

Sodexo supports Care After Combat event to highlight issues faced by veterans

9 months ago



[Sodexo](#) UK & Ireland was proud to support the Care After Combat all-party parliamentary event held at the Houses of Parliament on 9 October 2024, highlighting the valuable work of the charity in support of former British Armed Forces personnel in the justice system.

Hosted by Steve Yemm, MP, the reception saw around 100 MPs and peers from the House of Lords hear from Care After Combat CEO Adrian Kirk about the charity's work to address the issues faced by veterans reintegrating into civilian life, especially for those becoming involved in the justice system. The charity provides personalised mentorship and comprehensive support services.

Adrian Kirk, CEO, Care After Combat said: "The vast majority of those who serve in our Armed Forces go on to lead very successful lives beyond the military. But for some the transition to civilian life can be a struggle and, for a subset of those, their experiences lead to involvement with the justice system. British Armed Forces veterans remain the single largest occupational group within UK prisons. That's where Care after Combat comes in, providing specialist support to veterans in the justice system to help rehabilitate, prepare for release from prison and successful reintegration into society, and reduce reoffending.

"We are proud to be delivering life-changing support to veterans in prisons across all of England and Wales, through our own Project Pheonix and co-delivering NHS England's Op NOVA service alongside Forces Employment Charity.

"It is a huge honour and privilege to be able to speak with many MPs, Peers, and Ministers about the work we do and to highlight the continued and significant need of veterans in the justice system. My sincere thanks go to Steve Yemm MP for hosting the event and to Tony and the Sodexo team for supporting."

As a long-time partner to the armed forces community and with extensive experience of managing prisons, Sodexo knows the challenges and issues faced by both veterans and ex-offenders and is committed to providing as much support as possible to help them.

Tony Simpson, Justice Operations Director for Sodexo UK and Ireland spoke at the event about Sodexo's [Starting Fresh programme](#) which was launched in March 2023 to promote the benefits of recruiting prison leavers across the business community.

Speaking at the event Tony said: "Sodexo has been operating across both prisons and military facilities for many years. We are therefore perfectly placed to apply our knowledge, resources and energies to activities which help those who serve, or have served.

"We see all too clearly the impact of imprisonment on veterans but we also fully understand their strengths, skills, aspirations and support requirements. Having a job, by itself, can reduce reoffending rates by up to 9%. However, as Care after Combat recognise, many groups, including veterans benefit from more specialised mentoring programmes which look across a whole range of support needs.

"There is more we can do, and we will be continuing our discussions with Care After Combat to explore how we can support veterans in prisons, building on the experience within other prisons, but also linking up our volunteering work, employment opportunities and other specific projects."

At the event Sodexo shared its Starting Fresh MPs toolkit developed specifically to enable them to engage with businesses and prisons in their local constituencies to help support prison leavers find employment opportunities and to break the cycle of reoffending.

In its first year, Sodexo's [Starting Fresh](#) programme supported our Prison Employment Leads form many new partnerships with companies such as Marriott Hotels, Burger King and Iceland. These collaborations included employer days in prisons, allowing businesses to meet potential employees and learn about their skills and qualifications first hand. It also offers free guidance to employers, encouraging more businesses to proactively recruit skilled and qualified people with convictions.

Sodexo UK & Ireland's purpose has always been to contribute positively to the communities in which it operates. Sodexo was an early signatory of the Armed Forces Covenant and as a partner to the military for over 30 years Sodexo continually looks to support and provide employment opportunities at every level to those leaving the military. It also has a number of veteran-owned SMEs as supply partners.

Early this year Sodexo was ranked 17 in the GREAT British Employers of Veterans Top 50 list for 2024. It has its own veterans, reservist and military families network group with membership of over 60 employees and Richard Jones, operations director for defence at Sodexo is a committee member of the IWFM Veterans in FM group.