

Ex-Service Personnel and the Justice System:

A synthesis of current policy and service provision

To help ensure that evidence is at the heart of decision making for the benefit of ex-Service personnel and their families, the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) Research Centre has committed to producing thematic research and policy summaries. These are intended to inform both policy and practice, as well as future research.

This one-page synthesis provides a summary of current policy and service provision for United Kingdom (UK) ex-Service personnel involved in the justice system (JS). It was produced using a robust methodology, including a narrative literature review of extant grey literature alongside consultations with leading stakeholders. This summary was also subject to peer-review. Further information about the methodology used is provided in the accompanying [full report](#).

Key Findings



Due to the devolved responsibility for service provision across the UK's constituent nations, police forces, and custodial establishments, there is currently **no UK-wide approach to assisting ex-Service personnel involved in the JS**.



Training is available to police, prison, and probation staff in England, Scotland, and Wales to assist the identification of ex-Service personnel within the JS and any associated support needs.



Dedicated statutory assistance is not available to ex-Service personnel within the JS in Northern Ireland because of ongoing concerns surrounding the identification of those belonging to this cohort and whether they should receive tailored support.



Numerous non-mandated initiatives have been implemented in police custody and prison settings throughout England, Scotland, and Wales to support ex-Service personnel, including the Veterans in Custody programme, dedicated Veteran prison wings/hubs, and breakfast clubs.



Despite the absence of a UK-wide approach, **several policy initiatives have been introduced with the aim of providing more cohesive support to ex-Service personnel within the JS**. These include the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan (England), the Supporting the Transition of Military Personnel initiative (Wales), and the Strategy for Our Veterans (Scotland).



There is **limited evidence of dedicated statutory and non-statutory assistance** for ex-Service personnel negotiating court proceedings, under probation, and serving community sentences.



There is currently **limited statutory and non-statutory support for the families of ex-Service personnel** involved in the JS.



There are a **growing number of partnerships dedicated to assisting ex-Service personnel** involved in the JS across England, Scotland, and Wales. An example is Op NOVA, which operates throughout England as a collaboration between NHS England, Forces Employment Charity, and Care After Combat.

Recommendations



Further efforts are required to **chart the services available to ex-Service personnel involved in the JS** throughout the UK and to present this information in a comprehensive and accessible manner.



Statutory and non-statutory support to help ex-Service personnel within the JS reintegrate into civilian society should be maintained and extended where appropriate.



Additional structures must be put in place to facilitate the **sharing of best practice among statutory and non-statutory service providers assisting ex-Service personnel within the JS** across the UK. These initiatives should form a basis for consistent and even support delivery.



Current statutory and non-statutory assistance for ex-Service personnel negotiating court proceedings, under probation, or serving community sentences **should be subject to review and, if necessary, expanded** to ensure consistent support provision across the JS.



Coordinated policy and training is needed to ensure that service providers are suitably equipped to identify ex-Service personnel, record their data accurately, and communicate the assistance available to them upon disclosure.



Further initiatives are needed to **identify the families of ex-Service personnel within the JS** and attend to their associated support needs.



It is recommended that the **Veterans in Custody Support Officer role be mandated in prisons** across England and Wales, with a similar role being established in English probation services to facilitate consistent support delivery.



Regular evaluations of current and any future service provision for ex-Service personnel within the JS should be conducted to identify potential areas of improvement and share cases of best practice.

This document was published in 2023 when the Centre for Evidence for the Armed Forces Community (Funded by FiMT) was called the Forces in Mind Trust Research Centre.

This infographic summarises research from *Ex-Service Personnel and the Justice System: Policy Summary*, available from <https://fimt-rc.org/downloads/policy-summary/full/justice.pdf>



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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