

HONOURING THE MILITARY COVENANT

Wherever we send our brave heroes, whatever the danger, they never let us down. We will not let them down. We will honour the Military Covenant.

UKIP will create a dedicated Minister for Veterans, attached to the Cabinet Office to head up a Veterans Administration (VA). The VA will work with current MoD veteran services and established charities to provide a single point of contact for veterans in a range of fields: health care, housing, counselling, education and training, rehabilitation, hospital care, access to veteran financial services, benefits and memorialisation. Issues such as veteran homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse and mental health problems will also come under this remit, as will rolling out the following initiatives by 2020:

A DEDICATED MILITARY HOSPITAL

We believe members of our Armed Forces should have access to expert care services, configured to meet the specific needs of serving forces personnel and veterans.

Britain is the only major country in Europe that does not have

a dedicated military hospital, so we will build one. It will provide specialist physical and mental health services and provide accommodation for 150 relatives or friends on site.

HOSTELS FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

9,000 homeless people are ex-forces, as are one in ten people sleeping rough on the streets, according to charities Combat Stress and Crisis. That those who have been willing to defend our homeland have ended up without a home themselves is appalling.

By 2020, UKIP will build eight halfway house veterans' hostels, each with 200 rooms and modelled on similar hostels already in operation. We will also built 500 affordable rent homes every year for ex-forces personnel.

JOB'S FOR EX-SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN

We will guarantee the offer of a job in the police service, prison service or border force for anyone who has served in the Armed Forces for a minimum of 12 years. This policy will also help meet our pledge to fund an additional 6,000 full time positions across these three organisations. We will secure our borders, get more police on the streets, have safer prisons and honour the Military Covenant.

BOOTS TO BUSINESS

Skills gained in the forces can be useful when running a small business. We will create a 'Boots to Business' scheme to channel loans, grants and access to free professional advice and mentors to veterans who wish to set up and run their own businesses after leaving the forces.

SUPPORTING OUR HEROES AND THEIR FAMILIES

Key roles for the VA will include bereavement support; the issue of a veteran service card to ensure fast-track access to NHS mental health care; and the award of a National Defence Medal to all veterans, irrespective of rank or length of service.

The current anomaly in the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme will be rectified, so no veteran has to use their war pension to pay for social care, whenever they were injured.

These entitlements will be extended to service personnel from overseas. If they have shared the responsibility, stress and danger associated with military service, they should be entitled to exactly the same benefits as the man or woman who stood at their side.