

## Changing Our Approach to Veterans' Employment

Summary Report of the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT)  
Summit on 'Transforming Perceptions and Unlocking  
Ex-Services Talent', 8 October 2019

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# Acknowledgements



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Finally we would like to thank all of the participants who attended the summit and contributed to the high level of discussion which took place. A list of the all organisations in attendance is provided at the end of this report.

# Introduction

Meaningful, sustained, and fulfilling employment plays a key role in helping ex-Service personnel to achieve a successful transition from the Armed Forces into civilian life. Research on the employment outcomes for ex-Service personnel has shown that while levels of employment are high, barriers to successful and sustainable employment remain. These include negative perceptions of ex-Service personnel and difficulties translating military skills and qualifications into the civilian context.

In particular, research funded by Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) in the area of employment of ex-Service personnel has highlighted civilian perceptions of ex-Service personnel and their experiences of entering the civilian job market. According to a 2019 survey, while 71 per cent of surveyed UK organisations are likely to consider hiring ex-Service personnel, 18 per cent said they were unlikely to consider hiring ex-Service personnel. This is linked to employers' views that ex-Service personnel do not have the relevant skills or experience (44 per cent), that they may not fit the culture of the workplace (19 per cent), that their skills from active duty may not translate into a business environment (18 per cent) or that they may have different levels of education to those expected of civilian workers (11 per cent). While the UK public have a broadly positive view of both ex-Service personnel and the Armed Forces, there remains a perception among 64 per cent of the public that ex-Service personnel suffer more from mental, physical or emotional issues than the average person.<sup>2</sup>

While the uptake of the Armed Forces Covenant by Local Authorities is a positive step, research on organisational pledges shows that greater awareness is needed of the Covenant by businesses.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, previous studies have highlighted the difficulty

of transferring – and translating – skills from the military to the civilian context,<sup>4</sup> despite the data showing that organisations value ex-Service personnel as employees.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, specific sub-groups of Service leavers, such as female Service leavers, tend to be doubly disadvantaged; research shows that they are more likely to be economically inactive and have a lower employment rate than their male counterparts.<sup>6</sup> Another consideration is that ex-Service personnel seeking work following their time in the Armed Forces will prioritise greater 'quality of life' – such as being near family, or living close to where they grew up – over employment considerations such as commuting for higher paid roles or moving for work.<sup>7</sup> However, when discussing the topic of ex-Service personnel employment, it is important to note that the focus should not only be about the rate of employment of ex-Service personnel – it should also be about whether they have meaningful employment.

On 8 October 2019, FiMT held a summit in partnership with Roche UK, Transforming Perceptions and Unlocking Ex-Services Talent, to discuss the public perceptions of ex-Service personnel and how employers can better recruit and utilise the skills of people who leave the UK Armed Forces. The aim of this event was to identify pathways for action to improve the employment prospects of ex-Service personnel. This report summarises the presentations and discussions held at the summit, under the following headings:

- Insights and way forward
- Event discussions
  - National and local government initiatives
  - Case studies on successful employment of ex-Service personnel
  - Working groups: discussion around potential solutions

# Insights and way forward

Several key points emerged from the working groups, which are summarised below and discussed in more detail in the Event discussions section. These points highlight a way forward for stakeholders across the private and public sectors with a view to supporting the transition of ex-Service personnel into civilian employment:

- Create a joined-up media strategy, across military charitable organisations, that focuses on reducing misperceptions in relation to ex-Service personnel.
- Build an online employment platform for ex-military job seekers which goes beyond requesting CVs, and also takes into account soft skills as well as past experience and qualifications.
- Use data provided by ex-military job seekers on their qualifications and skills to provide guidance on future employment pathways, such as potential careers, career progression, but also provides coaching and mentoring, and advice and guidance, while outlining the skills sought by employers.
- Translate military qualifications to civilian equivalents to enable improved understanding by employers of the skills and knowledge held by ex-Service personnel.
- Make an evidence-based business case to organisations as to why ex-Service personnel add value to a company.
- Provide additional training and support to Human Resources departments and hiring managers in relation to the recruitment and retention of ex-Service personnel.
- Create opportunities and reduce risk for both ex-Service personnel and employers through veteran-tailored schemes such as internships or apprenticeships.
- Increase dialogue and collaboration between employers and businesses on the topic of hiring ex-Service personnel.

# Event discussions

## National and local government initiatives

Two sessions focused on selected national and local government initiatives on the integration of ex-Service personnel into civilian employment. The national initiative, the Armed Forces Covenant, seeks to help ex-Service personnel directly, and the local initiative, Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), examines the broader benefits employment of ex-Service personnel brings to the local economy.

## The Armed Forces Covenant and Defence Relationship Management (DRM) – Eloise French

DRM partners with organisations throughout the UK, helping them understand the value of signing the Armed Forces Covenant and building mutually beneficial partnerships with the Ministry of Defence (MOD). It provides support on employing Reservists, ex-Service personnel, Cadet Force Adult Volunteers and military spouses and improving fairness for the Armed Forces community in the consumer market. DRM serves as a link between employers and the Armed Forces Covenant scheme<sup>8</sup>, to improve the communication channels, and was created following feedback to MOD from civilian employers about the lack of clear and consistent messaging around the hiring of ex-Service personnel.

Over the years, DRM has seen a growth in both the number of signatories and the quality of the pledges: the Covenant is approaching 5,000 signatories as of October 2019, which represents an average of 27 new signatories per week. This is particularly significant when considering that DRM has no sales or marketing team, and that information about the Covenant is spread informally by signatories. In terms of the quality of the pledges, DRM places particular importance on pledges that make a difference and remove barriers to entering civilian employment for ex-Service personnel. Examples of pledges are provided in Box 1.

The Covenant has helped DRM provide government officials with information about the most supportive employers and improve MOD support to civilian employers. Another advantage of the scheme is the fact that the benefits are self-perpetuating: once an employer has started hiring ex-Service personnel, this employer will often continue to hire more ex-Service

### Box 1. Examples of pledges

- Sky waived cancellation fees for Armed Forces personnel who are deployed abroad.
- National Express give a 60 per cent discount to Armed Forces personnel, a 30 per cent discount to ex-Service personnel, and offer free travel on Remembrance Sunday.
- Mott MacDonald involves ex-Service staff in interviews of ex-Service personnel, and in the process of reading CVs and 'translating' these for civilian hiring managers.

personnel – some employers have stated that ex-Service personnel stay in their jobs longer than their civilian counterparts: for example, Morrisons have recruited 10 per cent of ex-Service personnel over the past 12 months, and they have a retention rate of over 90 per cent with these employees, thus saving on recruitment costs.



DRM set up the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) in 2014, which recognises employers that demonstrate support to the Armed Forces Community and uphold the values of the Armed Forces Covenant.<sup>9</sup> There are three levels as part of this scheme: Bronze, Silver, and Gold. The Silver award is made at the point at which companies begin to demonstrate a real level of support for Defence, and are looking to support the whole of the Armed Forces Community. Gold award holders are those who advocate for Defence, go the extra mile in being Forces-friendly organisations, and provide a good support network for ex-Service personnel in civilian employment. Box 2 provides an overview of selected award holders and the different pledges they uphold.

DRM has limited resources, and the reality is that some companies do not engage with DRM. Therefore, DRM relies heavily on Gold award holders to help promote the Covenant and expand the Covenant's work. Additionally, DRM is starting to monitor employers to ensure that they are meeting their pledges, to continue upholding the quality of the Covenant. DRM also works closely with the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), with CTP also

pointing companies towards the Covenant. CTP support is only provided to ex-Service personnel for two years following their departure from Service, the charity sector taking the lead for individual support from that point onwards, working with DRM where appropriate to cultivate business relationships. Overall, employer feedback now indicates that MOD is more coherent, consistent, and transparent compared to the feedback received in 2012. However, there remain areas for development, such as making it as straightforward as possible for ex-Service personnel to communicate with employers, expanding the community of advocates to explain what MOD needs from employers, and improving understanding of what employers need from MOD.

#### **Box 2. Overview of selected award holders**

- Amazon have set up a group to identify veteran issues (Warriors at Amazon), which helps them as an employer to understand the value ex-Service personnel bring to the organisation. Amazon are also keen to connect with other employers if they are approached by applicants who may not have the right skillset for Amazon, but may be better suited for other organisations.
- Salesforce have a scheme called Vetforce, which is an internal sales force that brings together ex-Service personnel and the wider Armed Forces Community by providing free training, a community, and courses. Salesforce's focus is on bringing Vetforce to the UK Armed Forces Community as successfully as in the United States (US), with the ultimate aim of helping ex-Service personnel and their families successfully transition to civilian life.
- Halfords have a guaranteed interview pledge, meaning that ex-Service personnel who apply for a job at Halfords will automatically be guaranteed an interview.



## **Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Hertfordshire County Council – Sally Hopper**

LEPs are a bridge between the public and private sectors, and are tasked by Government to accelerate business-led local economic growth within their regions. Hertfordshire LEP is one of 38 LEPs across England.

Hertfordshire LEP works with local authorities and businesses to determine local economic priorities. Its Strategic Economic Plan has secured over £300m of UK and EU public funding to invest in activities to help improve infrastructure, drive up jobs and skills, and support business growth within the county.

There are over one million people living in Hertfordshire. Employment levels are high and there are many skilled people in the region: 79 per cent of the working age residents are employed.

Additionally, Hertfordshire is highly connected, in part due to its proximity to London, which is an advantage as well as a disadvantage, because of the competition to retain skilled people locally. Despite the positive outlook, there is a need to be future-focused and to explore what Hertfordshire should look like, with respect to transport, skill base, and business, and to consider how to keep up with growth in other regions.

In November 2017, Government set a mandate for LEPs to produce Local Industrial Strategies (LISs) to tackle regional disparities, deliver inclusive growth and improve productivity. Backed by a robust economic evidence base and extensive stakeholder engagement, Hertfordshire

LEP published its draft LIS for public consultation in September 2019. The final strategy, co-designed with Government, is expected to be released at the start of 2020.

This strategy is important for Hertfordshire County Council, being the biggest employer in the county. It is also relevant to the estimated 36,000 ex-Service personnel living in Hertfordshire, who have much to contribute to the local economy.

As a proud Gold award holder of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, Hertfordshire County Council has built the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant into its day-to-day activities. It brings these to the wider community through its 'Hertfordshire Heroes' brand and Armed Forces Day celebrations. In terms of recruitment, the county council provides Reservists with ten days extra paid leave for training camp and five days extra leave for general training annually.

# Case studies on successful employment of ex-Service personnel

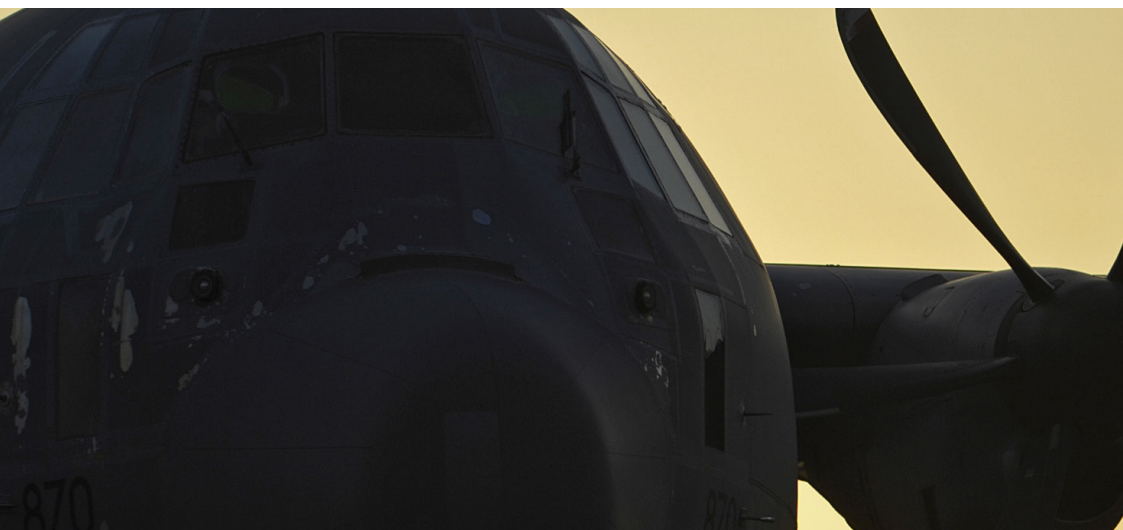
Two case studies were presented during the summit. The first focused on BuildForce, a UK programme seeking to provide employment and long-term careers to ex-Service personnel in the construction sector, with personal reflections from two ex-Service personnel who came into contact with BuildForce. The second case study examined the US context, with a focus on learning and transferable tools.

## **BuildForce – Caroline Logan**

The BuildForce programme is a UK-wide alliance of employers, industry bodies, and charities helping ex-Service personnel find employment and long-term careers in the construction sector. Overall, BuildForce has helped employ over 500 ex-Service personnel across the UK, supporting individuals in securing careers in areas with a skills gap within the construction sector. BuildForce is partnered with over 100 companies, including both large and small and medium sized enterprises. BuildForce was in part funded to test the concept of recruiting ex-Service personnel and, given its success, BuildForce has secured additional industry funding until 2022.

Overall, 14,000 people leave the UK Armed Forces every year with a set of transferable skills, and BuildForce is seeking to match these skills

with those needed by the construction industry, which is a growing sector and requires personnel. BuildForce focuses on providing work experience, career support, opportunities outside the military, mental wellbeing support, and mentors to ex-Service personnel, while also providing industry placements, all of which results in providing sustainable employment. In particular, the mentor support works by matching individuals based on skillset and location. After that, it is up to the mentor and mentee how they wish to structure their relationship. Mentors can also help identify job opportunities from inside organisations. A personal reflection on the transition into civilian employment and on the benefits of being mentor was shared by Darren Hardy (Box 3).





### **Box 3. Success story:**

#### **Darren Hardy, Skanska**

Darren Hardy started his career in the Army and spent time in the Special Forces but left the Armed Forces after suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and took up civilian employment in London. However, this civilian job was not the right fit, and he transitioned to a career in the construction sector, gaining employment within Skanska, and became a mentor via BuildForce. He mentors several people and finds this to be very rewarding overall. People can slip through the net when transitioning, but by acting as a mentor, Darren can help 'catch' them and provide the necessary support. Within Skanska, Darren is the head of the military network, and there is a good uptake in the group from other ex-Service personnel. Overall, Darren felt that ex-Service personnel react well to working under pressure and work to very high standards. Based on his personal experience, he successfully transferred his project management and people skills from his military career over into the civilian world.

BuildForce has a good relationship with DRM, and more broadly is looking to expand in terms of recruiting more mentors and more employers to join their network – particularly as it is free for companies to join. BuildForce describes it as a cyclical process: once an ex-Service person joins an organisation, BuildForce has a personal contact who is more likely to support BuildForce's activities and goals and make them aware of available roles. BuildForce also hosts quarterly Armed Forces Insight Days, which convene employers, and include construction experts who are also ex-Service personnel. In this way, ex-Service personnel can attend, ask questions, and network with other ex-Service personnel and employers. Box 4 describes the career pathway of Nick Medlicott, and his experience with BuildForce.



#### **Box 4. Success story:**

##### **Nick Medlicott, Highways England**

Nick Medlicott left the Royal Navy after 32 years, having served as an aircraft engineer with extensive management experience. At first, Nick joined the defence industry, but quickly realised that he was doing a similar job to his work in the Armed Forces. Using the set of 'core competencies' put together by the Armed Forces, he saw that Highways England mapped against his values and areas of interest. Via BuildForce, Nick took the key skills courses regarding construction and wider management aspects and was assigned a mentor. Nick's mentor helped him think about the new role, helping with CV writing and how to best frame his past expertise. He also received help from within Highways England to develop his application and to best match it with Highways England values and criteria.

According to Nick, there is recognition of veterans within Highways England. For example during Nick's job interview, his interviewers were keen to learn about his transferable skills and his experience from the military. He has since introduced another ex-Service person into Highways England via BuildForce.

There are nonetheless areas for improvement which were noted by BuildForce and across the event attendees more generally. Participants noted that, on the topic of hiring managers or human resources, Armed Forces skills and qualifications are not always understood or recognised in the civilian context. A 'translation' of military credentials needs to happen for the full potential of an applicant to be appreciated: BuildForce and their mentor system help articulate these transferable skills in CVs. BuildForce also noted

that connecting the ex-Service personnel directly with senior managers or future colleagues can help to obtain buy-in and positive employment outcomes.

There is also the issue of misperceptions: for example, some members of the British public believe that ex-Service personnel are psychologically damaged due to their service, with statistics showing that overall there is generally a negative perception in relation to ex-Service personnel. In some cases, there is work needed in terms of mentoring or changing perceptions on the part of employers; however, this point should not be generalised – for example, Highways England has a very good support structure for mental health issues, including a veteran-specific support section.

There needs to be a wider conversation on how to manage risk when hiring ex-Service personnel, and where that should lie: with businesses or also with wider society. However, to a certain extent, it was felt that the responsibilities are also on the individual, who should be focusing on personal development throughout their career in the Armed Forces; people who take the time for this are generally better prepared for the transition to civilian employment.

There is a wider lack of knowledge among ex-Service personnel, upon leaving the Armed Forces, of the extent of the careers available. Event participants pointed to a lack of structure and a 'Wild West' style of job hunting for ex-Service personnel.

## **The Overseas Perspective: Veteran and Military Spouse Employment – John Edelman**

In the US, despite a generally positive perception in relation to ex-Service personnel, there remain misperceptions about the hiring of ex-Service personnel and military spouses. Edelman conducted a survey on this topic, and found that while 70 per cent of the respondents felt ex-Service personnel were heroes, only 18 per cent felt they were a strategic asset for companies, showing that there is a disconnect in people's thinking on the topic of employing ex-Service personnel. Additionally, one out of two respondents stated that they felt ex-Service personnel did not have the necessary educational levels to perform well in civilian employment.

However, this perception does not match the reality, where many ex-Service personnel have degrees, including degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Another survey conducted in the US mapped the skills sought by employers and the skills held by ex-Service personnel, and there was a lot of overlap, including in areas such as teamwork. Additionally, survey responses showed that 65 per cent of respondents said that media and pop culture shaped their view on veterans – a factor recognised by companies such as a US organisation that read film and television scripts to ensure that they accurately represented military and ex-Service personnel.

In relation to the hiring of military spouses, retention is a major challenge. Statistics in the US show that one out of two military spouses leave their employment within the first year, with 70 per cent leaving their employment within two years. This shows that the lack of appropriate employment opportunities do not allow this cohort to grow and flourish, with reasons for leaving employment including poor pay and lack of growth opportunities. This issue is also linked to the non-employment or

underemployment of military spouses, including underutilisation in the context of civilian jobs. Overall, data shows that military spouses tend have a very high level of dissatisfaction with their job.

There are therefore a number of areas for improvement, including bridging the skills gap between an individual leaving the Armed Forces and entering civilian employment. In the US, efforts have been undertaken to reduce this skills gap through schemes such as internships, apprenticeships, and mentorships. A challenge in this space is the high number of organisations in the US targeting ex-Service personnel, with around 45,000 veterans' service organisations (VSOs), and the difficulty of navigating this landscape for ex-Service personnel and military spouses, with challenges around collaboration and communication. A third area for improvement relates to barriers of entry, or the so-called 'frozen middle'. For example, while the senior managers in a company may be open to employing ex-Service personnel, there is sometimes a disconnect on this subject at the human resources or hiring manager level which still needs to be closed. Box 5 highlights selected success stories from the US context.

### Box 5. Success stories in the US

- **Hiring Our Heroes Corporate Fellowship Programme:** This Programme was developed in collaboration with the US Department of Veteran Affairs and the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and provides transitioning personnel with experience of working as part of the civilian workforce. As part of this Programme, the transitioning individual's salary is paid for three months, and they first have one week of corporate classroom training, followed by 11 weeks of on-the-job training with the host company, before companies formally employ them. Individuals can be posted in different locations as part of this Programme, with the Programme currently running in 27 cities. This Programme was launched in 2011, and there have been around 2400 completed fellowships since its inception, and more than 450 participating employers, with over 90 per cent of the fellows obtaining a job offer by the end of their trial period. This programme is beneficial for both employers, who can observe the quality of an individual's work before making the decision whether to hire them, and for the employee, to gauge if the work suits them.
- **Bunker Labs:** This is designed to be an incubator for ex-Service personnels' business ideas, the logic being that if the company owner is ex-Armed Forces, they are more likely to hire ex-Service personnel. This programme has existed for three years. The Bunker incubates a cohort for 12 weeks on an entrepreneurial course and an 'own your own business' course. This programme is also available for military spouses.
- **Apprenticeships:** These first started in the UK, and have now been taken up the US. The apprenticeships are regulated by the National Apprenticeship Act, with industry associations having the possibility of creating adapted programmes. Local government and non-for-profit organisations, industry associations, and educational institutions can become Standard Recognition Entities, and create industry-recognised apprenticeship programmes. This initiative can help change the mind-set about the talent available among ex-Service personnel, as it can help incorporate them into civilian workplaces.

In terms of practical tools, there is the concept of the 'veteran employment life cycle' which breaks up the employment journey of ex-Service personnel into four stages: pre-transition, recruitment and hiring, on-boarding and integration, and retention. This also involves having a mentor who is ex-Forces themselves and a senior leader, and providing specific support at each of these four stages, such as highlighting any skills gaps, attending job fairs, training programmes to transition into the

workforce, and information on how to progress with their career. The public-private partnership model is another tool through which to assess the way a good partnership should look like, and how to evolve partnerships so that they develop, and have organisations benchmark themselves against this model.

## The main lessons from the US experience

### overall are that:

- Multi-stakeholder partnerships are essential;
- Having the data and knowledge on both the employer and employee side is beneficial;
- It is important to create scalable programmes and with robust accountability and oversight mechanisms;
- Having the equivalent of the US Department of Veteran Affairs is also crucial to serve as a central point of contact; and
- Ensuring cross-government collaboration and accountability on the issue of ex-Service personnel employment.



# Working groups: discussion around potential solutions

Three discussion groups were held, which each focused on a different issue area:

1. Veterans' and civilian employers' perceptions of each other
2. How technology and data can best be utilised to help ex-Service personnel gain employment
3. Discussion of the long-term vision of success for ex-Service personnel.

These three working groups resulted in a set of recommendations for stakeholders across the private and public sectors, which are summarised below.

## **Changing perceptions: How can veterans' and civilian employers' perceptions of each other be changed?**

To explore how veterans' and civilian employers' perceptions can be changed, it is first important to determine where people's perceptions come from. The media plays a large role, and people's perceptions also reflect their personal experiences and the opinions of friends and family. The way in which the Armed Forces is regarded is also closely tied to how military culture and ethos is embedded in a country. In the UK, challenges are presented by the way that the Armed Forces and ex-Service personnel are portrayed in the media, which tends to fixate on people with mental or physical issues. Over time, perceptions can become accepted truths, and there may be less public differentiation between the politics behind a conflict and the role of the Armed Forces in that conflict. Similarly, in some cases Armed Forces personnel have misperceptions of the civilian world.

In order to help change perceptions, a number of recommended actions were discussed by participants, and are ordered according to their level of priority, as judged by the working group's participants:

- Undertake a media campaign to ensure positive messaging around ex-Service personnel, such as by providing the media with good quality and interesting content on this topic. There also needs to be a much more joined up media campaign across the media from different interest groups, such as military charities. These interest groups should meet regularly to develop a joined-up communications strategy.
- Ensure that a persuasive business case is put forward when targeting businesses on the topic of employing ex-Service personnel, for example linking Service leaver employment to the skills needs of companies and highlighting the added value of ex-Service personnel (experience, soft skills, etc.), rather than making it a sympathy case.
- Target the educational system to ensure greater understanding of the Armed Forces in the school curriculum, as this can help target misperceptions early.
- Improve civilian understanding of military qualifications by translating Armed Forces courses and qualifications to qualifications understood by civilian recruiters. It could be helpful to create a mapping of what military credentials mean in civilian terms. This goes hand-in-hand with delivering appropriate training for human resources staff on the topic of recruiting and working with ex-Services personnel.
- Increase the commitment of UK businesses to



mentorships, internships, apprenticeships and fellowships. The use of these 'ships' can help de-risk employment for both the employer and the employee. This would benefit from a more concerted communications effort across other stakeholders including DRM and CTP.

- Encourage ex-Service personnel to build their own businesses and engage in entrepreneurial activities.
- Implement a guaranteed interview scheme for ex-Service personnel among companies in the UK.

Technology and data: How can technology and data be utilised to help connect ex-Service personnel to employers?

Ahead of this working group, summit attendees were asked to complete a short survey with regard to the employment of ex-Service personnel. The results of this survey are described in Box 6.

#### **Box 6. Employers' survey**

Ahead of the working group, a short survey was circulated and completed by 19 participants from the summit, asking questions around skills and the employment of ex-Service personnel. Overall, 80 per cent of the respondents stated that their organisation is currently facing talent or skills shortages, and yet for around 80 per cent of the respondents, sourcing the right talent and skills is critically important for the future growth and success of their organisations. Over half of the respondents said that, from their experience, ex-Service personnel make great employees; however, 40 per cent of the respondents find it difficult to engage and attract talent from the ex-Service community, while 60 per cent of the respondents stated that they can find it difficult to understand the transferable skills from ex-Service personnel applications. Overall, respondents largely agreed that their organisation would benefit from a solution that makes it easier to understand these transferable skills (nearly 80 per cent) and that they would be interested in a solution that provides access to, and engagement of, talent from the ex-Service community (90 per cent).

Today, there are challenges in relation to the translation of individuals' qualifications and skills to what is required by companies– and this applies more widely across the job market, not only specifically to ex-Service personnel. It was felt by working group participants that traditional recruitment methods via CVs and cover letters are no longer pertinent, and that skills-based selection may be more relevant for employers, with more training, education, and support provided to hiring managers. Good practice areas highlighted by participants include 'ships', publicising case studies, and increasing communication and collaboration between employers on this topic. Overall, there is an appetite for a tool that can support the military-to-civilian transition process. According to participants, such a tool needs to offer more than just a place where a user can upload their CV – rather, it also needs to take into account soft skills and help job seekers understand the connections between the skills they possess and what sector they would like to work in. Once a user has uploaded their information, the tool could outline

options and choices available according to the user's skillset and preferences, on areas other than only employment, such as career progression and planning, coaching and mentoring, and advice and guidance. At the same time, the tool could be aligned with the broader market data and help provide the user with information in terms of how they fit in the wider employment market.

There is also appetite for employers to provide new forms of support, which include:

- Providing guaranteed interviews to ex-Service personnel or offering mock interviews. This is currently in place for school leavers, and thus could easily be adapted. This also provides an opportunity for signatories to the Armed Forces Covenant to deliver on their pledges in practice.
- Undertake place-based advertising by recruiters, which could also enable more industry collaboration.
- Educate hiring managers and line managers about the value of ex-Service personnel in the workplace.

# Long-term success: What should be the long-term vision of success for Service personnel leaving the military?

Participants raised the question of when resettlement discussions should start for Service personnel leaving the Armed Forces. The recommendations from this working group are targeted to the MOD and to businesses. Participants' recommendations for the MOD include:

- Avoid having discussions with Armed Forces personnel about transition too soon, as individuals who have just joined the Armed Forces will be focusing on joining – and not leaving. However, the topic could be built in to conversations over time as the Service personnel progress through their careers.
- Do more to develop individuals' skills by increasing the educational components that involve developing transferable skills and teach individuals how to best demonstrate these skills in their job applications.
- Begin the transition period two years before resettlement. Resettlement should be normalised and seen as a normal step along the way.
- Improve awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant among members of the Armed Forces Community.
- Bring organisations and businesses to the Armed Forces, such as via a 'careers fair' event, to on the one hand enable Armed Forces personnel to obtain better knowledge of the types of employment and roles available, and on the other hand improve businesses' knowledge of the types of skills held by Armed Forces personnel.
- Introduce mentoring for Armed Forces personnel, with mentors who are ex-Service personnel now employed in the civilian world and make use of case

studies to enable ex-Service personnel to discuss their experiences to help bridge the gap and bring across 'lived' knowledge.

These recommendations are beneficial not only to ex-Service personnel but also to the MOD, as they can help the MOD recruit ex-Service personnel while also being able to communicate what skills will be gained and highlight future career pathways after having been in the Armed Forces.

### Regarding businesses, the following recommendations were put forward:

- Conduct a mapping of the skills and qualifications obtained in the military with their civilian equivalents in order to enable better understanding of ex-Service personnel applicants and the value that they offer organisations.
- Improve how businesses search for and recognise talent, with an increased focus on recruiting ex-Service personnel by human resources and hiring managers.
- Better define what skills are needed across businesses and organisations and articulate these needs to human resources and hiring managers, so that they have a better awareness when it comes to identifying skillsets of ex-Service personnel applicants.
- Ensure that adequate expectations are set in relation to remuneration and career progression. While ex-Service personnel are joining a new industry, they are doing so with a unique set of skills, and this should be recognised by creating a specific trajectory for them, or at least taking these aspects into careful consideration.
- Increase collaboration between companies on this topic to share good practices and lessons learnt.

# Attendees

ABF-The Soldiers Charity	Ministry of Defence
Armed Forces Pension Society	Naval Families Federation
Army Families Federation	Officers' Association
British Chamber of Commerce	PWC
Beyond the Battlefield	Roche
BFBS UK Forces Network	Royal Air Forces Association
British Forces Resettlement Services	RAND Europe
Business in the Community	Remploy
Career Transition Partnership	RFEA - The Forces Employment Charity
Confederation of British Industry	Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity
City and Guilds	RUSI
Cobseo	Schneider Electric
Defence Relationship Management	Scottish Veterans Commissioner's Office
Deloitte	Serco
Department for Work and Pensions	SMJ Consulting Services
Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT)	SSAFA
FiMT Research Centre	The Poppy Factory
Forces Media Academy	The Royal British Legion
Forward Assist	The Royal Foundation
Federation of Small Businesses	Travis Perkins plc.
GoodPeople	Veterans Scotland
Hire a Hero	Veterans Support Office (NI)
Institute of Directors	Welsh Assembly
Local Government Association	Welsh Veterans Agency
Mission Motorsport	X-Forces

## References

1. Based on a survey commissioned by FiMT and undertaken by YouGov in 2019 to over 1,000 senior HR decision makers from private, public and third sector organisations of all sizes.
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9. For more information on the ERS, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-employer-recognition-scheme/defence-employer-recognition-scheme>

