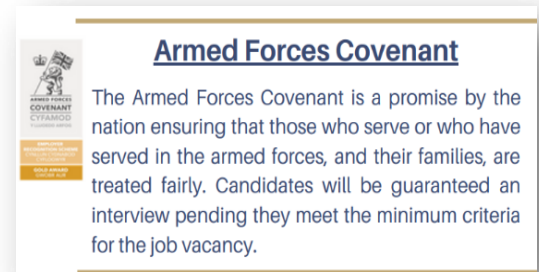
Achieving Veteran-Friendly Practice accreditation represents a clear commitment to improving access, experience and outcomes for veterans and their families in primary care. Participation in the HEIW accreditation scheme strengthens primary care's role as a key gateway to support veterans, improving signposting, continuity of care and the ability to tailor services to individual needs. Continued promotion of the scheme supports the Health Board's wider commitment to embedding Armed Forces Covenant principles across frontline services.

Priority 4: Promoting Hywel Dda as an employer of choice for veterans and the Armed Forces community

Recruitment

The Health Board [Guaranteed Interview Scheme video](#) which was launched on the Health Board Swyddi Hywel Dda Jobs recruitment social media sites in June 2024 has been shared with various partnership forums both as part of the Health Board's inclusive recruitment campaign and celebration of Armed Forces week this year. The new video features three members of the Armed Forces staff network with different military backgrounds and job roles to show the varied possibilities and job opportunities and the support the Health Board can offer to veterans and the Armed Forces Community in terms of recruitment, transition, and staff wellbeing.

To support the Health Board's commitment to inclusive recruitment and the Defence Employers Recognition Scheme (DERS), the Inclusive Recruitment: Reasonable Adjustment leaflet includes information on due regard for veterans and the Armed Forces community in line with the Armed Forces Covenant and this is visible on the Health Board intranet.



Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly. Candidates will be guaranteed an interview pending they meet the minimum criteria for the job vacancy.

As a DERS Gold award holder, the Health Board application form includes the question "Are you a member of the Armed Forces Community?" During the shortlisting process, applications from members of the Armed Forces community are highlighted and, if individuals meet the minimum essential criteria for the role, they are guaranteed an interview.

In partnership with the VC Gallery, the Health Board held an information session (online and in person) outlining the opportunities available and the application process for vacancies including the Guaranteed Interview Scheme for the veteran and the Armed Forces community.



Are you a member of the Armed Forces Community?

Hywel Dda University Health Board will be holding an information session outlining the opportunities available and the application process for vacancies for the veteran and the Armed Forces community.

Wednesday, 16th July

In Person Event:
The VC Gallery,
Britannia Road,
Pembroke Dock, SA72 6PD
9.30am - 10.30am

Online Event:
Scan the QR code to receive a joining link, or email us on StrategicPartnerships.hdd@wales.nhs.uk
1.30pm - 2.30pm

Armed Forces Week 2025
23rd - 28th June

June 23rd - 28th is Armed Forces Week. It is our chance to show our support for the people who make up the Armed Forces community: from those who currently serve to service families, Veterans, Reservists and Cadet Forces Adult Volunteers.

MON 23 We will be raising an Armed Forces flag at all four acute hospital sites. Join us at the accessible flag poles at:
• Glangwili Hospital - 10:50am, near the main road as you enter the Outpatients main parking area
• Prince Phillip Hospital - 10:50am, near the main entrance
• Withybush Hospital - 5pm, in front of A&E

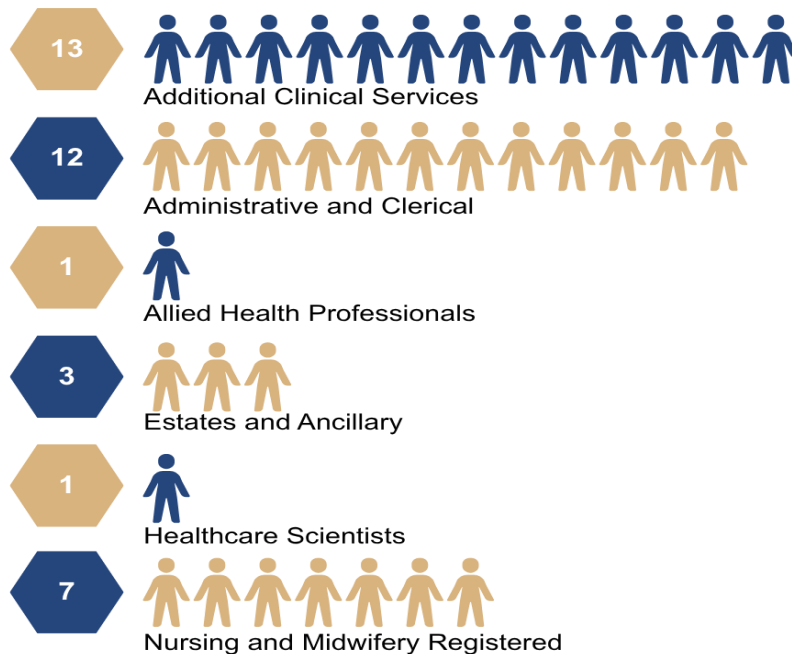
WED 25 **Reserves Day**
Are you a Reservist? Or, do you manage someone who is? Make sure you record this on ESR under Supplementary Role. To find out what support is available for you, contact us on the email below.

THURS 26 **Armed Forces Staff Network coffee and catch up**
We will be joined by Maggie who is the Armed Forces Champion of the Department of Work and Pensions for a C&A about Armed Forces Pensions.
Online via MS Teams, 11:00-12:00

For more information about Armed Forces Week and to register for the events above, please email StrategicPartnerships.HDD@wales.nhs.uk

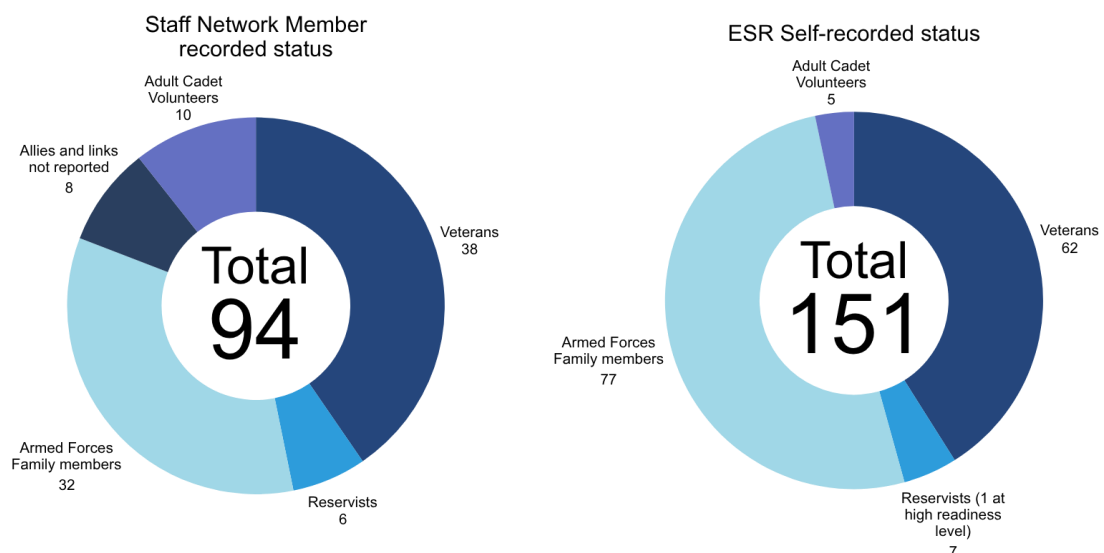
Between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, a total of 386 applicants declared that they are a “Member of the armed forces community”, an increase by 169 or 78% since 31 March 2025. Of these, 138 or 36% were invited to interview; and 37 or 27% of those who were interviewed were offered roles in the Health Board.

Job offers to members of the Armed Forces community in 2025- 2026



Armed Forces community in the workforce

As an employer, the Health Board continues to encourage staff to self-identify their link to the Armed Forces community using the supplementary role facility within the Electronic Staff Record (ESR). 94 members of staff are registered with the Armed Forces staff network, an increase from 86 in the previous year. Increases have also been seen in the number of staff who have self-recorded their status on ESR, which has increased to 151, from 131 in the previous year. The infographic below provides a comparison of self-identified characteristics from data held for members of our Armed Forces Staff Network as well as information recorded on the ESR system as of 31st March 2026.



The numbers of staff self-declaring their identity has increased but it should be noted that this may still be an under-representation of our Armed Forces community as the information is voluntary. Not all staff report or record their supplementary roles on ESR, declare their Armed Forces status during recruitment or in job applications, or register interest in the Staff Network. The above numbers, therefore, may not be a true figure of all the Armed Forces community in the workforce and there is no way of verifying the data to provide a definitive number.

Armed Forces Staff Network

Members of the Armed Forces Staff Network continued to be involved in various collaborative meetings and partnership working so that they are able to inform decisions and activities that affect them. The staff network participated in the planning for VE Day 80th Anniversary celebration as well as Armed Forces Week events. Several staff network members attend the Health Board Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group meetings and actively contributed to projects that were relevant to them. The Health Board has a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel for the staff network which provides a space for continuous discussion and sharing of information about staff wellbeing initiatives and training opportunities.

Armed Forces Week 2025

The Health Board celebrates Armed Forces Week each year as an opportunity to acknowledge the diversity and the contribution of our staff who make up the Armed Forces community. In 2025-26, the Health Board celebrated Armed Forces Week by:

- Simultaneously raising the Armed Forces flag across four acute hospitals, including representation from the band of 948 Squadron Royal Air Force Air Cadet at the Withybush Hospital event
- Sharing a corporate message on our public and staff facing social media sites
- Holding the Armed Forces Staff Network Catch Up and Coffee Morning
- Promoting the Guaranteed Interview Scheme video
- Holding an online Armed Forces Covenant Drop-in event to encourage other organisations to sign up to the Covenant
- Hosting a Volunteering and Apprenticeship event for veterans and members of the Armed Forces
- Promoting the use of an Armed Forces Week themed Teams background during on-line meetings as a way of raising awareness and showing our support to veterans and members of the Armed Forces in the workforce and in the community.



Information about the activities and events were disseminated to staff through various platforms to promote and recognise our members of the Armed Forces community, and some of the feedback we received from our staff shows that these were appreciated.

Our member of staff who is also a Cadet Adult Volunteer said:



"It was great to be a part of this event as both a veteran and a Cadet Force Adult Volunteer"



Major (retd) Dean Morgan, Service Manager Trauma and Orthopaedics, led the flag raising event in Prince Philip Hospital. He said:



"Being a recently made veteran of 28 years' service with the 1st Bn Wesh Guards it was very special t have the honour of raising the Armed Forces Flag at Prince Philip Hospital. For me, Armed Forces Week symbolises two things: celebration and remembrance. Firstly, celebrating the commitment and sacrifice our current service personnel undertake in protecting and serving the nation in such an unstable world. Secondly, remembering all those who have made the ultimate sacrifice and those that are still dealing with the wounds of conflict today, the freedom we enjoy very rarely comes for free. It really is nice to see that Hywel Dda University Health Board recognises these things and place such an onus on marking the start of Armed Forces week."



VE Day 80

2025 marked the 80th anniversary of the VE (Victory in Europe) Day. The Health Board celebrated with the nation by coming together to honour and pay tribute to veterans of the Second World War and their families through various events including Fish and Chips Day at all hospital canteens, board displays in service areas, and tea and cakes within teams and services.

Hywel Dda Celebrated VE Day 80



How did you celebrate? Let us know at StrategicPartnerships.hdd@wales.nhs.uk

Commemoration of Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday

In November 2025, the Health Board led a coordinated and highly visible programme of Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday activities, demonstrating its ongoing commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and to recognising the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces community. The commemoration was delivered in partnership with the Board's Armed Forces Champion and key internal stakeholders, including the Armed Forces Staff Network, Communications, Spiritual Care, and Estates teams.

Key activities included:

- A simultaneous two minute silence held across all four hospital sites, supported by the Estates team and observed in Outpatients and appropriate clinical and non clinical areas, ensuring wide participation across the organisation.
- Remembrance services and wreath laying ceremonies led by the Spiritual Care team in the chapels across all four hospital sites, providing staff, patients and visitors with meaningful opportunities for reflection.
- A commemorative video message, produced by the Communications team and shared via the Health Board's social media channels and hospital radio stations, extending the reach of the commemoration beyond hospital settings.

The Health Board's Armed Forces Champion and Independent Members represented the organisation at local Remembrance Sunday events, formally laying Health Board wreaths in Aberystwyth, Cardigan, Carmarthen, Haverfordwest, Llanelli and Pembroke Dock, reinforcing the Board's visible support for Armed Forces communities across the region.



Concluding comments

We are proud to highlight the Health Board's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant through the examples outlined in this 2025-26 end of year report various improvement in outcomes for and celebrations of veterans and members of the Armed Forces both in our workforce and in the community. Our commitment to work in partnership, both at strategic, operational and community levels, in order to drive improved outcomes for veterans, important changes and quality improvements, commemorative events, staff awareness and training opportunities, staff recognition, and more, will continue during this reporting year and beyond.