



Post-Service Employment among ex-Service personnel and their partners

Policy Summary

October 2024

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The Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) Research Centre aims to ensure that evidence about the experiences and needs of Serving personnel, ex-Service personnel, and their families is at the heart of decision making so that it can inform and transform policy and practice to enable successful transition to civilian life post-Service. The FiMT Research Centre is run by a consortium of RAND Europe and the King's Centre for Military Health Research at King's College London, under a grant agreement with the Forces in Mind Trust until 2027. For more information: <https://www.fimt-rc.org>.



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Background and purpose



The FiMT Research Centre is committed to ensuring that ‘evidence is at the heart of decision making for the benefit of ex-Service personnel and their families’. One mechanism for achieving this objective is to produce research and policy summaries for each of the nine transition themes which organise the Research Centre.¹

These summaries aim to provide an accessible and robust synthesis of up-to-date research evidence, policy, and practice relevant to the specified theme of focus. It is intended that they be used by researchers, policy makers, and service providers to inform their work, thereby placing evidence at the heart of decision making for the benefit of ex-Service personnel and their families.

This policy summary synthesises the available evidence of current employment policy and support provision for United Kingdom (UK) ex-Service personnel and their families in the civilian labour market. Drawing on existing academic and grey literature, as well as consultations with relevant stakeholders, it reflects critically on the following topics:

- UK policy and support concerning the employment of ex-Service personnel and their families.
- Employment support provision for ex-Service

personnel and their families, including both statutory and non-statutory provision (Wales).

- Employment support provision for ex-Service personnel and their families, including both statutory and non-statutory provision (Scotland).
- Employment support provision for ex-Service personnel and their families, including both statutory and non-statutory provision (Northern Ireland).

Through addressing the above points, the summary outlines existing policy and practice, identifies gaps in policy and current support provision, and considers the implications of existing policy for future initiatives. A summary of current research evidence about ex-Service personnel and their partners’ employment in the civilian labour market is available on the FiMT Research Centre’s website ([Ribera-Almandoz and Keeling, 2024](#)).

The findings presented here capture policy and support provision at the time of data collection and were based on the search strategy employed.² A robust methodology was used to produce this summary, helping to ensure that its findings are both valid and credible (see Annexes A and B).

This summary has been subject to peer-review by independent parties.

¹ For details of the nine transition themes, see: <https://www.fimt-rc.org/themes>

² Data collection period: 01/05/2024 – 08/08/2024. Note that the new Government formed following the UK general election held on 4 July 2024 may bring changes that were not yet in effect at the end of the data collection period.

Key findings



Statutory employment support is available for ex-Service personnel across the UK's constituent nations. To enhance the cohesiveness of this support, several policy initiatives have been introduced, including the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan (UK), the Veterans Scoping Exercise - Employment (Wales), and the Strategy for Our Veterans - Refreshed Action Plan (Scotland).



The provision of dedicated employment support is ensured through **comprehensive resettlement and recruitment programmes, with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) playing a central role.** While progress has been made in addressing the needs of the devolved nations, **some concerns remain about the accessibility and effectiveness of services in Northern Ireland and Wales.**



A growing number of programmes are dedicated to engaging with the business community and establishing structured pathways to employment. An example is Op PROSPER, a new initiative funded by the Office of Veterans' Affairs (OVA) and managed by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, aimed at empowering ex-Service personnel and their families by ensuring equal access to job opportunities and supporting their transition to sustainable, meaningful careers.



There is a pressing need for robust evaluation of employment support services across the UK and devolved governments. The introduction of a new CTP contract presents a timely opportunity to integrate a comprehensive independent evaluation process.



The Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the OVA should **collect and publicly release longitudinal data on the employment experiences and trajectories of ex-Service personnel and their partners.** This data should include details on skills, career aspirations, and long-term employment outcomes to better tailor support for securing sustainable and fulfilling employment.



Although numerous initiatives led by third sector and private organisations are available across England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, **there remains a need for a comprehensive directory to assist ex-Service personnel in identifying and navigating these options.**



Similarly, while support is available, the **landscape of employment assistance for partners of ex-Service personnel is confusing**, with potential for gaps and overlap.



Recent initiatives like CTP Future Horizons and the Veterans' Career Development Fund have promoted targeted support for specific groups. However, evidence indicates that ex-Servicewomen, individuals aged 50 years and over, Early Service Leavers (ESL), LGBT+ ex-Service personnel, those with health needs, and those from minoritised ethnic backgrounds continue to face challenges in accessing and sustaining meaningful employment. **Further tailored employment support is needed for individuals within the Armed Forces community who may face specific challenges in the job market.**

Employment of ex-Service personnel: UK wide policy and support



Statutory support: CTP and other government services

The provision of dedicated employment support to UK ex-Service personnel is ensured through comprehensive resettlement and recruitment programmes. ***Dedicated statutory support is primarily delivered via the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), a collaboration between the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Right Management Ltd.***³ Operating through a network of 10 Resettlement Centres across the UK⁴ and the Resettlement Training Centre (RTC) in Aldershot, the CTP provides vocational training, employment advice, and job placement services tailored to service length and discharge type, on an opt-out basis (see Table 1). CTP's annual statistical bulletin offers valuable data on the estimated employment

outcomes of UK Regular Service personnel within six months of leaving the Armed Forces, indicating that in 2022/23, 89% were employed, 4% were unemployed, and 7% were economically inactive (MoD, 2024). However, these figures only reflect those who accessed billable CTP services and reported their employment outcomes, leaving the overall employment status of all Service leavers unknown.⁵ Moreover, not all Service leavers participate in CTP programmes, and historically those most at risk of a challenging transition were less likely to engage (Kantar Futures, 2017). ***A full-scale independent evaluation of CTP services would help determine whether this trend persists and provide insights into their long-term impacts, and allow for comparison of the outcomes for CTP users and non-users.***

³ Right Management Ltd is a global career development and outplacement specialist, part of the ManpowerGroup.

⁴ Resettlement Centres are currently located in Aldergrove, Aldershot, Catterick, Cottesmore, Colchester, Northolt, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Rosyth, and Tidworth. Notably, there is currently no Resettlement Centre in Wales.

⁵ In the period 2022-2023, out of 16,453 eligible Armed Forces Service leavers, 11,427 (69%) utilised a billable CTP service, and 9,708 (59%) reported their employment outcomes six months post-service (MoD, 2024).

Beginning on October 1st, 2024, a new contract between the MoD and Reed in Partnership Ltd⁶ will replace the current agreement with Right Management Ltd for the provision of CTP services. The new partnership will focus on enhancing digital services, developing a new website, digital learning solutions, and improving online career advice. Face-to-face support will continue to be available

for up to two years post-discharge, but the digital platform will offer lifelong accessibility to all ex-Service personnel. ***This strategic shift towards digital engagement aims to provide continuous and comprehensive support throughout career transitions, addressing key challenges identified in the literature, including those related to discharge type and geographical barriers.***

Table 1. Resettlement entitlements depending on service length and type of discharge

	CTP Future Horizons (FH)	Employment Support Programme (ESP)	Core Resettlement Programme (CRP)	CTP Assist
Eligibility	< 4 years of service (ESLs)	4-6 years of service	> 6 years of service or medical discharge	Medical discharge deemed to face significant barriers to employment
Initial interview	Unit ESL Resettlement Brief, CTP Future Horizons Interview	Service Resettlement Adviser (SRA) Interview	Service Resettlement Adviser (SRA) Interview	Service Resettlement Adviser (SRA) Interview, Vocational Assessment
Career Advice	Employment, training and education guidance delivered by Central Support Team (CST). Access to Employment Advisor if needed. Personal Resettlement Plan (PRP) devised.	Job finding service delivered by Client Services Advisor (CSA). Access to Employment Advisor if needed. Personal Resettlement Plan (PRP) devised.	Allocation of Personal Career Consultant. Access to Employment Advisor if needed. Personal Resettlement Plan (PRP) prepared with consultant.	Specialist Employment Consultant (SEC) embedded in the Personnel Recovery Units (PRUs). Personal Resettlement Plan (PRP) prepared with consultant.
Online Resources	CTP RightJob online jobs board myPlan career platform	CTP RightJob online jobs board myPlan career platform	CTP RightJob online jobs board myPlan career platform	CTP RightJob online jobs board myPlan career platform
Briefings	Financial Aspects of Resettlement Briefing, Civilian Housing Briefing	Financial Aspects of Resettlement Briefing, Civilian Housing Briefing	Financial Aspects of Resettlement Briefing, Civilian Housing Briefing	Financial Aspects of Resettlement Briefing, Civilian Housing Briefing
Training Courses	No entitlement, but advice provided on free training resources for ESLs	Access (on Standby basis) to CTP Resettlement Training Courses	Access to CTP Resettlement Training Courses. Access to vocational training courses	Access to CTP Resettlement Training Courses. Access to vocational training courses.

6 Reed in Partnership Ltd, part of the Reed Group, is a UK public service provider specialising among other areas in employability, skills, and business services (Reed in Partnership, 2022).

	CTP Future Horizons (FH)	Employment Support Programme (ESP)	Core Resettlement Programme (CRP)	CTP Assist
Workshops	CV writing assistance	ESP Job Skills Workshop	Career Transition Workshop (CTW), Future Employment Options, Self-Employment Awareness, New Horizons - Moving towards Retirement.	Career Transition Workshop Plus (CTW+), Future Employment Options, Self-Employment Awareness, New Horizons - Moving towards Retirement.
Follow-On Webinars	LinkedIn, CV Development, Interview Success, etc.	LinkedIn, CV Development, Interview Success, etc.	LinkedIn, CV Development, Interview Success, etc.	LinkedIn, CV Development, Interview Success, etc.
Events	Employment Fairs and Events	Employment Fairs and Events	Employment Fairs and Events	Employment Fairs and Events
Post-Discharge Support	Up to two years of CTP FH support. Forces Employment Charity (FEC) support for life.	Up to two years with CSA. Forces Employment Charity (FEC) support for life.	Up to two years with Personal Career Consultant. Forces Employment Charity (FEC) support for life.	Up to two years with tailored SEC support. Forces Employment Charity (FEC) support for life.
In-Service preparation time	No entitlement	Resettlement time for selected events.	Up to 35 days of Graduated Resettlement Time (GRT)	Up to 35 days of Graduated Resettlement Time (GRT)
Financial Support	Limited to travel warrants for selected briefs.	Limited to travel warrants for selected briefs.	Individual Resettlement Training Costs (IRTC) grant (up to £534). Travel warrants (up to 7).	Individual Resettlement Training Costs (IRTC) grant (up to £534). Travel warrants (up to 7).
Other Support	No entitlement	No entitlement	No entitlement	Access to recovery activities if needed.

Source: Authors' elaboration based on MoD 2022a; 2023a; 2023b.

Note that the content will change following the transition to the new CTP contract on 1st October 2024. As of 30th September 2024, the CTP website delivered by Right Management Ltd. has been discontinued and has yet to be replaced.

Beyond the CTP, the landscape of employment support for ex-Service personnel is extensive and complex, consisting of numerous statutory and non-statutory bodies, including third sector organisations and private enterprises. Over the past century, this system has evolved following a piecemeal approach, with services added to address specific needs at particular moments, often without considering the overall coherence

of the system (MoD & OVA, 2023). As a result, **navigating these overlapping services can be overwhelming, not only for ex-Service personnel and their families but also for welfare providers working within the system.** The complexity has led to duplication, potential inefficiencies, a lack of clear accountability, and confusion about what services are available, to whom, and under what conditions (MoD & OVA, 2023). In response to

these challenges, the UK-wide Strategy for our Veterans was launched in 2018 as a UK-wide initiative, supported by the UK, Scottish and Welsh Government. This ten-year strategy outlines a commitment to providing more cohesive support for ex-Service personnel in civilian life across all government levels, including the devolved administrations, as well as statutory and non-statutory service providers (HM Government, 2018).

The establishment of the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) within the Cabinet Office in 2019 marked a pivotal step toward achieving this goal.⁷

Central to the OVA's mission is the identification and development of best practices within the Civil Service. This focus is reflected in a variety of public sector support and ex-Service employment initiatives, such as the Great Place to Work for Veterans scheme, which promotes the recruitment of ex-Service personnel into the Civil Service by progressing those who meet the minimum criteria for a vacancy to the next stage of the application process (typically, interviews or online tests). The OVA-supported strand of this scheme has led to 840 job offers between 2020 and August 2023 (OVA, 2023a). Complementing this, the Going Forward into Employment (GFIE) programme offers work placements and fixed-term paid contracts for ex-Service personnel and their partners, with the potential for these opportunities to evolve into long-term Civil Service roles. The GFIE programme has successfully recruited over 100 people from this group between 2017 and 2022 (OVA, 2023a). Other initiatives, such as the Advance into Justice scheme, recruited 15 ex-Service personnel through its pilot in 2022, while Step into Health enabled multiple National Health Service (NHS) organisations in England and Wales to recruit over 1,700 ex-Service personnel between 2018 and August 2023 (OVA, 2023a). Furthermore, GFIE and Guaranteed Interviews programmes such as the Great Place to Work for Veterans scheme are now offered across most Civil Service roles within government departments across the UK. Despite these promising outcomes, the available data appears to cover only the strands of these initiatives

directly supported by the OVA. There is currently no centralised or publicly accessible source of data on the overall outcomes of these schemes, and robust impact evaluations remain necessary to fully understand their long-term impact.

Another key provision supported by the OVA was the Veterans' Gateway, a digital and telephone service launched in 2017 that served as the first point of contact for ex-Service personnel and their families, offering comprehensive information on welfare support across different areas, including employment (MoD and OVA, 2023). However, as of September 2024, the Veterans' Gateway website has been discontinued. In its place, the OVA has compiled a directory of organisations that support ex-Service personnel and their families, now available on GOV.UK. While this new list offers a useful resource, it should not be considered exhaustive. There remains a need for a comprehensive directory to further improve the efficiency of service referrals (HM Government, 2023).

Announced in April 2024, Op PROSPER is a new OVA funded initiative managed by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, aimed at enhancing employment opportunities for ex-Service personnel and their families across the UK. The programme seeks to create structured pathways to high-skilled roles in key sectors, such as finance and professional services, technology, construction and infrastructure, logistics, health and social care, defence and security, energy and renewables, and manufacturing. The programme will involve the business community in driving practical, cultural, and behavioural change through three workstreams: Sector Engagement, which focuses on engaging trade associations and sectors and generate forces-friendly environments; Forces Employment Pathways, which connects ex-Service personnel with employers through pathways into eight major sectors; and a Career Development Fund, which targets specialist areas of support. **Op PROSPER aims to support ex-Service personnel and their families in building successful civilian careers and promoting in-work**

⁷ One of the notable changes announced by the new Government is that the OVA has been moved to become part of the MoD.



progression by addressing prevalent challenges like underemployment, overqualification, and underpayment (Fellows et al., 2020; Pike, 2016).

As the third arm of Op PROSPER, the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, on behalf of the OVA, has launched the Veterans' Career Development Fund. This initiative provides grants to projects that enable ex-Service personnel and their families to enter stable and meaningful employment by offering qualifications, training, and skills development. **The fund particularly targets projects supporting minority cohorts facing heightened challenges in the job market, typically ex-Servicewomen, those aged 50 and over, ESLs, LGBT+ ex-Service personnel, those with health needs, and those from ethnic minority backgrounds** (Pike, 2016; Parry et al., 2019; Flynn & Ball, 2020; Fisher et al., 2021; Grand-Clement, 2019; MoD 2024). Grants of up to £70,000 have been awarded to universities, charities and Community Interest Companies (CICs) over a two-year period.⁸

Another relevant initiative is Op NOVA, commissioned by NHS England since 2023, which offers crucial assistance to ex-Service personnel in the criminal justice system, with employment support as a component of the overall service offered (Bryan & Keeling, 2023). Op NOVA's expansion to Scotland is currently under discussion, while it remains unavailable in Wales and Northern Ireland. Furthermore, the **Female Veteran Transformation Programme, aims to address the unique challenges faced by ex-Servicewomen across all branches. Its goal is to develop a toolkit that ensures the specific needs of female veterans are integrated into the design and delivery of support services in key areas, including employment.** Scheduled for release in summer 2025, this initiative, funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and NHS England, seeks to empower women within the Armed Forces community and support their transition to civilian life.

In line with its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, **the Department for Work and Pensions**

⁸ A list of the 11 grants totalling £700,000 awarded under the Veterans' Career Development Fund in the period 2023/24 can be found here: <https://covenantfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CDF-Awards-List-March-2024-FINAL.pdf>

(DWP) offers different schemes which actively support current and former Service personnel and their families (DWP and the Armed Forces Covenant, 2016). This includes appointing an Armed Forces Champion in each of the over 60 Jobcentre Plus (JCP) districts to assist ex-Service personnel and their partners in securing employment and resolving complex cases. They also facilitate collaboration between JCP and the Armed Forces community by informing staff about Armed Forces initiatives, raising awareness of the unique challenges faced by this group, and promoting the skills and experiences of ex-Service personnel (MoD, 2023b). Additionally, the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) offers financial support to individuals with disabilities or health conditions that affect their ability to work, helping cover living costs for those unable to work and aiding those who can work in returning to employment.⁹ Ex-Service personnel and their partners also have early, voluntary access to the Work and Health Programme in England and Wales, which provides intensive, tailored employment support to facilitate job placement for individuals with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, and priority groups including ex-Service personnel and their partners. Although the DWP regularly publishes statistical data on referrals, new participants joining the programme, and employment outcomes for this programme, disaggregated data specific to ex-Service personnel is not publicly available (DWP, 2024).

Efforts to promote inclusivity and equality in the workplace are increasingly central to Government initiatives, particularly in addressing misconceptions and stereotypes that lead to discriminatory hiring practices against ex-Service personnel (Deloitte, 2016; Futures For Forces, 2015). As part of the OVA's commitment to enhancing perceptions of ex-Service personnel and showcasing their contributions to civilian life, OVA has launched an *Employer's Guide to Hiring Veterans*, offering practical advice on recruiting and supporting the career development of ex-Service personnel (OVA, 2023b). To assist employers,

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) offers a twelve-month National Insurance Contributions Relief for those hiring ex-Service personnel in their first civilian roles. Additionally, over 10,975 businesses and organisations have pledged their commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, demonstrating awareness of the challenges facing the Armed Forces community and committing to fair and inclusive employment practices (Armed Forces Covenant, 2023). The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) further acknowledges organisations that actively support defence personnel, with nearly 900 Covenant signatories achieving Gold Award status. The ERS is delivered by Defence Relationship Management (DRM), which is part of the Reserve Forces and Cadet Association (RFCA), an MoD body funded to foster partnerships with employers across the UK (MoD, 2019). DRM provides support for employing Reservists, veterans, Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, and military spouses, and oversees ERS and Covenant signings with various industry sectors and public bodies, ensuring effective engagement and support at both regional and local levels. See annex C for a detailed table of available statutory services.

Non-statutory support: Third sector and private initiatives

The UK military charity sector is highly active and extensive and offers free additional or complementary employment support to the available statutory services. Central to this network is the COBSEO (Confederation of Service Charities) Employment Cluster, which includes 50 registered members from both statutory and non-statutory sectors, all dedicated to providing various types of employment services. Military charities are known for their collaborative approach, often partnering with each other to enhance service delivery. This collaboration also extends to the public sector, where Government initiatives led by the MoD and OVA commission military charities to provide specialist service support. **Despite the breadth of support available, navigating these services**

9

Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, together with other statutory benefits and tax credits, is progressively being replaced by Universal Credit.

can be a challenging task due to the complexity and variety of the support systems in place and the lack of a fully comprehensive directory, which complicate efforts to identify and access the most relevant support options.

The Forces Employment Charity (FEC) stands out as a leading provider of employment support for the Armed Forces community. In 2023, FEC assisted 22,384 ex-Service personnel and their families, with numbers expected to rise as more individuals transition out of Service (FEC, 2024). FEC delivers approximately one-third of CTP services – including Future Horizons for ESLs and CTP Assist for Wounded, Injured and Sick (WIS) Service leavers – offering support across all ranks and Service branches, irrespective of length of Service. With a dedicated team of 195 professionals and a network of mentors and volunteers, FEC's inclusive approach extends to supporting partners, and families. Currently, FEC is significantly involved in the delivery of Op NOVA and, more recently, in the development of Op PROSPER, leading its Employment Pathways workstream.

As the largest cross-sector third sector organisation involved in providing transition and ex-Service personnel employment support, the FEC plays a preeminent role in this landscape. Additionally, numerous other charities and private initiatives provide specific support for certain sectors, industries, Services, and ranks. **Building Heroes** and **Buildforce** assist ex-Service personnel transitioning into the construction sector, while **HighGround** focuses on rural jobs, and **Mission Automotive** provides support in the automotive sector. Centrica and **Mission Renewable** support careers into energy and renewables, while Veterans into Logistics offers training and placements in logistics. TechVets, an initiative of the FEC, offers IT training, mentoring, and employment support to ex-Service personnel and family members pursuing careers in information technology and cybersecurity, and **Salute My Job** also mostly addresses digital skills and cybersecurity. Additionally, **X-Forces Enterprise** provides services for self-employment and business development, with more than 200 new businesses supported and almost 500 business plans developed in 2022/23 (X-Forces Enterprise, 2023). Service-specific initiatives include the White

Ensign Association for ex-Navy and ex-Marine personnel, and the Officers' Association, now part of the FEC, which supports officers, ex-officers, and their families. ***While most of these initiatives have not yet been fully evaluated, recent studies indicate they provide a valuable sense of direction and control to ex-Service personnel. They also function as a critical source of social capital through networking opportunities, which is particularly beneficial for lower ranks and younger or early Service leavers*** (Meierdirk, 2024; Fisher et al., 2021).

The Royal British Legion (RBL) also serves an essential function in supporting ex-Service personnel. Although it does not directly deliver employment services, it funds specialist non-profit organisations through grants, enabling them to offer targeted employment support. Additionally, the RBL provides signposting services on its website, guiding ex-Service personnel and potential employers to appropriate resources. Caseworkers are also available to offer advice and connect individuals with the necessary support networks, aiding them in navigating the various employment services available.

Finally, several private companies play a pivotal role in enhancing the employability of ex-Service personnel by offering placements during resettlement to service personnel, as well as to their families. Amazon and Centrica, for instance, were key partners in launching Op PROSPER, providing valuable employment pathways. Barclays stands out with its AFTER (Armed Forces Transition, Employment & Resettlement) UK programme, which since its inception in 2013 has supported over 8,000 ex-Service personnel and military partners, with more than 800 securing positions at Barclays. Other commercial enterprises, such as Lloyd's Banking Group, JPMorgan Chase, and Blackrock in the banking and financial sector, FDM in technology and innovation, Jaguar Land Rover in the automotive sector, and BT in communications, have established Armed Forces hiring teams, offering specific placement schemes for ex-Service personnel and their families. Additionally, OCS Group, a global facilities services provider, promotes forces-friendly employment and collaborates with charities such as the Poppy Factory through their People into Work Scheme, further illustrating the



private sector's commitment to supporting Service personnel in their transition to civilian careers. These are only a few examples that highlight the contributions of the private sector. While CTP has compiled a list of some major employers,¹⁰ **a centralised and comprehensive directory is still needed to provide greater visibility into the full range of available opportunities and to facilitate navigation for ex-Service personnel.**

Targeted support for ex-Service personnel with health conditions

In addition to CTP Assist, which supports those receiving a medical discharge and facing heightened barriers to employment, several organisations provide specialised employment

support to ex-Service personnel with disabilities or medical conditions. Research highlights the high effectiveness of tailored, individualised career support—such as coaching, targeted job search assistance, and services integrating mental health and employment support, encompassing Individual Placement and Support (IPS) programmes—in improving long-term employment outcomes for disadvantaged groups, including older ex-Service personnel and those with disabilities (Fisher et al., 2021; Carolan, 2016; Flynn and Ball, 2020).

Walking with the Wounded (WWTW) is a key organisation providing programmes designed to help ex-Service personnel with physical and mental health conditions and social challenges regain independence and secure sustainable

10 The list of major employers compiled by CTP is temporarily unavailable following the transition to the new CTP contract

Moreover, FEC collaborates with a range of employers who regularly recruit from the ex-Service talent. These companies include: Allianz Engineering, Amey, Amazon, AWE, Barclays, Black Rock, BT, Babcock, BAE Systems, Balfour Beatty, Boeing, Bureau Veritas, Centrica, Deloitte, DHL, DXC Technologies, FDM Group, JP Morgan, Jaguar Land Rover, Fujitsu, G4S, GSK, Kuehne + Nagel, Leonardo, Lidl, Lockheed Martin, Mitie, M Group, Network Rail, OCS, Openreach, Palletways, Qinetiq, Rolls Royce, Sellarfield Ltd, Serco, Siemens Energy, SSE, Tesco, Tesla Motors, Thales UK, Travis Perkins, UK Power Networks, Wincanton and Vodafone. Additionally, they engage with public sector organisations such as the NHS, Police, HM Prison and Probation Service, Home Office, Border Force and Civil Service, all of which have dedicated programmes to support ex-Service personnel in their transition to civilian careers. This list is not exhaustive, as many other employers also offer valuable opportunities.

employment. In 2023, WWTW's Employment Programme supported 540 individuals, with 232 securing paid roles (WWTW, 2023). Using the IPS model, WWTW's Employment Programme has been credited with potentially contributing to between 50% and 90% of the increase in participants' wellbeing (Pro Bono Economics, 2023). Collaboration with DWP suggests possible increases in employment rates among programme participants, although it highlights that a robust impact evaluation remains unfeasible due to data limitations on long-term employment outcomes for ex-Service personnel (DWP, 2024).

Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) is another key organisation, offering employment support in England, Scotland and Wales. Through its social enterprises, Britain's Bravest Manufacturing Company and Scotland's Bravest Manufacturing Company, RBLI directly employs 150 people, with 70% being ex-Service personnel or individuals with disabilities, and is recognised as a leading signage manufacturer in the UK (RBLI, 2023a). The Lifeworks Programme enhances this support by offering free vocational assessments, counselling, employability courses, and job placement assistance to ex-Service personnel and their families. In 2022-23, the Lifeworks Programme supported 450 ex-Service personnel towards employment, with 79% of them facing physical or mental health challenges (RBLI, 2023a; 2023b). Additionally, RBLI's Lifeworks Hub provides online access to training resources, job listings, and comprehensive support to facilitate effective employment transitions.

The Poppy Factory, operating across England and Wales, also stands out as a leading charity supporting more vulnerable ex-Service personnel with mental and physical health needs, as well as their families. Their employment consultants offer comprehensive assistance, including CV writing, job search strategies, training, career exploration, interview preparation, and overcoming employment barriers. In the 2022-23 period, the support provided by The Poppy Factory resulted in 301 ex-Service personnel and nine family members securing new jobs or starting self-employment (The Poppy Factory, 2023). Additionally, between 2019 and 2022, the organisation piloted a vocational

rehabilitation intervention aimed at supporting WIS ex-Service personnel into employment using an evidence-based, adapted IPS approach. This pilot was independently evaluated, showing effectiveness in achieving positive employment outcomes, as well as improvements in wellbeing and quality of life (Thomson et al., 2022). However, the small sample size necessitates caution when interpreting the results, particularly the 12-month follow-up employment outcomes.

Other notable initiatives include Help for Heroes' Career Recovery, focusing on mental health support while assisting WIS ex-Service personnel in exploring employment options and gaining confidence, Mission Motorsport and Mission Community, which aid in recovery through opportunities in the automotive and other sectors and will be central in the delivery of Op PROSPER, and Step Together, which supports in engaging with community volunteering as part of rehabilitation.

As noted in the accompanying research summary (Ribera Almandoz and Keeling, 2024), **evidence highlights the importance of personal resources and attributes, such as self-esteem, confidence, and self-reliance, in successfully transitioning to civilian life and employment, with better outcomes linked to swift acceptance of military discharge, forming a new civilian identity, and adapting to civilian workplace culture** (Kantar Futures, 2017; Fisher et al., 2021). Two noteworthy charitable initiatives in England and Wales stand apart from the general employment support services by specialising in this area. The Warrior Programme (WP), while not directly employment-focused, offers intensive personal development training to enhance emotional management, resilience, focus, and motivation for serving and ex-Service personnel, and their families, dealing with PTSD and other mental health challenges to help them re-enter the workforce. A 2015 pilot Randomised Control Trial of the WP showed significant immediate improvements in participants' functioning and emotional well-being, and potential positive effects on occupational functioning, although most benefits did not seem to persist three months later (Thandi et al., 2015; 2022). HighGround is another key charity offering Horticultural Therapy at Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC),



as well as providing hands-on experiences through its Rural Experience Week. This initiative supports those struggling with homelessness or mental health issues, including PTSD, and facilitates re-starting their employment journey or signposting to additional charities.

Employment support for partners and families

Military and ex-Service partners, particularly when dealing with frequent relocations, encounter distinct employment challenges that can affect their career prospects and the family's financial stability, as detailed in the research summary (Ribera Almandoz and Keeling, 2024). **While employment support for partners of ex-Service personnel is increasingly recognised as vital, dedicated statutory provision remains limited.** CTP support, for instance, may be transferred from WIS ex-Service personnel to their partners only in 'extreme' cases (MoD, 2022a). In 2020, the MoD launched the Partner

Career Support Programme, which aimed to provide bespoke professional career advice to 750 partners over six months (CTP, 2020). However, this programme lacked continuity, with no ongoing support established beyond its initial phase. The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's Supporting Partners programme, launched in 2022 following the publication of the MoD's *Armed Forces Families Strategy 2022-2032*, aims to address this gap (MoD, 2022b). The programme provides grants of £30,000 to £80,000 for projects enhancing support for Service partners regarding the skills and experiences they bring to the workplace.¹¹

Several non-statutory organisations, now gathered under the Partners Employment Sub-Cluster of the COBSEO Employment Cluster to enhance collaboration and transparency across key providers and the MoD, offer tailored resources to meet the specific needs of partners and families. One initiative is the Forces Families Jobs (FFJ) website,

11 The list of the 13 grants totalling £794,816 awarded under the Armed Forces Families Fund: Supporting Partners programme 2023/24 can be found here: <https://covenantfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/MOD-Awards-List-SP-FINAL-edit-1.pdf>

developed by the Army Families Federation (AFF) and operated in collaboration with the Naval Families Federation (NFF) and the Royal Air Force Families Federation (RAF FF). This website provides employment and training opportunities across the UK for partners and adult children of serving and ex-Service personnel from all Service branches. As of November 2023, the portal featured 1,716 employers, 20,144 candidates, and 10,293 live jobs advertised on the website, proving a valuable resource, despite some functionality and accessibility issues (Mayhew, 2023).¹² Similarly, the social enterprise Recruit For Spouses (RFS) offers dedicated support through its Career Academy and Recruitment services, including a jobs board, talent pool, coaching, and mentoring. In 2023, RFS assisted 110 candidates, including partners, serving, and ex-Service personnel, through its Coaching & Mentoring Programme, while over 400 partners registered with their Career Academy, and more than 8,155 members of the Armed Forces community actively sought employment through RFS services (RFS, 2024). The Military Coworking Network (MCN) further supports and enables Armed Forces partners to maintain independent professional lives, with coworking hubs in England and Scotland. This tri-Service initiative set up by military partners is, however, mostly targeted to partners of serving personnel.

Some organisations supporting ex-Service personnel also offer targeted programmes to partners and family members. The FEC Families

Programme provides UK-wide employability support to partners and children aged 16-24 of serving and ex-Service personnel. This support is delivered by experienced Advisors, many of whom are military partners themselves, and includes tailored advice on career choices, training, and education, and aid in researching the job market. RBLI's LifeWorks programme, available in England, Wales, and Scotland, is also accessible to adult family members, offering them tailored support to achieve their career goals. The Poppy Factory's Families Employment Service, in partnership with Ripple Pond, assists adult family members in England and Wales who support or care for individuals in the Armed Forces community with health conditions. X-Forces Enterprise also supports partners and family members in pursuing business and entrepreneurial ventures across the UK.

Despite these initiatives, ***the employment support landscape for partners remains fragmented and difficult to navigate, with limited communication and information-sharing to military and ex-Service families. Improved signposting and coordination among support providers are needed. Additionally, partners and families continue to receive comparatively limited support compared to Serving and ex-Service personnel, with notable gaps in provisions*** for partners from diverse family structures, ethnic minorities, non-UK origins, overseas families, and families of WIS personnel (Heaver, 2018; Slapakova et al., 2023).

12 An independent review of the website, following consultation with stakeholders, service users, and employers, identified several potential areas for improvement, including better use of data and analytics, more proactive communication (including social media activity), increased personalisation of employer profiles, enhancements to job vacancy uploads and CV search functions, and overall improvements to the FJJ webpage (Mayhew, 2023).

Devolved nations' specific support provision for ex-Service personnel



While UK-wide services offer comprehensive support to ex-Service personnel, the devolved nations—Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland—have implemented additional, nation-specific policies and practices that address regional needs and gaps in service provision. These initiatives complement the broader UK support landscape, providing tailored assistance where national coverage is less comprehensive.

Employment support in Wales

In 2021, the Welsh Government launched the *Support for Serving Armed Forces Personnel and Their Families* guide, designed to inform and direct ex-Service personnel settling in Wales to relevant services, with employment as one of its main topics (Welsh Government, 2021). The Government has

also produced an annual *Armed Forces Covenant Report*, summarising achievements in ensuring fair treatment for serving and ex-Service personnel and their families, with employment being a key area of concern (Welsh Government, 2024). This report is informed by the Expert Group on the Needs of the Armed Forces Community in Wales, which advises on how public services can best meet the needs of current and former members of the Armed Forces.

To enhance employment opportunities for ex-Service personnel, the Welsh Government has introduced several programmes. Among these, **the Working Wales scheme, delivered by Careers Wales, has been actively promoted within the Armed Forces community.** This programme offers tailored employment support accessible to all, including ex-Service personnel. Business Wales

provides critical business support for startups and self-employed individuals, with a targeted effort to reach ex-Service personnel. Business in the Community (BITC) offers a network of business resources and support that, while UK-wide, includes valuable information specific to Wales. ***BITC Cymru, in partnership with the Welsh Government, developed the Inspire, Hire, Grow: How to Capitalise on Military Talent toolkit, guiding businesses through a straightforward process of creating a strategic, forces-friendly recruitment and retention programme*** (BITC Cymru, 2018). In collaboration with the Welsh and Scottish Governments, BITC has also produced the ***Capitalising on Military Family Talent guide***, encouraging employers to recruit partners and other family members of serving or ex-Service personnel (BITC, 2020).

The historically centralised nature of CTP's offerings, exemplified by the absence of a dedicated resettlement centre in Wales has posed challenges for ex-Service personnel seeking employment in this nation. However, recent years have seen a gradual shift, driven by initiatives such as the *Strategy for Our Veterans*, launched in 2018, which has involved devolved nations in its development and extensions. ***In 2022, the UK Government appointed Wales's first Veterans' Commissioner to ensure that ex-Service personnel and their families living in Wales do not face disadvantage from their Service nor compared to their peers across the other nations of the UK.*** The Commissioner works with the Welsh Government, local authorities, the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA), and various statutory and third-sector support bodies to enhance collaboration, reduce overlap, and address gaps in policy and delivery in areas including transition, education, training, and employment. Additionally, the development of Op PROSPER further suggests a move towards a more inclusive UK-wide approach, with the establishment of an officer in Wales and the potential for new employment-related initiatives. The CTP has also expanded its Career Transition Workshops across Wales, including in Cardiff, Brecon, Caerphilly, and Chepstow, enhancing accessibility for Service leavers. Increased collaboration between the CTP, MoD, Armed Forces Liaison Officers, Tri-Services, Welsh Government, and other partners has boosted activity in this area, signalling positive changes in the employment

support landscape.

Moreover, ***in 2020, the Welsh Government published the Veterans Scoping Exercise to contribute to the delivery of the UK-wide Strategy for Our Veterans.*** This report, informed by over 1,000 consultation responses from ex-Service personnel, families, and support providers, offered specific recommendations aimed at improving employment and transition support in Wales, among other key areas. To drive these recommendations forward, action groups on Employment and Transition were established, which included key Welsh-based and UK-wide partners, such as the RFCA, CTP, the Defence Transition Services (DTS), MoD, and public and third-sector agencies.

Direct outcomes of these collaborative efforts have been significant. Notably, the CTP, RFCA, FEC, and Careers Wales, with the support of the Welsh Government, organised the first Veterans Employment Event in South Wales in 2021. It has since become an annual event, with its 2022 edition drawing over 160 ex-Service personnel and resulting in at least 21 confirmed job offers (Welsh Government, 2024). Building on this success, ***the first North Wales Armed Forces Jobs Fair was held in 2024***, attracting 130 ex-Service personnel (interview with the Welsh Government, Armed Forces Branch, 3rd July 2024). In addition, a dedicated veteran employment conference, delivered by RFCA with the support of the Welsh Government, CTP, and the Tri-Services in Wales, has been established. The publication of the first-ever Wales Transition Guide in 2021, represents another milestone in improving resources for ex-Service personnel in Wales.

Despite recent advancements, ***ex-Service personnel in Wales continue to face distinct challenges in securing successful employment, partly due to geographic factors.*** Although Wales contributes approximately 7% of the UK's Service strength, Service careers are often spent far from Wales, limiting access to local networks and awareness of job opportunities, and creating competition between Welsh job markets and local opportunities near Service stations. Consequently, Wales may not be seen as a major employment hub by those stationed elsewhere in the UK (interview with the Welsh Government, Armed Forces Branch, 3rd July

2024). This situation is further complicated by the location of formal transition services, such as Resettlement Centres, which are primarily based outside Wales. As a result, transitioning Service personnel living in Wales may need to commute, sometimes weekly, to services and jobs. Additional issues include inconsistencies in the awareness of available services by ex-Service personnel and local employers. Welsh Government-funded Armed Forces Liaison Officers are currently working with some local authorities to enhance knowledge of support options for these groups (interview with the Welsh Government, Armed Forces Branch, 3rd July 2024).

Employment support in Scotland

The Scottish Government has demonstrated a sustained commitment to supporting ex-Service personnel and their families through a broad range of employability initiatives, as outlined in *The Strategy for Our Veterans Action Plan* (Scottish Government, 2022a). A key element of this effort has been the work of the **Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Partnership to better align the skills and experiences of military personnel with civilian equivalents, which has led to the development of the Military Skills Discovery Tool**. Recognising that many ex-Service personnel report difficulties in translating and communicating their military-acquired competencies to civilian employers (Ashcroft, 2012; Pike, 2016; Fisher et al., 2021; Fellows et al., 2020), the Scottish Government has supported the launch of the Support for Veterans page on the SCQF website. This initiative, part of the Military Qualifications Mapping project led by the SCQF Partnership, facilitates the conversion of military skills into civilian qualifications recognised by employers in Scotland. The SCQF received £39,000 in funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for 2018-2020, with the Scottish Government providing an additional £35,000 in 2021 and £13,500 in 2022 to develop and support a skills recognition tool for the online careers service My World of Work (Scottish Government, 2021; 2022b).

NHS Scotland has also introduced the **Supporting Armed Forces Employment Programme**, which since 2023 features the **Armed Forces Talent Programme**. This recruitment initiative aims to

facilitate the entry of ex-Service personnel and their partners into the NHS Scotland workforce, which is the largest employer in the country. As this initiative is relatively new, data on its outcomes and effectiveness has not yet been made available.

Another central employment initiative is **No One Left Behind, the Scottish Government-funded approach to employability in Scotland. Although aimed at the general population, this all-age, place-based, person-centred model of support is also available to ex-Service personnel and their partners**. No One Left Behind focus on developing and enhancing individual's skills - both soft and vocational - while considering their personal circumstances (interview with the Scottish Government, Jobs and Wellbeing Economy Directorate, 11th July 2024). The initiative addresses structural barriers to employment through integrated and aligned working with other services and collaborates with employers to help individuals sustain employment. Previously, Fair Start Scotland was a service designed to enhance job prospects for disadvantaged groups, including ex-Service personnel. However, referrals to Fair Start Scotland ended on 31st March 2024, with all new referrals now directed to No One Left Behind. Between January to March 2024, 19,146 people receiving support from No One Left Behind and 1,517 participating in Fair Start Scotland found employment, although specific data on former Service status is not available (Scottish Government, 2024).

Furthermore, **Skills Development Scotland (SDS), the national skills agency, has partnered with the CTP to provide employment support for ex-Service personnel**. This includes career guidance, participation in Apprenticeship Week events, and ongoing engagement with the Armed Forces community through the My World of Work portal. Although these resources offer unique support not available in other areas of the UK, **it is essential to evaluate their effectiveness in improving employment outcomes for ex-Service personnel**. Additionally, every local council, NHS board and some statutory bodies in Scotland has an Armed Forces and Veterans Champion. These champions, typically volunteers, act as advocates and points of contact for ex-Service personnel, offering support, guidance, and assistance in navigating services,

aiming to ensure that no member of the Armed Forces community is disadvantaged due to their service. Recently, a new Network of Champions for Further and Higher Education has been established, offering a dedicated point of contact in each of Scotland's colleges and universities for ex-Service personnel and their families.

The Scottish Veterans Commissioner (SVC), independent from the Government, advocates for the challenges faced by ex-Service personnel and the broader Armed Forces community, influencing policymakers to implement necessary changes in devolved public services. A strategic priority is fostering greater understanding among communities and employers about veterans, enabling better support as they transition into civilian life and contribute meaningfully to society (SVC, 2023). In 2020, the Commissioner produced the *Employment, Skills and Learning* paper, part of the *Positive Futures - Getting Transition Right in Scotland* series, offering recommendations to the UK and Scottish Governments aimed at improving the transition process for ex-Service personnel. These included calls for a more flexible, accessible and long-term transition model, enhanced statutory support for ex-Service personnel and their partners, better alignment of military and civilian qualifications, and strengthened collaboration with the business community and charities (SVC, 2020). Following one of SVC's earlier recommendations, the Veterans Employability Strategic Group was established in 2017. This group, consisting of representatives from the Scottish Government, SDS, CTP, DWP, MoD, SCQF Partnership, and Veterans Scotland, has focused on enhancing collaboration between CTP and SDS, mapping military qualifications to civilian equivalents, and advancing the employability of ex-Service personnel in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2022b).

Various Scottish charities also contribute to the employment support landscape for ex-Service personnel and their partners. ***Veterans Scotland represents 90 service charities across Scotland, offering information and guidance on a range of support services, including employment support.*** It has developed the Veterans Assist website, a central online directory offering vital information on pathways to employment and signposting to relevant services. Veterans Scotland has

also recently released an updated information booklet summarising the available support in Scotland (Veterans Scotland, 2024). Other notable organisations contributing to employment support include the Officers' Association Scotland, Glasgow's Helping Heroes, Poppy Scotland, and the Scottish Association of Mental Health (SAMH). Officers' Association Scotland services, for instance, managed to successfully find employment for over 150 individuals in 2023-24, whereas SAMH's assisted 114 individuals in securing employment during the 2022-23 period (Officers' Association Scotland, 2024; SAMH, 2023).

Employment support in Northern Ireland

The unique context of Northern Ireland presents distinct challenges for ex-Service personnel in their employment transitions. Despite the Troubles officially ending in 2007, many former Service members still carry a legacy of hypervigilance and secrecy, with mottos like "Don't say what you do for a living" remaining deeply ingrained.

Employers in Northern Ireland are divided in their views on the Armed Forces, complicating the employment landscape as it is difficult to discern which employers are supportive of ex-Service personnel. As a result, a crucial barrier for members of the Armed Forces community is identifying as a former member of the UK Armed Forces, with many having to fabricate alternative backgrounds to conceal their military service, often resulting in noticeable employment gaps on their CVs (interview with NIVCO, 17th June 2024). Additionally, primary employment opportunities for ex-Service personnel often remain in male-dominated fields such as construction, engineering, and health and safety, which may not align with the skills and experiences of all ex-Service personnel.

Statutory support is primarily delivered through the CTP in Northern Ireland, which provides vital resources to assist ex-Service personnel in their transition to civilian employment. The Northern Ireland Executive, through initiatives such as Careers Service and JobApplyNI, also offers non-targeted employment services that can assist ex-Service personnel as part of its broader support for the general population.

A key challenge facing ex-Service personnel in Northern Ireland is the disjointed provision of services and policies, particularly concerning employment support. Since 2018, the Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Office (NIVSO) has been instrumental in fostering coherence and coordination among service providers, serving as a central point of contact for those seeking dedicated support. It is important to note that the NIVSO office will close in September 2024, with its function being transferred to a dedicated OVA post in Northern Ireland. **This change is part of the ongoing evolution of Northern Ireland's support services for ex-Service personnel**, which have been working collaboratively since the creation of NIVSO (NIVSO, 2024).

The efforts of NIVSO were further supported by the establishment of the Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner's Office (NIVCO), with a new Commissioner appointed in 2020. While NIVCO does not provide direct employment support, it has played a crucial role in connecting ex-Service personnel with various programmes and initiatives.¹³ Additionally, various bodies and initiatives are actively enhancing employment support for ex-Service personnel in Northern Ireland. **Eleven Local Councils have appointed a Veterans' Champion, an elected member of the council with a keen interest in the Armed Forces**

Community who serves as the first point of contact for those seeking information and support services in their area. Veterans' Champions have a comprehensive understanding of local resources and are equipped to identify and advise local charities or Community Interest Companies that may qualify for funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

With a team of two professionals in Northern Ireland, the FEC offers employment consultancy services to ex-Service personnel, with targeted programmes for their partners and family members. FEC and NIVCO, among other organisations, sponsor the organisation of the **Northern Irish Veterans Awards to recognise contributions by ex-Service personnel in business**, among other areas. Another initiative, Connect Through Service, focuses on connecting ex-Service personnel with business and employment opportunities across various sectors. This network organises events to facilitate connections between service leavers and businesses, provides resources and mentorship for aspiring veteran entrepreneurs, and creates pathways to training, development, apprenticeships, and employment.

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As of 5 September 2024, the position of Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner is currently vacant following the resignation of the previous Commissioner.

Recommendations:



The fragmented nature of employment support for ex-Service personnel requires the establishment of a **comprehensive central directory** to consolidate both statutory and non-statutory services into a single, accessible resource which would need to be regularly reviewed and updated. The new list of services compiled by the Office of Veterans' Affairs (OVA) presents a critical opportunity to develop this directory, ensuring it serves as a unified point of reference for the Armed Forces Community and is relevant for each nation.



Regular evaluations of statutory and non-statutory services, including public sector support and ex-Service employment schemes (such as Going Forward into Employment or Great Place to Work), the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Armed Forces Champions, Employment Fairs, Career Transition Partnership (CTP) programmes, are essential. These assessments should gather both quantitative and qualitative data on user experiences and outcomes, and be conducted by independent, credible organisations. They should also facilitate the identification of areas for improvement and the sharing of best practices to enhance service provision.



The CTP and relevant government bodies should establish a system **for collecting longitudinal employment data on ex-Service personnel**. Follow-ups should be conducted at regular intervals beyond the current six-month period, incorporating qualitative insights on employment experiences, including underemployment, and career trajectories, to gain a better understanding of post-Service employment.



An exploration into **what may be preventing certain groups of ex-Service personnel, as well as employers, from engaging with CTP and other available services** is necessary. This assessment should focus on how the factors affecting engagement may also influence transition outcomes and compare long-term employment results between users and non-users of CTP and other services to identify and address any potential disparities.



While there has been progress in extending the availability of dedicated employment services across the UK, **further efforts could be implemented to guarantee a more even distribution of support, particularly in Northern Ireland and Wales**. It is recommended that statutory services continue to be developed and tailored to meet the specific needs of each devolved nation. Strategies and action plans should be implemented to ensure that all ex-Service personnel, regardless of their location, can fully and effectively access the support they need.



Although statutory and non-statutory initiatives have made strides in providing targeted support for specific groups, challenges persist for ex-Servicewomen, individuals aged 50 and over, ESLs, LGBT+ personnel, those with health issues, and individuals from minoritised ethnic backgrounds. Developing new, **tailored initiatives to address the unique challenges these groups face in securing sustainable and fulfilling employment** is essential to ensure effective and equitable support.



Greater coordination, improved **signposting, and communication are necessary to ensure partners and family members of ex-Service personnel can navigate and access relevant resources.**



Further research should explore the employment challenges faced by partners, with particular focus on **addressing gaps in provisions for partners from diverse family structures, ethnic minorities, non-UK origin, and families of the wounded, injured, and sick.** The findings should inform the development of tailored, long-term programmes to enhance their career prospects and financial stability.



The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) provides a valuable resource to the Armed Forces community. Expanding this initiative into a **comprehensive tool available across the UK could enhance the military-to-civilian employment transition process, improving both employment access and career progression.**



Efforts are underway to connect with the business community and develop structured pathways to employment for ex-Service personnel. To further enhance these efforts, **it is essential to conduct research into the experiences, views, and long-term outcomes of ex-Service personnel engaging with employment services or career placements within the private sector.**



To enhance support for ex-Service personnel during their transition to civilian life and employment, research should explore the **cultural and identity challenges** they may encounter. This would deepen our understanding of the role of culture and identity in adaptation to civilian work environments and inform the development of targeted support and integration strategies to effectively address these challenges.

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Annex A: Methodology

To compile the summary presented above, a narrative literature review of extant grey literature was conducted. This methodological approach was chosen due to its suitability for synthesising a broad range of material with the aim of informing future policy and/or practice. To conduct the review, a structured approach was employed which centred around the sequential process of literature identification, data extraction, and follow-up analysis.

Consultations with leading stakeholders were conducted in parallel with the data extraction procedure to validate the initial findings as well as obtain supplementary information relevant to the summary. To identify and contact these stakeholders, a call for evidence was issued via social media as well as the COBSEO newsletter and the Employment Cluster which also included an invitation to interview. Leading stakeholder organisations which were known to be engaged in service provision and did not respond to the initial invitation to interview were also contacted directly.

The consultations were held via Microsoft Teams and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. A list of the stakeholder organisations which consented to a consultation and/or provided supplementary information is provided in Annex B.

Literature identification

Sources relevant to the study were located using four complementary search strategies:

- Initial literature search using Google Scholar conducted in November 2023 using a selection of key words and repeated in June 2024. The full search strategy is detailed in Annex B.
- An appraisal of literature within the Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre repository.
- A call for evidence was issued via social media as well as the COBSEO newsletter and the Employment Cluster in April and June 2024, requesting that stakeholders submit documentation relevant to the summary. Direct appeals for evidence were also sent to relevant existing contacts.
- 'Snowball searching' by identifying relevant sources through the reference lists of prior selected literature.

The resulting longlist of literature was then subject to a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 2) to identify those sources which were most relevant to the review. Any sources which did not meet the criteria were excluded from full review.

Table 2. Literature inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Focus of the source	Sources addressing policy and/or support provision for UK Service personnel's, ex-Service personnel's, and/or their family's engagement with the civilian labour market, including employment, unemployment, under-employment, skills and qualifications, and job seeking behaviours.	Sources that do not address issues specified in the inclusion criteria.
Type of source	Grey literature produced by credible statutory and non-statutory service providers relevant to the summary. Evaluations of service provision relevant to the summary.	Source types not meeting those specified in the inclusion criteria.
Date of publication / issue	Sources published during or after 2001 (year selected to reflect the summary's objective of capturing recent developments in policy and practice).	Sources published prior to 2001.
Country of origin	Sources produced in the UK.	Sources produced outside the UK
Language	Sources published in English.	Sources published in languages other than English.

Data extraction

To map relevant information in a robust and replicable manner, a structured data extraction framework was employed. This included the development of an initial taxonomy of policies and services discussed in the literature (including their geographic distribution/scope), which was subject to peer review and comment. After further consolidation, the original taxonomy was revised to capture support provision across four geographic areas: 1) UK-wide provisions, 2) Wales, 3) Scotland, and 4) Northern Ireland.

Analysis and write-up

As the final step in the research process, a concise narrative was developed which synthesised the leading outputs from the data extraction and stakeholder consultations. This formed the basis of an initial draft summary which was subject to peer review. A final version of the summary was then compiled which incorporated relevant revisions and copy-edits.

Annex B: Policy summary search strings & contributing stakeholders

Policy summary search strings

Population

"veteran*" OR "deployed" OR "reserve" OR "military veteran*" OR "armed forces veteran*" OR "UK veteran*" OR "ex-service personnel" OR "ex service personnel" OR "service leaver*" OR "service personnel" OR "Early Service Leaver" OR "Armed Forces" OR "Royal Air Force" OR "RAF" OR "Army" OR "Royal Navy" OR "Royal Marine" OR "defence personnel" OR "military service personnel" OR "military families" OR "military family" OR "armed forces families" OR "armed forces family"

Subject matter

"benefits" OR "career*" OR "career development" OR "career management" OR "career transition*" OR "civilian labour market" OR "civilian workforce" OR "competenc*" OR "employ*" OR "expert*" OR "furlough" OR "hiring" OR "income" OR "job" OR "job seeking" OR "job-seeking" OR "knowledge" OR "labour market" OR "post-service employment" OR "post service employment" OR "profession*" OR "qualifications" OR "self-employed" OR "self employed" OR "skills*" OR "socioeconomic status" OR "socio-economic status" OR "special*" OR "talent" OR "talent management" OR "underemployment" OR "under-employment" OR "unemployment" OR "un-employment" OR "vocation*" OR "work*" OR "training"

Table 3. Contributing stakeholders

Stakeholder	Contribution Type
Army Families Federation	Supplementary information
Building Heroes	Supplementary information
COBSEO	Supplementary information
Connect Through Service	Consultation
Forces Employment Charity	Consultation
HighGround	Consultation
Mission Motorsport/Mission Community	Consultation
Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner's Office	Consultation
Royal British Legion	Consultation
Scottish Government	Consultation
The Poppy Factory	Consultation
UK Government, Cabinet Office (Office for Veterans' Affairs)	Consultation
UK Government, Ministry of Defence (Armed Forces Covenant Team)	Consultation
UK Government, Ministry of Defence (Resettlement Division)	Consultation
Veterans Scotland	Consultation
Walking with the Wounded	Supplementary information
Warrior Programme	Consultation
Welsh Government (Armed Forces Branch)	Consultation
X-Forces Enterprise	Supplementary information

Annex C: Summary of statutory employment support for ex-Service personnel and their families

Table 4. List of statutory provisions and support schemes available for ex-Service personnel and their family members

Statutory provision	Purpose	Delivered/ Funded by	Target group	Geographical Coverage
Advance into Justice	Pilot scheme recruiting ex-Service personnel into key roles within the HM Prison & Probation Service. It offers a two-year fixed-term contract with the possibility of a permanent role after one year	HM Prison & Probation Service (MoJ)	Ex-Service personnel, partners	UK-wide
CTP Assist	Resettlement provision for Wounded, Injured and Sick (WIS) Service leavers with significant barriers to employment. It includes CRP services, flexible support, a Vocational Assessment, referral to a Specialist Employment Consultant (SEC), and access to a vocational opportunities' portal	CTP (MoD and Right Management Ltd.)	Service leavers with medical discharge and significant barriers to employment	UK-wide
CTP Core Resettlement Programme (CRP)	Resettlement provision for those who served more than six years or were medically discharged. It provides 35 days of Graduated Resettlement Time (GRT) for resettlement activities, career consultancy, training courses, employment events, and online resources	CTP (MoD and Right Management Ltd.)	Service leavers with more than 6 years of Service or medical discharge	UK-wide

Statutory provision	Purpose	Delivered/ Funded by	Target group	Geographical Coverage
CTP Employment Support Programme (ESP)	Resettlement provision for those who served between four and six years. It gives access to job-finding assistance, one-to-one employment support, training and employment events, and online resources	CTP (MoD and Right Management Ltd.)	Service leavers with 4-6 years of Service	UK-wide
CTP Future Horizons	Resettlement provision for Early Service leavers (ESLs). It offers employment, training and education guidance, access to online resources and career advice if needed	CTP (MoD and Right Management Ltd.)	Service leavers with less than 4 years of Service (ESLs)	UK-wide
Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS)	Recognition for organisations supporting defence and the armed forces community and aligning their values with the Armed Forces Covenant. It provides them with Bronze, Silver, and Gold awards	DRM RFCA	Private sector employers and certain public sector organisations	UK-wide
DWP's Armed Forces Champions	Champions providing specialised support within Jobcentre Plus for ex-Service personnel transitioning to civilian employment. They also raise awareness of their needs and challenges, and promote their skills	DWP	Ex-Service personnel, partners	UK-wide
Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)	Financial support for individuals with disabilities or health conditions impacting their ability to work. Supports living costs for those unable to work and aids in returning to employment for those who can (income-related ESA is being replaced by Universal Credit)	DWP	Individuals with long-term medical conditions or disabilities	UK-wide

Statutory provision	Purpose	Delivered/ Funded by	Target group	Geographical Coverage
Female Veteran Transformation Programme	Development of a toolkit to transform service provision for ex-Servicewomen in key areas, including employment, across commercial, statutory and charitable sectors	Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and NHS England, in partnership with WRAC Association and the Female Veterans Cluster of COBSEO	Ex-Serviced women	UK-wide
Going Forward into Employment (GFIE)	Programme offering work placements and fixed-term paid contracts within the Civil Service, with the potential to secure long-term roles	Multiple government departments and Devolved Administrations	Ex-Service personnel, partners	UK-wide
Great Place to Work for Veterans/ Guaranteed Interview Scheme (GIS)	Schemes promoting recruitment of ex-Service personnel into the Civil Service by progressing those who meet the minimum criteria for a vacancy to the next stage of the application process (typically interview)	Multiple government departments and Devolved Administrations	Ex-Service personnel (and in some cases partners/family members)	UK-wide
National Insurance Contributions Relief	Twelve-month NI contributions relief for employers hiring ex-Service personnel in their first civilian roles	HMRC	Employers of ex-Service personnel	UK-wide
Op PROSPER	Programme that creates pathways to high-skilled roles in key sectors, mobilises the business community for practical, cultural, and behavioural change, and offers grants for projects that enable ex-Service personnel and their families to enter stable and meaningful employment (via Veterans' Career Development Fund)	Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, on behalf of the OVA	Ex-Service personnel, family members, businesses in key sectors, universities, charities and Community Interest Companies (CICs)	UK-wide

Statutory provision	Purpose	Delivered/ Funded by	Target group	Geographical Coverage
Supporting Partners Programme	Grants of £30,000 to £80,000 for projects that assist Service partners in employment and support whole family transitions to civilian life	Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust in partnership with MoD	Universities, charities, Community Interest Companies (CICs), Armed Forces Units or bases	UK-wide
Veterans' Gateway	Digital and telephone service offering comprehensive information on welfare support for ex-Service personnel and their families across different areas, including employment	OVA	Ex-Service personnel, family members	UK-wide
Step into Health	Dedicated pathway for the Armed Forces community to access career opportunities within the NHS	Multiple NHS organisations	Ex-Service personnel	England and Wales
Work and Health Programme	Intensive, tailored employment support for people with disabilities, the long-term unemployed, and priority groups including ex-Service personnel and their partners	DWP	People with disabilities, long-term unemployed and Early Access groups (including ex-Service personnel and their partners)	England and Wales
Op NOVA	Personalised practical and emotional support for ex-Service personnel in the criminal justice system, including employment assistance	NHS England	Ex-Service personnel in the Justice System	England (expansion to Scotland under discussion)
Business Wales	Information, guidance, and support for businesses, startups, and self-employed individuals, with targeted efforts to support ex-Service personnel	Welsh Government	Businesses, startups, self-employed individuals	Wales
Working Wales	Tailored employment support, funding for training, and career advice aimed at the general population, including ex-Service personnel	Careers Wales (Welsh Government)	General population	Wales

Statutory provision	Purpose	Delivered/ Funded by	Target group	Geographical Coverage
Armed Forces and Veterans Champions	Advocates for ex-Service personnel and their family members, providing support and guidance in navigating services, and aiming to ensure they are not disadvantaged due to their Service	Multiple Scottish government departments, Local Authorities, NHS Scotland, colleges and universities	Ex-Service personnel, family members	Scotland
Armed Forces Talent Programme	Facilitate the entry of ex-Service personnel and their partners into the NHS Scotland workforce through dedicated employment pathways and career development	NHS Scotland	Ex-Service personnel, partners, and dependants	Scotland
My World of Work	Online careers guidance service aimed at the general population, with specific advice for ex-Service personnel through their 'military to civilian qualifications tool', developed with the support of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Partnership	Skills Development Scotland (Scottish Government)	General population	Scotland
No One Left Behind	All-age, place-based, person-centred employment support model aimed at the general population, including ex-Service personnel and their partners. It replaces Fair Start Scotland for new referrals, which aimed to improve job prospects for disadvantaged groups	Scottish Government	General population	Scotland
Careers Service	Impartial, all-age service providing careers advice and guidance to help individuals make informed career choices. Aimed at the general population, including ex-Service personnel.	Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland Executive)	General population	Northern Ireland

Statutory provision	Purpose	Delivered/ Funded by	Target group	Geographical Coverage
JobApplyNI	Jobs board and employment service aimed at the general population, including ex-Service personnel	Department for Communities (Northern Ireland Executive)	General population	Northern Ireland
Local Council Veterans Champions	Dedicated first point of contact for ex-Service personnel seeking information, signposting or referral to support services in their local area	Local councils	Ex-Service personnel	Northern Ireland

