

COMMENT



**MILITARY COVENANT
SECURITY FOR VETERANS,
SAFETY FOR TAXPAYERS**

In 1593, Elizabeth I enacted a statute that old soldiers “should at their return be relieved and rewarded to the end that they may reap

the fruit of their good deserving, and others may be encouraged to perform the like endeavours”.

Sadly it has taken 400 years, from one Elizabeth to another, before any government has been moved to modernise that promise. Previous governments had

the time, the money and the majorities to legislate, but it is only now that an Armed Forces Covenant, to rebuild the bonds of trust and obligation between state and military, is to be enshrined in law.

“The Military Covenant is both a safeguard and a shield”

The Covenant is both a safeguard and a shield. It ensures that our service personnel and their families are recognised for the sacrifices they make. It also defends against ‘litigation creep’ – any pernicious tendency that might see a growing number of services personnel, encouraged by no win/no fee-style lawyers, marching off to court more often than they march off to war.

The Covenant outlined in the Armed Forces Act gets that balance right. It guarantees that the most important military concerns – the ‘key pillars’ – of education, housing and healthcare for our services, as well as other topical issues, are reported to Parliament by the defence secretary. Importantly, it also requires him to acknowledge that ‘special provision for service people may be justified’ and report on it as appropriate. This approach, supported by Chris Simpkins, director general of the Royal British Legion, ensures that all governments will be held to account.

The Armed Forces Covenant delivers justice to our services without being justiciable. It reinvigorates the relationship between our people and our military. And it provides a flexible framework, not a prescriptive checklist, responsive to service needs. Chiefs, charities and campaigners back it. So should we. 🇬🇧

Christopher Pincher is Conservative MP for Tamworth



Injured servicemen from Headley Court and Selly Oak meet Princes William and Harry before a rugby match at Twickenham last year: such events are important but a statutory footing for the Military Covenant is vital, says Christopher Pincher

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