ARMED FORCES ENHANCED ACCESS TO JOBCENTRE PLUS SERVICES
& ARMED FORCES CHAMPIONS

As part of the Armed Forces Covenant there are certain Department for Work and Pensions initiatives to assist current and former members of the Armed Forces and their families in accessing Jobcentre Plus services. These initiatives are detailed overleaf.

JOBCENTRE PLUS ARMED FORCES CHAMPIONS

- In 2009 the Department for Work and Pensions created an Armed Forces Champion role in every Jobcentre Plus District to ensure that Jobcentre Plus support, advice and guidance reflect the needs of the Service community.

- If you are a Service person, a Service family member or a recent veteran trying to access one of the initiatives overleaf, please ask the member of the Jobcentre Plus staff that you are dealing with to speak to their Jobcentre Plus District Armed Forces Champion about your case.

- Jobcentre Plus staff can find their District Champion through the Armed Forces Champions intranet site or through their Customer Service A-Z.

The role of the Armed Forces Champions is as follows:
  - Develop relationships and joint working arrangements between Jobcentre Plus and the Armed Forces community in their District;
  - Provide information for Jobcentre Plus advisers about the specific Armed Forces initiatives (listed overleaf) and provide an understanding of the issues for the Forces community that can be a barrier to employment;
  - Be the first point of contact for Jobcentre Plus staff and Services welfare/families staff in their District to advise on queries regarding individual Armed Forces community cases (including serving personnel, their families and recent veterans);
  - Focus specifically on the Jobcentre Plus support available to Service leavers and those within their resettlement period; spouses/civil partners of currently serving and ex-Service personnel, and work to put support in place where necessary and appropriate.

  - The Champions are working in partnership with the Armed Forces community and support organisations in their District, as well as local and national employers, to identify work trials, employment opportunities and support for Service leavers and their families. They are also working to raise the profile of the Service community in terms of the skills, knowledge and experience they can offer, and working with colleagues to alleviate some of the barriers to work being faced by Service families. The activities of each Champion will differ from District to District, as it will be tailored to the needs of the Armed Forces community in that District. The Armed Forces Champion is an addition role to an existing job, usually within the partnerships roles in District Office: thus the Champions are not able to have direct contact with service leavers or their family members, unless a specific issue requires further information prior to resolution.
EMPLOYMENT & BENEFITS INITIATIVES

EMPLOYMENT

Jobcentre Plus and Work Programme
All former Service personnel have access to the full range of Jobcentre Plus services; In addition, a person who has served in the Armed Forces for any day within the last three years can be considered for early access to the new Work Programme. Service leavers on Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity Benefit or Income Support will be able to volunteer for the Work Programme at any point in their claim.

ARMED FORCES SPOUSES SPECIFIC

Spouse/partner employment opportunities
The Government is committed to providing appropriate support to the spouses or partners of Service personnel. Partners of currently serving and ex-Service personnel have access to the full range of Jobcentre Plus services and can be considered for early access to the new Work Programme from three months into their claim for Jobseeker’s Allowance.

NI Credits for spouses following a member of the Armed Forces overseas
In April 2010, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) introduced an award of Class 1 National Insurance credits for Service spouses and civil partners to cover periods in which they were accompanying a member of the Armed Forces posted overseas. The credits, which have been in effect since April 2011, will help protect the eligibility of Service spouses and civil partners to a basic state pension and contribution-based working-age benefits.

Easing the contribution conditions for spouses/partners of Service personnel accompanying on overseas posting
In addition to the NI credits award covered above, an easement is in place to the first contribution condition for both contributory Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA(Cont)) and contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESA(Cont)) for the spouses and civil partners of members of Her Majesty’s Forces who have accompanied their spouse or civil partner on a posting outside the UK. This will help these spouses and civil partners to claim contributory Jobseeker’s Allowance or contributory Employment and Support Allowance when they return to the UK.

Easing voluntary unemployment conditionality for spouses
It is Jobcentre Plus policy is that ‘Spouses of Service personnel who leave employment to follow their partner will have just cause for leaving that employment. This means they should not be precluded from receiving Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) on the grounds of voluntary unemployment. Each case should be considered on an individual basis using the relevant legislation and the information provided by the person claiming JSA.

Maternity Allowance for Spouses overseas
Spouses accompanying a service partner overseas are unable to claim maternity allowance from the UK. However, depending on where they live, they can either claim the local nation’s maternity benefits or apply for an MOD ex-gratia payment in lieu of Maternity Allowance. Details of the scheme are in MOD DIN 2012DIN01-220 on the MOD intranet.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH - BENEFITS ACCESS

Access to benefits for dependants of Foreign and Commonwealth personnel
Dependants of serving Foreign and Commonwealth personnel (including Gurkhas) who are injured, including on operations or during training for operations, may not be able to access benefits such as Carer’s Allowance if they do not qualify to settle in the UK.

Special provisions exist, whereby if a Foreign or Commonwealth member of the Armed Forces is medically discharged as a result of a Service attributable injury, the requirement for them to have completed four years of service in order to qualify for settlement would normally be waived. However all other criteria would have to be met. If appropriate, any dependants would have their application for settlement granted in line with that of the serving person.

WOUNDED, INJURED AND SICK - BENEFITS ACCESS

Access to benefits for medically discharged personnel
When a Service medical board decides a person can no longer be employed in the Armed Forces and should be discharged, DWP now uses the Service medical board evidence to determine eligibility to Employment and Support Allowance rather than conduct a face to face medical assessment.