



LIFTING OUR SIGHTS BEYOND 2030

The impact of future trends
on the transition of our
Armed Forces Community
from military to civilian life

FiMT
forces in mind trust



**COMMUNITY
FUND**



FUTURE AGENDA

Open Foresight

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Armed Forces Community from military to civilian life

Acknowledgements

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Foreword

Ray Lock, outgoing Chief Executive,
Forces In Mind Trust

Forces in Mind Trust is halfway through its planned 20-year life. What a decade it's been, and I wonder had we commissioned *Lifting Our Sights* in 2011, whether we would have foreseen the tumultuous global changes that have since played out. I hope we would. Or at least their impact. This project drew inspiration in part from my previous work on the Ministry of Defence's Global Strategic Trends, and our ambition is that *Lifting Our Sights* proves just as credible, and just as useful.

Credibility and utility alone though will not guarantee its success. With our partners Future Agenda, together we set out to conduct work that is as purposeful as it is substantial, and of relevance to anyone with an interest in the six million members of the Armed Forces Community in the United Kingdom. That interest need not be based on morality, or ethics, or corporate responsibility. It might simply be based upon a job description, or a business development pitch. The message of *Lifting Our Sights* is that it contains something for everyone – socio-economic trends, and insights into such diverse topics as digitalisation and diversity, resource inequality and civilian integration. Engaging with these foresights and investing in understanding their likely impacts will benefit both individuals and organisations.

It's been put to me that it's time to stop "circling the issues", and I recognize the risk that *Lifting Our Sights* sits on coffee tables or bookshelves, serving only to protect a surface or project an image. That would be the most terrible waste, and the most extraordinary loss of an opportunity to plan for the future.

This then is what we hope for. That politicians, policy advisers, officials, trustees, charity staff, business leaders and many others dip into *Lifting Our Sights* because it's credible, and it's useful. That way, our planning for the next decade will be more coherent, more comprehensive, and more collaborative. And those who will benefit most will be members of the Armed Forces Community, as well as those organisations that exist to support them, or would benefit from tapping into this rich national human resource.

Lifting Our Sights includes some stunning ideas. The ethnographic report introduces a new concept of transition that, if widely embraced, would produce a better shared understanding and thus collectively tackle the challenges of the next decade. The toolkits which flow from the latter sections describing implications, the 'so what?' approach much admired (and applied) by military doctrinaires, have been tailored for every relevant audience. In engaging with these foresights and investing in understanding their likely impacts, it is possible, indeed it is essential to identify and set broad goals. Attainment of such goals will chart our progress over the next decade and show the path governments and organisations must follow to allow the Armed Forces Community of 2030 to thrive.

I don't expect the next decade to follow anyone's predictions of today. But I firmly believe that by soaking up *Lifting Our Sights* and by determinedly thinking through its conclusions, and applying them across society, we will better support the Armed Forces Community. And although we focus on military to civilian transition, in truth we spend our whole lives going through transitions, and there is much in here that is made no less relevant by distance from service.

If *Lifting Our Sights* provides you with the freedom to experiment, if it supports your business case, if it is a topic at your Board strategy day, if it helps your planning; if it excites you – then we will have achieved our aim.

We ask for and expect no thanks for what could aptly also be described as 'Gifting Our Foresights'; it is after all the type of work that what we were established to do. At the start of the project, I was asked what success looked like. My answer was simple: if in 2030 we can look back over the last decade and say with confidence that the Armed Forces Community is better off for *Lifting Our Sights* and the work and changes it inspired, then we will truly have created a gift worth the giving, and worthy of the receiving.



Ray Lock CBE

Forces in Mind Trust Chief Executive

December 2012 to June 2021

Mike Ellicock, incoming Chief Executive, Forces in Mind Trust from June 2021

I suspect that many of you reading this know, or know of, Ray; however, I am sure very few of you know me, so I felt it may be helpful to include a couple of lines before reflecting on this impressive report.

I served in the Armed Forces from 1998 to 2005 and led soldiers in combat in Sierra Leone and Iraq. I was wounded in action during a hostage rescue in Sierra Leone in September 2000. I made a full recovery, but my radio operator was less fortunate and was eventually medically discharged. Since then, I have felt a deep personal responsibility to do what I can to support Service personnel, particularly those with physical or mental scars, in their transition into civilian life. I had assumed that this would always be rather tactical alongside my primary employment, so feel privileged to now have the opportunity to contribute at a more strategic level as the next Chief Executive of the Forces in Mind Trust.

Having left the Armed Forces after five and seven years' service respectively, my wife and I know just how challenging it is to make a successful and sustainable transition. My wife started her training to become an Osteopath whilst still serving in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and my career since has been a series of transitions spanning banking, start-up and scale-up businesses and the charitable sector. For the past twelve years I have been the Chief Executive of organisations that deliver social impact based upon sound evidence.

I am convinced that veterans and their families are a largely untapped asset both for 'UK plc' and to strengthen the social fabric of the communities in which they live – and that we can change this. As a senior executive of a global organisation quoted in this report states: *"The Armed Forces are unequivocally a great source of future leaders. Even a squaddie who joins and completes basic training has more investment in them than most people will have, perhaps across the entirety of their corporate life."* As we enter the post-Covid, post-Brexit world, a readiness to improvise, adapt and overcome and to accept continuous transition (see 5.2) is going to be essential for almost everyone. If provided with the right support at the right time – and with a shift in perceptions all-round (see 5.1), veterans and their families could be better placed than many to exploit this uncertain environment.

I am excited about the opportunity to build upon the fantastic work that Ray and his team have delivered over the past ten years. As I start to try to understand where we as a small team can have the biggest impact in the coming ten years, this report certainly is a gift for me. I am committed to doing all I can to enable all veterans and their families – both the 2-3% of veterans who really struggle and those whose latent potential is not currently realised – to make a successful and sustainable transition. I look forward to working with you all on this mission in the coming years.



Mike Ellicock
**Forces in Mind Trust Chief
Executive**

From June 2021



Preface

When they join the Armed Forces, men and women make a commitment to their country. They are prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice to protect their nation. To do this, they are obliged to put the normalities of civilian life to one side, often for many years. Inevitably, settling back into the community when their Service term is over requires a period of adjustment. Although significant efforts are being made to help those in transition to deal with this, some find coming to terms with the daily trials of civilian life, such as finding a home, a job, a school for their children and taking financial decisions, very difficult. Others struggle to articulate their Service achievements in a way which civilian employers can understand. At a time when the Armed Forces themselves are changing, public sector organisations and charities are finding it increasingly difficult to fund appropriate and timely support to those in need. It is clear therefore that how and in what form this support can be offered must remain under review.

This report strives to shine a light on the changing nature of UK society, and identify the trends that are likely to be most relevant to those members of the Armed Forces who will undergo transition over the next decade. As the UK adapts to the realities of a post-Covid, post-Brexit world, what will the realities of the economic, social and political shifts be, and how will they impact the Armed Forces, their role, their purpose and their place in the national consciousness? Furthermore, as society changes and the nature of military service evolves, what is the best way to support transitioning Service men and women so that they can continue to make active and positive contributions to society? What changes to current policy should be made to facilitate this, how should these be delivered and what will be the impact on the lives of transitioning personnel and their families?

Using a mix of foresight and ethnographic research, the *Lifting Our Sights* programme is designed to help find answers to these questions. In order to understand how future change might affect those

in transition, we used ethnographic research to build a clear understanding of the real-life experience of transitioning personnel as it exists today. Through extensive consultation with experts, we articulated the future complex challenges they may face, considered the different ways in which these could be addressed and, from this, offer recommendations about how the services and support provided to those in transition could evolve to better suit the changing environment.

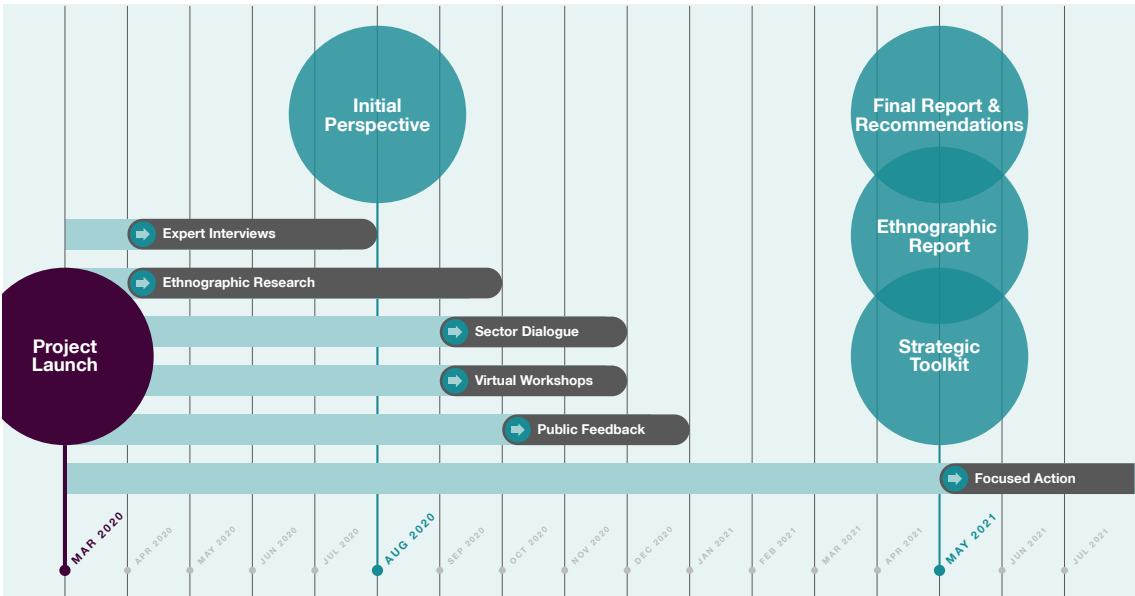
This document provides policy-focused foresight for all those who are experiencing transition, their family members who may be affected, as well as the statutory and voluntary organisations which support them. It's important to note that the foresights identified and the future shifts they outline are all likely to impact on ex-Service personnel in different ways in the future, depending on their particular circumstances. Some will shape the macro, societal contexts in which individuals will live and work, others might have a more direct impact on the specific processes and phases of transition itself. Different audiences may react differently to them, depending on their circumstances. Please don't worry about this, we are dealing with uncertainty after all.

Finally, many people have contributed to this report, including veterans, Armed Forces personnel, those from the business sector, the third sector, academics and government bodies. They were generous with both their time and their wisdom. We would like to thank them most sincerely.

Lifting Our Sights Process

Lifting Our Sights:

Beyond 2030





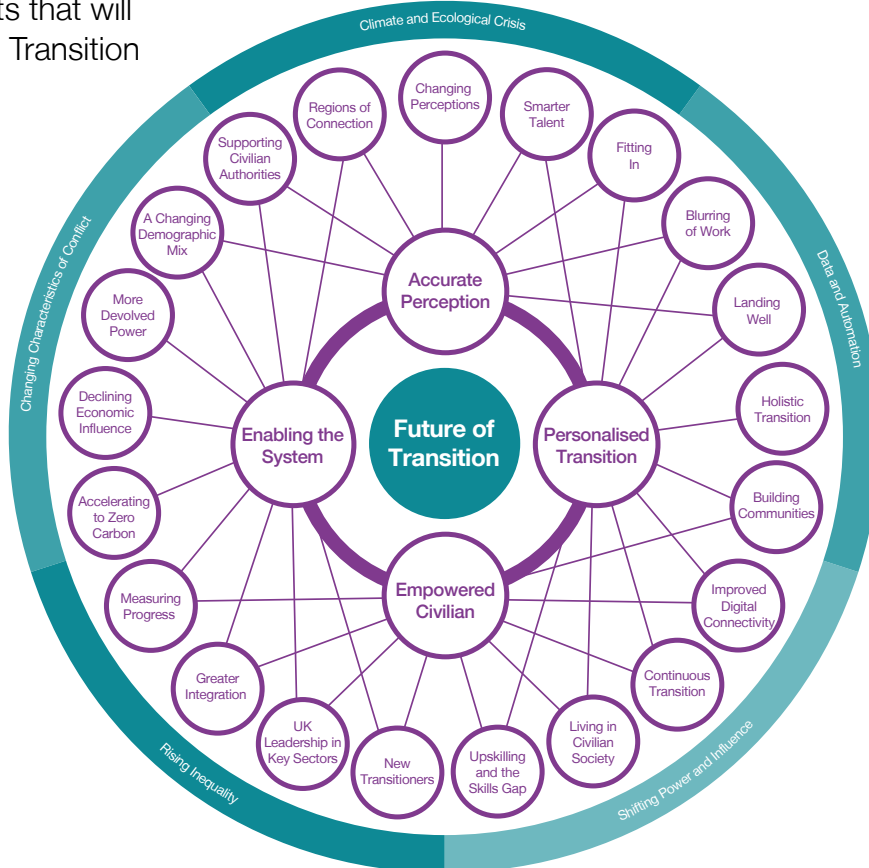
Lifting Our Sights:

Beyond 2030



Executive Summary

Foresights that will Influence Transition



Lifting Our Sights:

Beyond 2030

Charitable Sector Foresights

The Digitisation of Services

Deeper Collaboration

Embracing Movements

Greater Competition

Ideological Rethink

Reduced Support

Approximately 145,000 people are members of the British Armed Forces. Every year, around 15,000 of them leave to return to civilian life. In total there are some 2.4 million ex-Services personnel in the UK today, all of whom will have had to acclimatise to a new and often unfamiliar way of living. Some find the process liberating, and easily adapt to their changed circumstances; forging new careers, becoming involved in their communities and establishing stable relationships. Others struggle to re-establish themselves and their families without the structure

that the Armed Forces provide. Acknowledging this and the risk of Service, the Armed Forces Covenant is a commitment by the nation to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society. The 2018 Strategy for Our Veterans outlines ways in which this can be achieved, focusing on an overriding ambition – to make the United Kingdom the best place in the world to be an Armed Forces veteran.

In support of this goal, the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) commissioned Future Agenda to undertake a year-long study looking at “Future trends and their impact on the Armed Forces Community in 2030 and beyond - with a focus on transition.” The aim was to better understand future social, technical, economic, environmental, political, and ethical trends, in order to ensure that transitioning Service personnel and their families have the best possible opportunity to make a successful and sustainable shift to civilian life. This report provides an overview of this study and highlights the incremental, and more significant, shifts that may impact the transition experience, and the transition journey.

In order to gain a rich view of the changes ahead, we have combined strategic foresight, exploring key future shifts with multiple expert voices, and in-depth ethnographic research, that creates an accurate view of the real lived experience of transitioning personnel today. When combined, these two create a powerful and unique lens on how emergent changes may become manifest, so that we anticipate and respond better for the benefit of future Service leavers and their families.

Looking ahead, we propose four primary areas of future action, and make specific recommendations for each. The four areas can be summarised as:

Empowering the System: Ensuring that the wider military and the civilian ecosystems that matter most have a collective understanding of the transition journey, and are supported by more collaborative data sharing, alongside greater clarity around measurement and accountability.

Personalising the transition process: Shifting support services so that transition is defined by the individual circumstances of serving personnel and their families. An important component of this shift is likely to be earlier dialogue, leading to earlier ‘pre-emptive’ support activity.

Empowered Civilian: Equipping ex-Service personnel to lead successful and fulfilled lives by helping them to take more responsibility for their lives in the military and beyond.

Accurate Perception: Broadening and improving public understanding of the role of the Armed Forces and the transferrable skills of Service personnel at a time of major change in society, the world of work, and the capabilities of the Armed Forces.

The foresights in this report can, and we hope will, be applied by many of the organisations working to support veterans and their families in transition. Each will reveal a number of different implications and opportunities, depending on their particular needs and circumstances. To demonstrate this, we have provided an example implication for each foresight. In addition, to help cement our foresights and recommendations into the current debate, we have used the themes from the 2018 Strategy for Our Veterans (see Appendix), as an example to demonstrate how foresight and ethnography can help shape strategy. A complementary toolkit will allow different organisations to apply these techniques to their own particular circumstances.

Finally, in order to illustrate a way of combining the foresights and ethnography, we end with a reimagining of the Transition Journey in an idealised 2030, in which we assume the foresights presented in *Lifting Our Sights* have been fully considered and addressed.

Our hope is that this report is used by many to ensure that by 2030, the UK is demonstrably the best place in the world to be an Armed Forces veteran.

Priorities and Recommendations

Priority Action Areas				
Summary	Empowering the System	Personalise the Transition Process	Empowered Civilian	Accurate Perception
	Ensuring that the wider military and the civilian ecosystems that matter most have a collective understanding of the transition journey, and are supported by more collaborative data sharing, alongside greater clarity around measurement and accountability.	Shifting support services so that transition is defined by the individual circumstances of serving personnel and their families. An important component of this shift is likely to be earlier dialogue, leading to earlier 'pre-emptive' support activity.	Equipping ex-Service personnel to lead successful and fulfilled lives by helping them to take more responsibility for their lives in the military and beyond.	Broadening and improving public understanding of the role of the Armed Forces and the transferrable skills of Service personnel at a time of major change in society, the world of work, and the capabilities of the Armed Forces.
Recommendations	Common journey Precise accountability Data-led and enabled Target incentivisation Informed recruitment Greater collaboration	Segmented approach In-Service preparation Formalising exit Creating self-supporting communities Nimble services	My responsibility Essential help Technical standards	Narrow the perception gap Value recognition and attainment Increase permeability Manage the expectation gap



How to Navigate this Report

Welcome to *Lifting Our Sights*, a guide to policy-focused foresight and how to apply it. Our overall aim is to uncover what may change over the next decade and how this may impact Service personnel and their families as they transition to civilian life, and to stimulate discussion around each, in order to identify ways in which they can be addressed. As this is not a traditional research report, a brief explanation of its context, rationale and format may be helpful.

Section 1 outlines some of the theory of foresight development, and the different methodologies which we have used during the research phase of the *Lifting Our Sights* programme. It aims to help to explain the rationale and processes that were employed as we mapped out the shifts and foresights which are likely to influence those in transition.

Section 2 provides an overview of the ethnographic research, giving a clear picture of the current transition experience for serving personnel and the challenges they face. It offers a model that outlines the different phases of transition and provides indications of the common behaviours and attitudes associated with each. Although this does not give a prognosis for the future in itself, it does provide a framework for thinking about what may lie ahead.

Section 3 explores some of the key macro shifts that will affect us all in the UK. Such are their size and scale that they can be considered to be certain. These are the things that, unless there is an unexpected, massive and fundamental global shift, will most definitely occur, and form the basis upon which everything else is built. Each of these is covered separately to explain why these drivers of change are occurring, their core characteristics and how they will influence society between today and 2030, and the Service Community in transition.

Together the certainties are:

- Climate and Ecological Crisis
- Data and Automation
- Rising Inequality
- Shifting Power and Influence

In addition, there is one area of significant change which, although affecting us all, will have particular impact on the Armed Forces. It is:

Changing Characteristics of Conflict

Section 4 discusses the impact of these shifts is often unequal or disproportionate, depending on other external factors, such as accelerators or catalysts, that overlay them and influence the speed of change. These are not new in themselves, but rather they change the overall effect that the macro shifts might have. The two accelerators that have particular resonance here are:

- The Lasting Impact of Covid-19
- Misinformation

Sections 5, 6 and 7 then detail the Foresights which were identified during the programme that will affect the transition journey. Although these work most effectively when they are combined, for convenience they are divided into three sections: those which will impact how the UK itself will change by 2030; those which will impact the Armed Forces community in transition; and those that will affect the Community supporting transitioning Service personnel. Although we recognise that they will all have a number of different implications, the nuance of which will change depending on the context, we have outlined in this document one possible implication which may affect the Armed Forces Community as a whole.

The foresights are as follows:

Foresights - The UK in 2030

A Changing Demographic Mix
 Accelerating to Zero Carbon
 The Blurring of Work
 Building Communities
 Declining Economic Influence
 Improved Digital Connectivity
 UK leadership in Key Sectors
 More Devolved Power
 Reskilling, Upskilling and the Skills Gap

Foresights - Armed Forces Transition

Changing Perceptions
 Continuous Transition
 Fitting In
 Holistic Transition
 Landing Well
 Living in Civilian Society
 Measuring Progress
 New Transitioners
 Regions of Connection
 Smarter Talent
 Supporting Civilian Authorities
 Greater Integration

Foresights - Charitable Sector

The Digitisation of Services
 Deeper Collaboration
 Embracing Movements
 Greater Competition
 Ideological Rethink
 Reduced Support

Section 8 details the key implications from the foresights and transition journey, identifying four priority action areas. A series of recommendations is made for each.

Section 9 applies the foresight to the key themes affecting veterans' lives, identified in the Strategy for Our Veterans, to make suggestions for 2030 goals. The aim here is to show the practical application of foresight to inform future strategy and plans.

Section 10 presents the conclusion. We conclude by reimagining an idealised Transition Journey model. In this, we assume that the foresights presented in *Lifting Our Sights* have been fully considered and addressed.





Section 1 | Introduction – Why Foresight?

We already know that the Armed Forces Community will undergo significant transformation over the next decade, as new threats and new technologies challenge some long-established principles of defence. What is less clear is how this will play out and how this will affect those in transition from the Armed Forces to civilian life.

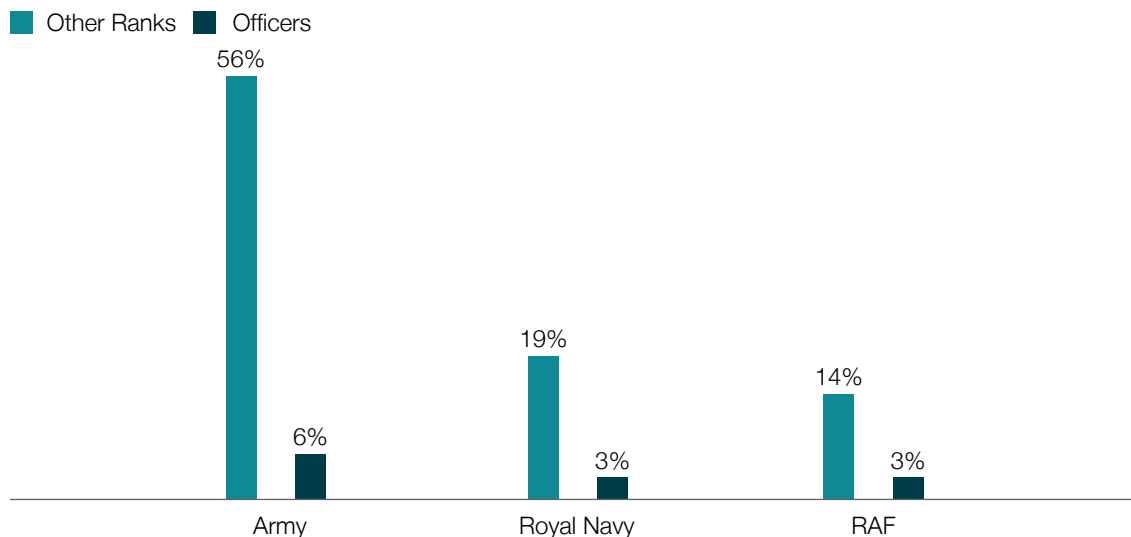
Around 15,000 Service men and women return to civilian life every year. The time it takes for them to adjust to their new environment varies, but in the main, and often with help from the wider Armed Forces Community, most are able to settle into a new reality. However, significant change is expected over the next decade, so it is important for all those involved in or supporting this process to look beyond the pressures of today to consider whether the support and services available will continue to be effective in the future. Being able to distinguish between what may be a short-term distraction from what will be long-term change is not easy. This is where strategic foresight has a role to play.

Foresight is neither prescriptive nor predictive, but when undertaken well, it does provide guidance

on potential future pathways and implications. Its success lies in differentiating between the possible and the probable. Open foresight combines consultation with experts, with appropriate research, to give individuals and organisations greater confidence around the decisions they are placing on the future. But not everyone is able to translate the knowledge gained from future-focused discussions and use it strategically. Some programmes are able to look ahead five, ten or twenty years, and are able to encompass a broad view of the future, but equally, many are run with a narrow single-industry or single-issue focus. As a result, they look at their sector and immediate adjacencies, and do not encompass a wider scope. Real life is often messier, more intertwined and more complex than this. Future Agenda has been active in the field of global, multi-issue open foresight for well over a decade and, for this project, was able to leverage a wealth of research to apply to this challenge. We began by focusing first on the big picture, the global shifts that are likely to impact transitioning Service men and women, before turning to national Foresights and then looking at the emerging changes that will specifically affect the Armed Forces Community, and then ultimately transitioning personnel themselves.

Service Leavers (2020) - Total 15,455

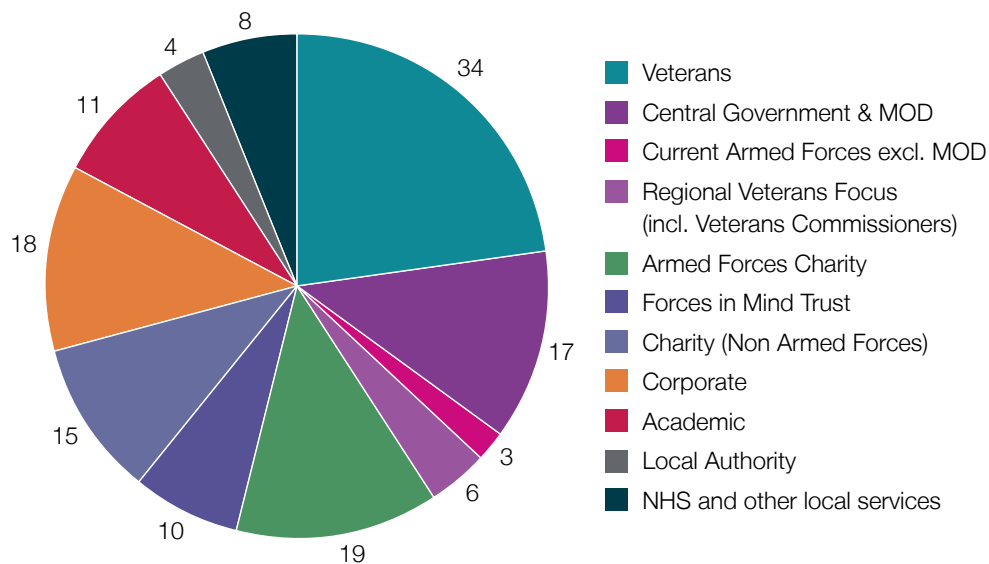
Source: Bespoke MOD analysis for Lifting our Sights



Sometimes it can be a challenge to reach beyond the usual suspects - the group of experts whose views and opinions are often canvassed. Given the current limited diversity within the Armed Forces, and to a lesser degree the charity sector that supports it, this often means talking to white, Anglo-Saxon, middle-aged, middle-class men. While it is important to have their perspective in the mix, if they were the only people that we engaged with, it would not have been possible to get as clear a view as we could if we reached out to a broader church, one that could be more representative of the future UK society. With this in mind, we did our best to ensure that we talked to and included the opinions of as wide a cohort as possible from multiple different backgrounds and across all sectors supporting the Armed Forces.

In terms of the core dialogue itself, in normal times, the most productive approach to gaining foresights is to have 20 to 30 different voices in a room together for a whole day – debating and challenging each other's assumptions. During a global pandemic, this is clearly not possible. So we have taken an alternative approach. Alongside individual interviews with specific experts, and a digital ethnographic study of those who have recently transitioned, we have brought diverse groups together online, via digital workshops. In addition to using a combination of platforms such as Slido, Zoom and Teams, to share and debate views, we have integrated templates to help focus debate within breakout groups. Just as they would physically, these have helped people explore future implications and pathways of change, as well as structure detailed views on the specific options ahead.

Experts Engaged for the Project



Finally, if a clear understanding about the future is developed, commercial and societal value can only be gained if it generates action. This can take different forms. Sometimes, no action may be necessary because the research simply validates what is already known. Sometimes, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of key issues that were not previously on the radar, and which, with a greater recognition of how change might play out in the future, means that it is possible to develop

a more considered response to the challenges ahead. Sometimes, new issues are identified, and more research is needed before informed decisions can be made. Given this, across our dialogue, we have highlighted and challenged the areas which we believe should be explored in more detail, and identified the areas where it seems clear that further action should be taken.





Section 2 | Ethnographic Research: The Transition Journey

Alongside the workshops and interviews which allowed us to create a contextual overview, we carried out ethnographic research to better understand what the transition experience is currently like from the point of view of transitioners themselves. In this way, it offers a strong and grounded context to any thinking about the future, and reveals the kinds of lived experiences that are likely to be impacted by the societal shifts we identify elsewhere in this report. The full ethnographic report, summarised below, can be found at www.liftingoursights.org

Key Findings

‘Successful’ transitions are not necessarily ‘easy’ transitions: It is often accepted as a truism that most ex-Service personnel manage their transition to civilian life successfully. However, this should not be extrapolated to mean that ex-Service personnel find transitions ‘easy’. The majority in our sample indicated that they found their transition difficult, especially in terms of its emotional impact.

‘Closing the chapter’ on life in Service is difficult to achieve: Transition does not have clearly defined start and end points. The emotional and physical legacies of Service can and do live on vividly and viscerally, long after leaving Service. As such, transition should be seen as a continuous process that begins at the point of joining, and becomes a part of a person’s continually evolving identity thereafter.

Preparation for transition goes beyond resettlement services: The culture shock experienced by those in transition means that, no matter how well they have been formally prepared by resettlement services and planning, transitioners nevertheless feel unprepared for the various implications of transition back into civilian life. This is true, despite the relative predictability of the problems and challenges that transitioners are likely to face.

Moments of feeling lost or alone persist, even where support is strong: The sense of ‘bereavement’, after leaving as all-encompassing a set of institutions as the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force, is inevitable. All of our respondents described feeling lost or alone, no matter how fleetingly, and therefore all had moments of vulnerability. This suggests that engaging with resettlement services, or post-Service support networks, should not be optional.

Friends and family provide pivotal support during the most difficult moments of transition: During the hardest moments of transition, respondents indicated that the heaviest burden of support was most likely to fall on their family and friends. In this sense, not only are friends and family members likely to have their own experiences with transition, but are also a key safety net in terms of supporting transitioners themselves.

Public perceptions of the Armed Forces and of ex-Service personnel affect transition: Transitioners are acutely aware of public attitudes towards both them and their former colleagues. As public perceptions shift, so transitioners are required to constantly re-evaluate their identity.

Interoperable skills are not easy to convey: Transitioners find it difficult to translate their experiences in Service into civilian language. This is especially true of the enormous variety of soft and hard skills they acquire. This is partly due to the fact that civilian applications of military skills and experiences are often not made clear at the time they are acquired.

Alongside these findings, we constructed a transition journey based on the personal testimonies of those we interviewed.

The Transition Journey



● In civilian world

● In service

● Crossing over

Lifting Our Sights:

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It is clear that transition is not just about meeting a series of practical needs (housing, employment, etc.) but is also a journey of identity; a series of emotional transitions which protagonists must come to terms with, and negotiate their place in the world around them. Finding secure housing, stabilising familial and social relationships, and finding work, are all a part of that journey, and of course comprise a set of components that are, to a greater and lesser extent, necessary for integration into the civilian world; but they should not be seen as a checklist which, once completed, constitutes success. Success instead is a personal evaluation made by each individual transitioner, who will weigh up sets of individual highs and lows against each other, and tell us themselves where they stand in relation to their military experiences and their role in civilian life.

Thinking about the future is on the one hand about understanding macro environmental changes in the housing market and employment, and on the other about understanding what a future transition journey might look like at an individual level. It's perfectly possible to imagine a world in which all practical transition needs are addressed for every serving member of the UK Armed Forces, but it is hard to imagine that future transition journeys will not continue to be characterised by periods of culture shock and the confrontations implied by movement between different cultural regimes. Similarly, it's possible to imagine a world in which employment options for ex-Service personnel are abundant, but it is difficult to imagine one in which every transitioner knows which to accept. Such a question could only be resolved if they go through a process of self-evaluation and experimentation, such as that outlined in the 'Integrating' phase in the transition journey today. In the future, there will still be a journey.





Section 3 | Foresights - The Certainties

We are pretty confident that some shifts will affect us all. These are the things that, unless there is an unexpected and fundamental global shock, will most definitely occur, and so are the drivers of change upon which everything else is built. Each of these drivers is covered separately to explain why they are occurring, their core characteristics, and therefore how they will influence transitioning Service men and women and their families between today and 2030. They are

1. Climate and Ecological Crisis
2. Data and Automation
3. Rising Inequality
4. Shifting Power and Influence

In addition, there is one area of significant change which, although affecting us all, will have particular impact on the Armed Forces. It is:

5. Changing Characteristics of Conflict



3.1 Climate and Ecological Crises

As the impact of both global warming and the ecological crisis becomes evident, new triggers for conflict emerge. All activities are scrutinised for mitigation.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN body responsible for collating scientific evidence on the issue, has concluded that climate change impacts have the potential to exacerbate factors linked to conflict. This can also act as a ‘threat multiplier’ that can worsen existing problems, especially in countries and regions with failing governments or experiencing long-term turmoil.

Coincident with climate change is the ecological crisis. Scientists now agree that we are currently living in and presiding over the Earth’s sixth mass extinction event, a period defined as a loss of 75% of species. Uniquely, this has been caused by humans - the others have all been caused by volcanoes and meteors.

One of the consequences is changing weather patterns. As floods, droughts, storms, fires and food shortages become more frequent, there will be increasing threats to international peace and security. Alongside humanitarian crises, including mass migration and disease transmission, transport and trade routes will be disrupted, and global supply chains affected. All this is likely to increase the need for related military interventions, with serving personnel having to operate in extreme ‘climate change-affected’ conditions more frequently.

The importance of the challenge was fully recognised by the Ministry of Defence in its March 2021 Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach and roadmap.¹ The roadmap commits “to becoming more resilient and sustainable in the face of the immense challenge of global climate change” and comprises 3 aims: To “adapt, fight and win in ever more hostile and unforgiving physical environments; contribute to the UK’s net zero by 2050 target by reducing emissions and scaling up the transition to renewables; act and be recognised as a global leader both in responding to the emerging geopolitical and conflict-related threats being exacerbated by climate change and in addressing carbon emissions.”

The UN International Law Commission has adopted 28 draft principles, which collectively are the “Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflicts” (PERAC). Following an opportunity for states and other stakeholders to provide feedback, it is expected that these will be adopted by governments in 2021. Although broadly in agreement, the UK government currently argues that ‘there is no basis for treating all the natural environment as a civilian object for the purposes of the laws of armed conflict.’² At the same time, the UK Prime Minister’s recent environmental statement to the Security Council highlighted environmental concern to be of utmost importance, indicating that over the next ten years, environmental concerns will carry significantly more weight in military planning and operations than they have previously.

While both climate change and biodiversity loss were identified as “transnational challenges” in the 2021 Integrated Review, the belief that environmental issues are not a priority for the Armed Forces was widely expressed during our discussions. Most we spoke to suggested that failure to address climate change and the ecological crisis will have little or no impact on the perceptions of the Armed Forces or serving personnel. “It should be an issue, but I don’t believe it will get salience versus other issues, in the near future at least.” Some also suggested that greater military engagement alongside the civil authorities in response to environmental crises may be good for ongoing public perception.

On the other hand, some felt that the next generation of military recruits will have strong views about environmental impact, and an inadequate response to the challenge may well have a negative effect both around ongoing public support and recruitment. “Look at the protests among school kids. Those kids that are protesting now are the people who will be leaving the Armed Forces in 10 years’ time.” They suggested that rising public pressure will mean that greater effort is needed to roll out more effective climate-sensitive initiatives and support the green agenda better. “Our next generation of recruits increasingly make career decisions based on a prospective employer’s environmental credentials.”

In addition to having a profound effect on the location and extent of military activity, concern about the environment may have the unintended consequence of switching public attention away from the charities and organisations that support the Armed Forces. Looking ahead, fundraising may be affected, as public priorities change.

Example Implication: Growing concern for our planet will increase public scrutiny of the Armed Forces. How Government responds will impact recruitment, Service length and the civil response to those in transition.

“The government doesn’t see the environment as urgent enough in the first half of the next decade, but it will do in the second half. It will have a profound effect on defence.”



3.2 Data and Automation

As data reveals the previously unknowable, increasing automation transforms society, and the digitisation of services improves transparency for some.

Just as politics is pushing some of us apart, our dependency on technology and interconnected systems is pulling others together. Deeper and wider digitisation is providing previously unknown levels of information and foresight. Within this, there is growing understanding that data is a national asset and requires protection. As a result, data flows are increasingly being blocked by governments which seek to defend their people, sovereignty, and economy from exploitation by foreign powers. As the true value of data becomes apparent over the next decade, many expect more countries of sufficient scale and capability to go beyond just defending their data assets and to try to build a data economy of their own.³

Some expect that in the long term, the acceleration in the number of interconnected systems will make the world a safer place, enjoying higher productivity and economic growth, and the creation of new jobs in yet-to-exist industries. Online giants in particular have assumed that the data economy will be a global affair, with data flowing to where storage and processing is best done for technical and cost reasons. However, the geopolitics are becoming complex. Governments are increasingly asserting their “digital sovereignty”, demanding that data does not leave their country of origin. They are

right to be concerned, as citizens' privacy is not the only worry. Data may also reveal much about a country's defences, and as military operations become increasingly data-driven, the skills needed to manage and protect critical data and applications is becoming a crucial requirement for the Armed Forces. For those Service men and women who work in this area, future career opportunities look bright. For others, understanding what they don't know about data may help to identify future training needs, as they transition into civilian life. This is particularly relevant to those in the military who may not be exposed to the same sort of on-the-job training opportunities as others, "We are seeing a lack of technical ability with some of those coming out of the military. We are in discussions to get some tech skills delivered for Armed Forces leavers."

Over the next decade, better use of data around transitioning Service personnel themselves looks set to transform their lives in other practical ways. Without clear information on those who are serving, veterans and their families, it's hard to provide them with the support they are entitled to. Despite an estimated 1 in 10 of the UK population being active members of the Armed Forces Community at some point in their careers, currently there is very limited information about where they are or what their needs might be. To address this, the Government's official statistics body, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), along with Scotland and Wales but not Northern Ireland, included a question about veterans in the 2021 census. Over the next ten years, it is hoped that better data around their needs will lead to better support services which can specifically target those who need it most. "I would focus on those who are experiencing the greatest difficulty. These are the people who have the least to offer society. They don't have a place to go."

Example Implication: More and better use of data to identify and support transitioners will help prioritise those who are experiencing challenges. Key to this is to ensure support services are prepared to collaborate and have the necessary digital skills to take action.



3.3 Rising Inequality

Increasing health, wealth, and education inequalities mean that more people at the margins of society struggle. The gap between the haves and the have nots increases.

Globally, many nations are experiencing growing inequality. The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and in some countries, those in the middle are being squeezed. In 2020, Britain had one of the highest Gini scores for income inequality in the western world.⁴ The Covid-19 pandemic has only served to widen existing social fault-lines around education, income, location and ethnicity. It has also created new ones. Over the next decade, it is unlikely that these will simply close. Few expect the economy or society to revert to some kind of pre-pandemic normal.

Even pre-Covid-19, material inequalities were of great concern in the UK. Graduates already earned 60 per cent more than non-graduates. Today, these same graduates are more likely to be able to work from home, and are able to protect their incomes and health. British pensioners with savings have also prospered. But the young are struggling with exacerbating intergenerational inequalities, and the self-employed have been particularly hard hit. Many we spoke to see an unstoppable wealth shift. As a result, the share for the top 1% will grow further, with the middle and lower classes having progressively less. Expect to see an increased focus to go beyond income inequality to include asset inequality. It is in investments, property and pensions where the divides within even affluent areas become more apparent.

Moreover, analysis released by the Health Foundation has found that Britain's poorest areas are now facing a double impact of the worst health outcomes and the most severe financial hardship.⁵ The most deprived 20% of local authorities not only have Covid-19 mortality rates that are more than twice as high as the wealthiest areas, they have also seen universal credit claimant numbers increase by 8%, compared to a 5.1% increase in the most affluent areas between March and August 2020.

Lastly, and linked to both digital connectivity and low-income levels in some communities, there is mounting concern around inconsistency in access to education. At 16, children from a disadvantaged background are at least 18 months behind their more fortunate peers.

Such is the variety of roles of transitioning serving personnel, it is difficult to generalise about their prospects as they re-enter the economy, but many in our workshops were concerned that "serving personnel will be in the middle, which will be challenging."

In public services and welfare provision, which would risk hurting those already in difficulties. If that happens, they argue that those most hurt by Covid-19 will be forced to pay for it. "All the evidence is pointing to growing inequality and worse circumstances."

Others claim poor regulation can be blamed for the country's lack of readiness to weather the storm and look towards innovation and greater investment in education to help the country recover. Looking ahead, we heard concern that future administrations may struggle to balance levelling up with the pressure to reduce the national debt. As a result, welfare spending may well suffer. Many feel the responsibility for care will shift from the state to the charitable sector, but sufficient resources may not accompany this shift.

Those in transition will not be immune to the consequences of this, although some we spoke to feel the matter is in hand, "I think politicians have got this issue, it's in the narrative." Others were not so positive, "We should not assume our serving personnel and veterans are immune to the increasing poverty gap. In a recent needs assessment, we were surprised by the number of Service children/ex-Service children who were entitled to free school meals."

Few in our workshops felt optimistic that the problems around inequality would be solved any time soon. "Seems to me that we need to intervene to level up and drive more social equity – but no one seems to know how to do it for those in transition."

Example Implication: The pressure of growing inequality in health, wealth and education, alongside government cutbacks, means that the support services available to vulnerable transitioners decline just at a time when they need it most.

"It is always in the Government's narrative but it is not demonstrated in terms of policy or action. All of the evidence is pointing to increasing inequality and worse circumstances for pretty much all aspects of society."



3.4 Shifting Power and Influence

As the centre of global economic activity continues to move East, stronger Asian leadership and US constraint stimulate a global power vacuum.

As the 2021 Integrated Review also makes clear, we are seeing fundamental changes in the global balance of power. Broadly speaking, we are witnessing an accelerating shift in global economic activity Eastwards, with stronger Asian leadership, especially from China, and simultaneously further US retrenchment stimulating a period of global uncertainty. Western markets are weakening. In recent years, and notwithstanding the new Biden administration, the US has become less interventionist, and there is growing concern around both China's ambitions for wider influence and Russia's increasingly assertive behaviour. Alongside this, there is a trend in many regions towards increasingly centralised, authoritarian rule, which is evident in countries such as India, Brazil, and Turkey, and typified by China and Russia. This has coincided with the rise of right-wing nationalist populist governments, and parties in parts of Europe where, with mounting pressures on the EU, the different priorities of north and south are also becoming evident.

Some experts warn that we may have reached the end of the era of globalisation, and looking ahead, we will experience greater fragmentation, instability, lasting and significant economic pressure, stronger competition, and a potential escalation in international conflict. Given this, it may be that the traditional global structures such as the United Nations (UN), the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), may no longer be capable of steering a middle path.⁶

This is all happening at a time when Britain's perceived status and role in the world post-Brexit has yet to be clarified, and many are concerned that its reputation as an international power player will be difficult to justify and maintain. There are multiple consequences resulting from this assumption, but in the context of transition, a reduction in global status may influence civilian understanding of the benefits a career in the Armed Forces can offer.

A consequence of this may well be an increased sense of disillusionment and an acceleration of the number of Service personnel who decide to transition. In turn, this could increase the pressure on the support services around them. More subtly, the accompanying loss of pride and sense of inadequacy may make it more difficult for some to articulate the transferrable skills that they gathered when in Service.

Example Implication: Notwithstanding the 2021 Integrated Review, a lack of shared clarity around purpose, relevance and influence may contribute to a decline in public and political support for the Armed Forces, and fuel a sense of inadequacy among serving and transitioning personnel.

"The implication is actually a growing sense of inadequacy. I always had a sense of pride, which helped me deal with things, cope and engage. The sense of pride in our ability to deal with threats will decline."



3.5 Changing Characteristics of Conflict

In a world of cyber-attacks, biowarfare, and misinformation, traditional military forces are increasingly complemented by less visible assets and capability.

Globalisation and ever more digital connectivity have made all nations more vulnerable to attack. A wide range of new technologies, including cyber, electronic, and drone warfare are now available to more rogue states and actors. Some nations, Russia, the US and China, for example, are also developing offensive weapons in space. This is a major cause for concern for international communications, critical intelligence, surveillance, and navigation, not to mention national infrastructures, from mobile phones and cashpoint machines, to stock markets. Understanding the likely direction of this new theatre of warfare has raised fundamental questions around the type of equipment necessary for the Armed Forces, and the kind of people and the skills required to serve. “Going forward, we will be trying to create peace in the digital world, rather than the physical world. This is definitely a military challenge. The majority of capability is now online, and you need to protect the nation.”

Key in all of this is the fact that distance is becoming increasingly irrelevant as a security buffer. As a result, both the 2021 Integrated Review and associated Defence Review argue that the UK should shift focus from conventional equipment such as aircraft carriers and tanks, and invest instead in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, robotics and space. However, despite faster technological innovation, new frontiers and forms of combat, old problems remain. Many we spoke to were convinced that in addition to developing new defence capabilities, it is also important to maintain a traditional force, and to ensure that there is a

deployable capability to support allies across the world. “There will always be a need for boots on the ground”.

That is not to say that the make-up of the Armed Forces will stay the same. Physical warfare itself is changing. It will become increasingly technical and precise, while at the same time, be less formal, with a shift away from traditional battle grounds to a type of hybrid warfare, centred on disinformation, much of which will be played out in a grey zone just below the threshold of open conflict. To adapt to this, a future force will have to become more technical, operating in the newest domains of space, cyber and under-sea. It will also have to become more nimble, “it will be less about tanks and more about data.” Adapting to this new environment means significant change for the Armed Forces, including the development of different skills for serving personnel. “If your human tactics, structures, and support don’t exploit the technology, then actually you are just wasting your money – or only exploiting 10-20% of the effect that you could have with support structures around it.”

Looking ahead, expect a leaner military and fewer instances of physical conflict. The positive effect of this will be fewer physical casualties, but the consequences of these new forms of engagement may tend to have lasting psychological impact. For example, serving personnel could be deployed in the long-term surveillance of individuals and their families prior to an attack. This more personal involvement may lead to an increase in mental stress for Armed Forces personnel. “Although we are getting further back from the front line (think of drones) – in some ways we are becoming closer, so moral injury will be a growing issue”.

Alongside this, public attitudes are also changing. “There is a greater desire for social consent before action, and a greater awareness of the impact of war. This is shaping the public response”. Some we spoke to believe that the public’s ambivalence

to warfare is still affected by the long shadow cast by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that this has had an impact on recruitment. Looking to the future, a lack of confidence in the morality of war, combined with an increased skills requirement, may mean that those who would traditionally serve in the Armed Forces will choose a different career.

All this talk of change is unsettling and may result in an increase in the number of transitioning Service personnel, as the realignment takes place following the 2021 Defence Review.

Example Implication: The demand for technical skills over physical ability will attract different applicants who will have different capabilities, needs and opportunities on their transition.

"Going forward, we will be trying to create peace in the digital world, rather than the physical world. This is definitely a military challenge. The majority of capability is now online, and you need to protect the nation."



Section 4 | Catalysts and Accelerators

Although most aspects of society are affected by these macro shifts, it is equally true to observe that their impact is often unequal or disproportionate, depending on other external factors that overlay them more or less regionally. These factors do not raise new trends in themselves, but rather accelerate, or decelerate, the impact of the macro shifts. Today, two issues are seen in this context: The lasting impact of Covid-19 and wider misinformation.



4.1 The Lasting Impact of Covid-19

The pandemic accelerates adoption of health technologies and seeds lasting change on issues such as privacy and trust, and the nature of how we work.

The world was aware of the possibility of global pandemics and their impact. What was uncertain was how governments would act, and particularly cooperate, to prevent an epidemic from becoming a pandemic. The UN, WHO, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and many government medical experts have been warning about a viral pandemic, and many have been running detailed simulations and scenarios. While several governments, notably many in SE Asia, have learned from previous cases and introduced policy and approaches to mitigate impact, elsewhere things have not gone as well. In 2019, the US and the UK were considered by John Hopkins University to be the most prepared for a future pandemic – but not fully ready.⁷ The reality currently being played out shows a different picture. A report by the OECD suggest that it is the UK economy that will be likely to suffer the worst damage from the Covid-19 crisis of any country in the developed world.⁸

China's challenge to US hegemony was already strengthening on many fronts before the Covid-19 crisis erupted. The pandemic may accelerate this

shift. For US-allied democracies that value open governance, civil rights, and free speech, this is a worrying prospect. Covid-19 has affected all aspects of UK society, but the accompanying economic shock is likely to hurt the vulnerable and socially insecure the most. Unprecedented government aid packages for businesses and workers, intended to mitigate the disease's economic and financial impact, have led some analysts to suggest “the State is back” – and that the limits of the post-war neoliberal, free market model have finally been reached.

At the beginning of the pandemic in the UK, the Armed Forces kept a relatively low profile through the crisis, deploying troops in supporting roles and largely operating away from the public eye. This lack of public visibility was not universally applauded by those we interviewed. Although there was no expectation that soldiers could be deployed to protect public order, there was often a sense of frustration that “perhaps the government, in hindsight, will be criticised for not using the Armed Forces - a ‘useful asset’ - enough.” Some also felt that the widespread description of front-line workers as heroes might have the unintended consequence of a decline in public sympathy for the Armed Forces. “That word (sic ‘heroes’) has now been borrowed. Or is it permanently lent? The word becomes more muddled, and so the likes of Help for Heroes have a harder time raising attention”.

As the pressures on civilian services increased and the need for greater assistance became clear, the Armed Forces involvement has become more visible. At its peak, about 6,000 military personnel drawn from the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force were helping the NHS - the largest number of medics the Armed Forces have deployed since the Iraq war in 2003. As such, it is clear that the military's contribution, from building the Nightingale hospitals to assisting with testing and providing vaccinations, has helped to raise the standing of the Armed Forces, as the general public has first hand experience of their adaptability, innovation and planning ability.

While society deals with the challenge of controlling the pandemic, several lasting changes are emerging. For example:

- There is renewed public confidence in people and organisations who really know what they are talking about. Accredited, independent, expert bodies that clearly explain complex issues and coordinate connected responses are prized.
- Global supply chains evolve to be more flexible shared regional supply webs. Manufacturing shifts from centralised production to a smaller and distributed approach. Competitors access shared, not proprietary, networks and systems.
- Health and personal identity data are integrated, as platforms emerge that allow or require us to be validated in order to access key locations and services. Proof of immunity and proof of identity are digitally unified for all.
- Recognition of the benefits of real-time surveillance and individual behaviour monitoring during a crisis supports widespread acquiescence to perpetual, national, digital surveillance infrastructures.
- A shift in how and where we work, with less time in the office, less time commuting, and more time working from home.
- A reduction in international travel, most notably from business travellers, but also potentially from consumers re-appraising their own lifestyle with respect to the climate change and biodiversity crises.

While these will impact variously, many see that without greater cooperation between nations, as occurred a decade ago with the G20 response to the Western financial crisis, the possible mitigation of future pandemics will be a growing threat.

Example Implication: The military's contribution to fighting the pandemic has helped to raise the standing of the Armed Forces in the eyes of the public, and demonstrated its ability to operate effectively under pressure in a civilian environment.

"I was quite struck in COVID by how the Civil Service embraced the military. A huge reluctance initially – which lasted for 3-4 weeks. And then the talent was recognized. Their respect for the military has grown exponentially. This picks up on their ability 'to do'."



4.2 Misinformation

The hijacking of truth by a more diverse, unregulated community undermines who we trust. Even sophisticated users struggle to determine fact from fiction.

We have already mentioned the significant role and value which society now places on data. Alongside this digitisation is a fundamental change in how people interact with each other. With an increasing number of activities taking place in cyberspace, information will become ever more central to humanity and conflict. We live in a world of an increasingly expanding and unregulated information space, where it is difficult for even sophisticated users to determine what is fact and what is fiction. The threat of cyber-attacks and the spread of misinformation are becoming increasingly commonplace. What's more, some significant social media platforms have helped to polarise opinion, create uncertainty, and in some instances, erode trust in institutions. Some respected middle ground commentators, such as the Economist, see that "Digital disinformation is destroying society, but we can fight back."⁹

Algorithms designed to amplify information, communicate social views, and generate trends, and social chatbots coded to post the latest news stories have, to varied extents, become vulnerable to manipulation. Although most frequently attributed

to Russia, others such as North Korea and China, and numerous independent bad actors, are often cited as being in the mix. Most attacks to date have, however, been fairly simple, driven by humans or bots. “Sub-threshold hybrid misinformation is all cheap to do, with little regulation, and is extremely hard to defend against.” Going forward, as Artificial Intelligence, machine learning and deep learning are variously applied, expect the use of these “deep fakes” to become more widespread. Credible fake video and audio will be used alongside text and images to deceive many – business, the public, and government agencies alike. As a consequence, “autocracies will do well, because they control all the information, but democracies are more open and therefore more vulnerable to misinformation.” A good number will struggle to determine fact from fiction.

Example Implication: The ability to be comfortable with ambiguity and to operate in fluid situations with incomplete and uncertain information, makes Service leavers increasingly attractive to potential employers.

“It has always been difficult to know exactly what’s true and what is misinformation - that’s the nature of conflict. What’s important is how nimbly you can respond.”



Section 5 | Foresights - The UK in 2030

In order to understand what civilian life may be like for transitioning personnel and their families from the British Armed Forces, it may be helpful to better understand how the UK may change over the next decade. How will society adjust to a post-pandemic, post-Brexit economy? What are the global and national trends that will impact the way we live and work? What Foresights can we glean for this?

At a time when there are many reasons to be anxious about the present uncertainties, few of the UK experts we consulted were as optimistic about the future of their country as their counterparts in many other nations. However, neither were they all pessimistic. Post-Brexit there are multiple reasons why the UK is going to be in even greater transition than other countries dealing with the certainties and catalysts already covered.

During our research, we identified 9 Foresights that will impact how we will live and work in the UK, around which there is strong consensus. They portray a country that is moving ahead in some areas in the next decade, but also being progressively challenged generally. They are:

1. A Changing Demographic Mix
2. Accelerating to Zero Carbon
3. The Blurring of Work
4. Building Communities
5. Declining Economic Influence
6. Improved Digital Connectivity
7. UK Leadership in Key Sectors
8. More Devolved Power
9. Reskilling, Upskilling and the Skills Gap



5.1 A Changing Demographic Mix

By 2030, the UK will have the fastest growing and second largest population in Europe: South East England will be the main centre of this growth. Society will be ageing faster, and proportionally we will have fewer children. It will also be more diverse.

By 2030, the UK will have the fastest growing and second largest population in Europe. This growth will vary across geographies. England's population is projected to grow by 5.0%, with much of this focused in the South East. In contrast, for Northern Ireland the figure is 3.7%; while for Wales and Scotland the figures are 2.7% and 1.8% respectively. Overall, we will be ageing faster and, most likely, we will have fewer children. The proportion of the population aged 75 and over will grow by 2m to 11m. With varied birth rates and the shift in sources of immigration, the country as a whole will also be more diverse, with multiple cultures, religions and languages.¹⁰

Although, post-Brexit, net migration may fall a little as it shifts to countries beyond Europe, we can still expect a further 2 million citizens from international migration. At the same time, there will be an increase of around one million from people living longer. When combined, this means we will experience “more births than deaths”. The non-white population, which will largely be a younger demographic, is expected to be greater than 20% of the total population for the first time, the majority of whom will continue to live in many of the larger cities. Smaller towns and rural locations are correspondingly expected to be home for an ageing, predominately white population. That said, despite the impact of Covid-19, the attraction of urban life remains. By 2030, over 85% of the UK population will live in urban areas; one of the highest rates in Europe.

At the same time, the make-up of the Armed Forces is changing. In part, this is because of the changing nature of conflict, and therefore the skills requirement for new recruits is changing. But it also reflects the increasing diversity of the UK population. “The veteran community will become younger, relatively more female, and diverse.” Indeed, the young cohort from which the Army recruits will become more ethnically diverse than the population as a whole.¹⁷ Black and minority ethnic troops make up 8.8% of the 145,000-strong Armed Forces, which is broadly in line with the population, (albeit that number includes 3,760 Gurkhas, around 1,300 Fijians, and other non-white troops recruited from the Commonwealth). And yet many soldiers are still recruited from low-income families in largely white working-class towns where social attitudes remain conservative. As a result, some are already finding this cultural change difficult, “It’s hard to talk about white privilege when you are dealing with a bunch of blokes from the north.” Perceptions of equality have to be carefully managed, as officers might sometimes be seen to promote women and ethnic minorities over “traditional soldiers”.

In addition to increased diversity within the Armed Forces, fewer see the military as a long-term career, which may affect their expectations when they leave. “I think very few people join for a career today, they join for a job – and this is going to be more common, so expect the terms of Service to change.”

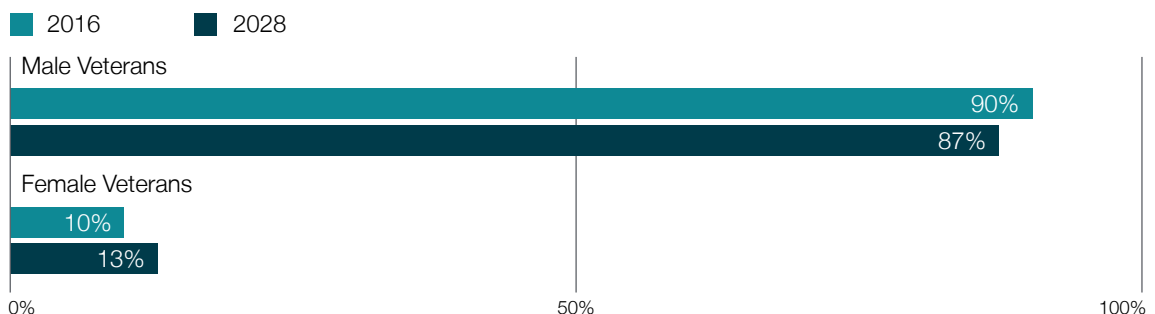
Looking ahead, it is likely that the total number of veterans will shrink, not least because of the passing of those who went through National Service. At the same time, the complexity of their needs may well change. Some suggest this should be reflected in the way ex-Service men and women are defined, “There is something in the term veteran. It immediately signals an old white bloke.” This perception may well change over the next decade, In summary, the diversity of those leaving the Armed Forces and the complexity of their need profile will increase.

Example Implication: As the demographic of the veteran community changes, so too do their needs and expectations. Supporting organisations must be more agile, and adjust their capabilities, resources and leadership to better reflect this.

“The needs of the community going forward will be less uni-dimensional... those with needs might have them in several areas at once – housing, relationships, moral issues.”

UK Veterans by Gender

Source: MOD Population Projections, 10.1.2019





5.2 Accelerating to Zero Carbon

As the tangible reality of climate change makes an impact, with more frequent flooding, hotter summers and shorter winters, resilience becomes a priority. The UK will achieve a 100% renewable energy supply for the majority of the year.

Climate change is one of the defining issues of our time, and resilience will become a priority. Although there is no agreed global blueprint for adaptation and mitigation, different economies around the world are stepping up to the challenge. The UK is likely to play an active role here, without leading across the board. The UK hosting of the G7 and UN climate conference (COP26) in 2021 will however accelerate the pace of change in the UK over the next decade. Specifically, UK policy on renewables, electric vehicles and carbon capture all help to accelerate the shift towards net zero in many local regions, and as a whole, by 2030, the nation will be achieving 100% renewable energy supply for the majority of the year.

However, challenges remain. For instance, the month of November will be difficult to manage without the use of fossil fuels. Low levels of sunlight and insufficient wind will limit the ability to generate sufficient renewable energy. More innovation in more efficient long-term storage of electricity is therefore seen as pivotal to ensuring that the UK can continue to use renewable energy through low supply periods. Also, while many regions will gain from greater access to renewables, this is not universal. Some energy-intensive sectors, such as the ceramics industry and parts of steel and concrete production, where the business case for adaptation is poor, will struggle to progress to meet targets. While there is confidence in 100% clean energy by 2040, and several cities are at the fore of adoption, 2030 proves too great a hurdle for everyone.

As acknowledged in the Ministry of Defence Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach developing a response to climate change will mean an adjustment in the balance of existing tasks.¹¹

This will include a review of the current concepts and doctrine, some of which do not consistently acknowledge climate change as a security driver or incorporate climate change as part of national security threat assessments. Furthermore, climate change is likely to increase the need for collaborative decision-making, resource-sharing and communication across a range of stakeholders, including UK government departments, emergency services, civil society organisations, industry and on occasion, NATO partners. This will also generate discussions on the need for new activities and roles to provide additional support to the civil authorities, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations abroad. This will have implications for future force planning, in particular around the demand for certain skills – especially related to engineering, search and rescue, evacuation, construction, air traffic control and diplomacy. Building a narrative as to how the MOD is addressing climate change could become increasingly important, both for securing buy-in from key decision-makers, and also for framing the skills that transitioning Service men and women can offer.

An Example Implication: Recognition of the growing need for those skilled in building climate resilience across all sectors provides greater opportunities for transitioning personnel, many of whom will have unparalleled experience of the challenge.

“For the Armed Forces, developing a response to climate change will mean an adjustment in the balance of existing tasks.”



5.3 The Blurring of Work

Progressively part-time multiple job workforces and flexible automated workplaces will become common, but some will find them difficult to adapt to.

It's not only the Armed Forces that are experiencing change. The workforce and the workplace are also undergoing transition. In particular, accelerated by the pandemic, formal office work is in decline, as more people are able to work from home, and there is an exponential growth in non-standard forms of employment, including project-based work and the on-demand or gig economy.

Corporates are also becoming more flexible. Many younger workers, particularly those who are higher earning and technology literate, prefer to set their own schedules. Independent workers are increasingly choosing to offer their services on digital platforms, including Upwork, Uber, and Etsy, and in the process, challenging conventional ideas about how, when and where work is undertaken. Even before the pandemic, the number of digital nomads who, rather than limit themselves to a 9-5 existence, choose to work where they can find the best Wi-Fi, was growing. Increasingly, companies are supportive, even pitching their remote workers "de-location packages" to move away from overcrowded urban cities.¹²

Looking ahead, although anecdotally "gigging" began as something that young people do, in many ways it may be more suited to older workers who may be more content to work part-time, are not looking for career progression, and are better able to deal with the precariousness and timing of such jobs.

Although this style of working has some benefits for companies, as they can keep a smaller core

staff of regulars and augment the team when needed, for those more used to the paternalistic support of life in the Armed Forces, adjusting to a society in which work is fragmented and irregular presents very particular challenges. While at times hugely challenging, the military is based on an inherently structured and formal work environment. Indeed, one of the reasons some join up in the first place is because of its structure and stability. It offers formal employment, a stable income and pension contributions, a well understood hierarchy, explicit training and a clear career progression. We heard, "People coming out of the military have been surrounded by enormous certainty from an unambiguous environment with clear relationships, operations and emotional support. A lot of that can disappear when they leave."

As careers and workplaces become increasingly disaggregated, and automation increases the need for flexibility, ex-Service personnel are likely to find the gap between their experiences within more rigid military structures and civilian work, ever more jarring. Whilst the ability to adapt to find suitable employment may well be something that they have prepared for, and already exists in the 'Integrating' phase of today's transition journey, this continuous uncertainty may make the 'Integrating' and 'Settling' phases of the journey more difficult, and could potentially lengthen the time it takes them to recover the stability they lost when leaving the Armed Forces.

That said, it is dangerous to assume that the military will not change. As has already been discussed, the character of warfare is changing, and this will affect how the Armed Forces are organised to respond. The gig economy, for example, may well suit the needs of those who wish to retain some connections by joining the reserves. The Armed Forces (Flexible Working) Act already allows part-time working for Service personnel. We also heard the suggestion that "there should be a wholesale modernisation of the career structure to allow us to embrace the skills of the gig economy when we need them." Looking ahead, although working

practices in the Armed Forces are unlikely to be as fluid as those of civilian workers, and there are obvious challenges around security that will need to be addressed, it may well be that a more flexible approach to working will make it easier for those leaving the Services to adapt to a civilian world.

Example Implication: In order to attract a widening skill set, the Armed Forces continue adapting towards a more flexible workforce in which personnel can bridge between part-time civilian and military roles. This facilitates a smoother transition for some.

"There should be a wholesale modernisation of the career structure to allow us to embrace the skills of the gig economy when we need them."



5.4 Building Communities

With more single households, sustained working near home and delayed retirement, many seek to make more of their local communities. Finding common interest and activities becomes a priority.

Before Covid-19, there was already an underlying trend towards deeper connections with local communities. The pandemic has accelerated and amplified this significantly. By 2030, with trust in central government expected to be still around half of what it was in the mid-eighties, a priority for many will be their regional and local communities.⁴ With more single households, a significant share of the population will be living alone, often renting, and finding themselves increasingly stressed, stretched and lonelier. Many crave connection and interaction and so seek to make more of their neighbourhood social networks. As those who are able choose to work from home or near home, interactions with local retailers, food and beverage outlets, shared

workspaces and walkable leisure attractions increase.

Stability is important for many of those who have joined the Armed Forces. As a result, settling into a community and establishing roots is something that many aspire to once they leave. This can take time, because as can be seen by our ethnographic research, it is often difficult for them to find a role that they find suitably rewarding. "It is a huge challenge for people to move from a stable, cared for environment to a more fluid uncertain environment." Therefore, if society is collectively making more of local communities, it may help those in transition. "Core values are driven into individuals as part of being in the military – they are necessarily part of a military unit. They build a sense of belonging and safety. These are powerful values to take forward into civil society." Many in our workshops expressed the view that the Future Accommodation Model will help with this. At the same time, we heard concern that the downside of establishing roots in the community would mean that the bonds that tie Service men and women and their families together as a unit would consequently suffer, as "there is limited support behind the wire, but when living in civvy street there is zero support".

Example Implication: A cultural shift to acknowledge the benefits of establishing community bonds within and outside the Armed Forces will help transitioning personnel and their families to adjust better to life outside the wire during and after Service.

"It is a huge challenge for people to move from a stable, cared for environment to a more fluid uncertain environment."



5.5 Declining Economic Influence

By 2030, the UK will have dropped outside of the world's top ten economies. Britain seeks to still operate as part of a European partnership, but also to reposition itself as a global broker rather than a global power.

Over the next decade, as the E7 nations' economies accelerate, Indonesia, Mexico, Brazil and Turkey will all experience higher levels of progress than their G7 counterparts. Alongside China and India, they will collectively account for half of the world's economy. As a result, the relative value of sterling is likely to decline, and when it drops outside the world's top ten economies, the UK's influence over the global hierarchy will further decline.¹³ Pragmatically, Britain seeks to still operate as part of a European partnership, but also reposition itself as a global broker rather than rekindle aspirations to be a global power.

Within the country, after a period of rising unemployment due to the expected post-Covid, post-Brexit 2021-24 slow-down, manufacturing will remain smaller than in many peer economies, and the service sector will continue to dominate with its share of GDP in UK plc rising from 75% to more than 80% by 2030. Many of the high-value service jobs and most company HQs are likely to remain in the South, and so overall income will continue to be focused there. Although different governments may try to mitigate this regional imbalance by driving greater public sector relocation and some private investment to prioritise more diverse future opportunities, the economic dominance of London and its hinterland is expected to remain. This risks deepening the North-South economic divide, so expect ongoing concern and calls for substantial action. This could include public sector job relocation, grants and subsidies for target industries, and strategic policy linked to the levelling up agenda.

Despite this economic decline, in recognition of growing international insecurity and the changing characteristics of modern warfare, government expenditure in the British Armed Forces will remain strong. However, this will not be reflected in an increased number of Armed Forces personnel. With a declining role in the world and with further personnel cuts, many in our workshops believed there will be a decline in overall morale in and support for the military. They expressed real concern about the government's and Armed Forces community ability to live up to its commitment to support the veteran community. "If you can't look after your personnel in the forces, how can you look after the veterans?"

At the same time, adjacent opportunities will be created by organisations which service the military by, for example, developing next generation technology. Indeed, the government predicts new projects will create up to 10,000 jobs a year across the country. Potentially, these might be of particular interest for transitioning Service men and women with the necessary qualifications.

Example Implication: A declining international role will reduce public pride in and support for Global Britain and the UK Armed Forces. Increased pressure on social services resources will limit the available support for those in transition.

Box Quote "If you can't look after your personnel in the forces, how can you look after the veterans?"

"If you can't look after your personnel in the forces, how can you look after the veterans?"



5.6 Improved Digital Connectivity

By 2030, 5G will be available to 90% of the UK population, with 6G launching in some cities. The digital divide will narrow as low-cost access is delivered as a common ambition. Questions on data transparency, value and control will however remain.

The move to 5G will provide the promised higher speed and increased capacity, and will drive up to 3% net GDP growth. Focused on key infrastructure links and urban areas, multiple new services will emerge. However, access is not universal, and those living in remote, rural locations will continue to lag behind. Despite having access to faster connectivity, for some communities, the digital divide will remain. Poverty, poor digital literacy and lack of opportunity will all constrain take up. Although the digital divide will narrow as low-cost access is delivered, without parallel investment in skills development and cross-country incentivisation for the continued digital transition, key segments of society will fail to benefit from the wider transformation impacting the majority. Questions on data transparency, value and control will remain, and will be areas of continued advocacy and emergent policy focus.

The prospect of 5G connectivity has the potential to provide multiple opportunities for transitioning Service personnel. In line with all those with the relevant skills, on a personal level it means that where transitioning Service men and women choose to live may no longer be tied to where they work.¹⁴ As the Future Accommodation Model is rolled out across the country, this may help to mitigate the double shock of having to change home and career at the same time. Also, given the main challenge from the new digital landscape is the management of the myriad devices which will have control over critical assets and crucial data, there will be an increasing number of organisations keen to harness the defence expertise developed by some of those

in the Armed Forces. “There is a huge need for veteran technical talent. These talents spread right across the Armed Forces; we produce people with different skills, different characteristics and who are particularly well trained, we are welcomed into BAE, QinetiQ, Cobham and many others.”

Equally, at a time when many expect the pressures on health and social care to escalate, those in need of support may find that they can more easily access appropriate services digitally. A combination of 5G, AI and automated technology will increase capacity, reduce latency and increase the speed of service delivery. This will open the door to greater personalisation of services. For example, video consultations mean patients are not limited to a GP surgery. Remote technology will enable virtual reality assisted diagnostics, and with the individual's permission, real time data sharing will allow different health and social care providers to align more efficiently, thus reducing the risk of vital information being “lost” in the system. These are of course early days, and it is possible that budgetary constraints will mean this move will take longer to embed into health and social care systems than others, but many are hugely optimistic about the future.

Example Implication: Personalised automated support services will enable more targeted, real time advice for those who are vulnerable during transition, but coverage will not be ubiquitous, and systems may take time to adapt, limiting support in some locations.

“For the army, there is a real drive to support people to get basic minimum qualifications in certain areas, but I wonder if things like better use of basic technology needs to be very specifically considered and included in future business skills training.”



5.7 UK Leadership in Key Sectors

Leadership in some key areas such as higher education, finance, science and the creative industries will continue to have global impact. Other sectors will decline. New international collaborations with higher growth economies will be sought.

The UK will continue to suffer poor productivity over the next decade. In part, this is due to past mistakes. Fixed investment is a good indicator of low productivity growth, and over the last ten years, the UK's average annual rate has been one of the lowest in the G7 at just over 16% of gross domestic product.¹⁵

But despite this, over the next ten years, the general expectation is that the country will continue to lead in four major areas - higher education, finance, science and the creative industries. These will all have global impact.

As a core part of this, the UK will seek international collaboration and new connections with the higher growth economies. Academically, the UK will continue to have leading global academic centres. Institutions like Oxford and Cambridge lead international rankings and so do not compete regionally – they will remain global institutions and operate at a different level, going beyond national issues and priorities, and tapping into wider talent pools and funding. Allied to academic research, key clusters will remain to the fore in scientific, but likely not innovation, leadership. Within this, the defence sector will continue to make a significant contribution. However, while the UK includes some of the most science-intensive regions in the world, turning leading research into high-value, good jobs within commercially focused innovation at scale, remains a cultural challenge; building a \$1bn business rather than a \$1tn business remains the ultimate ambition.

Other areas of leadership include the finance sector, where, despite the departure of some European-focused businesses post-Brexit, the City of London is expected to maintain its prominence. This is due to a relatively proactive regulatory mindset, a deep talent pool and lower trading costs. Lastly, expect significant growth in the creative industries. These look set to contribute over £150bn a year to the UK economy by 2030, and will add an extra one million jobs over the decade, whether in film, TV, music, design, fashion or architecture.

What does all this mean for those in transition? Given the increased focus on STEM and technical skills within the Armed Forces, this might suggest that transitioning Service personnel are well positioned to take advantage of the opportunities that are likely to emerge. But questions arise about whether the focus is on the appropriate growth sectors. This is particularly relevant for those without specific skills. "There is a concern that the training focus will remain on low growth sectors, which although significant in the past, are likely to decline." A good example here would be the transport industry. Is it, for example, wise to encourage transitioning personnel to gain qualifications in professional driving skills at a time when there is a global shift to autonomous vehicles? Also, we heard that even those with skills are still hampered by a lack of industry experience and a clear understanding and experience of the recruitment process, so closer alignment with industry may be necessary.

Looking ahead, a pragmatic overview of the sectors that will have sustained growth and are likely to provide meaningful employment post-pandemic and post-Brexit, may be necessary to ensure the appropriate training investments are made. Furthermore, closer partnerships with growth sectors, through secondments, internships or indeed short-term placements will increase understanding of the needs and opportunities for all.

Example Implication: Training advice and modules will need to be reviewed to avoid a bias towards legacy industries and ensure that transitioners are being prepared for the future growth sectors.

"There is a concern that the training focus will remain on low growth sectors, which although significant in the past, are likely to decline."



5.8 More Devolved Power

Occurring at different speeds, with varying levels of national and regional support, the UK will experience more devolution and sustained decentralisation. This will redefine what it means to be British.

The general view in many of our conversations was that, as a nation, the UK is facing a fundamental challenge to its national consciousness, and a reinterpretation of what it means to be British. Although "the role that the Armed Forces play can still be unifying – even in the context of change, "Those organisations that are closely coupled to a strong UK identity may well experience a corresponding change in public support. "There is a rebalancing... from an employment perspective, this will make transition more challenging".

Despite this, national leaders are increasingly seen as those best able to manage the future. "Nationalists want more control and devolution; more fiscal responsibility." Calls for another independence vote for Scotland are growing, and with the socio-political shifts underway, a border referendum on the reunification of Ireland is also considered a possibility in some quarters. Alongside this, English regions are also keen to gain more control of policy and action – some, such as the South West and North West, are increasingly confident about setting their own path.

All this risks a potential fragmentation of the UK, which in turn could lead to rising "political uncertainty that will create challenges for the economy, the government, and the nation as a whole". Add in the probable succession of the Queen by a less "universally popular" heir, and there may well even be "shifts in the role of the state over the next few years." Whatever the perspective, there was general consensus that alongside a wider decline in trust in central government that has been underway for some time, there is an accelerating decline in confidence in the UK identity that will have a growing impact over the decade.

The implications of all this for those in transition are complex. Those who join the Armed Forces often do so because they are proud to be part of the United Kingdom, and therefore its fragmentation is a matter of deep personal concern. "A lot of policy is now moving to a place-based approach, which is completely at odds with those leaving the military, and a national organisation and conversation. Some worry that it will make it more complex to offer support, as different regions adopt different approaches to the likes of social care. "The point on UK fragmentation for me would be a divergency in investment and support levels which affects individual veteran or service leaver experience, rather than it being something that fundamentally undermines the provision of some support." Others that we spoke to were less concerned, "none of us think there will be true devolution – but we do believe that the UK will be more introspective and less empowered in multi-lateral relationships."

Logistical problems are also emerging, as policy makers struggle to adapt to the practicalities of devolution. "People don't understand that we have devolved services," and preparation for "transitioning Service personnel coming out of a united UK space into a national space" needs to improve. For example, "Scotland has fewer larger employers compared to the UK as a whole. There is, however, a vast number of extremely small businesses, so an individual who is coming back into the Scottish economy is probably entering a market that is not

the same as that which is perceived by the MOD.” Similar views were echoed in interviews with experts in Wales and Northern Ireland, in particular with respect to local state service provision. As devolution deepens, social and health service provision will vary markedly from country to country and council to council. This means that transitioning personnel may have difficulty finding relevant information depending on where they choose to live on leaving the services. It is beholden on the MOD to help them.

If we map this onto the Transition Journey (Section 2), we see competing forces. On the one hand, trends towards regionalisation of service provision could potentially allow for more personalised services, and therefore more immediately welcoming communities and employment opportunities for ex-Service personnel. This could greatly transform the culture shock associated with the ‘Threshold’ and ‘Confronting’ Stages of the journey. On the other hand, a fragmentation of the UK itself might have a significant impact both on the motivation for ‘Joining’ the military, and of course on those who see themselves, later in their transitions, having served an ideal and a country that in some ways no longer exists. In each case, those aspects of the transition journey that involve struggles with identity are likely to come under increasing stress.

Example Implication: Transition support shifts from a UK focus to be more region specific. Greater investment is required to ensure transitioning Service personnel receive appropriate support wherever they are located.

“The UK currently faces quite a stark change in how it interacts with the world. The Armed Forces are intrinsically tied up in how the country sees itself.”



5.9 Reskilling, Upskilling and the Skills Gap

With many likely to continue to work until they are aged 70, reskilling and upskilling is expected to become the norm. Filling, funding and coordinating the skills gaps is a core challenge.

We can’t ignore the fact that our population is ageing. This raises fundamental questions around how to fund retirement. For many, retirement at age 65 is economically infeasible. We are also living longer, and few can fund a 30-year retirement with a 40-year career. It is likely that the UK pension age will move towards 70. In the meantime, those who are able to work choose not to move around and stay in the same role for longer, and many will prefer to stay in their community rather than retire abroad.

Many are already working past their traditional pensionable age – some out of financial necessity, others because they are keen to maintain a proactive role. Ageing societies have the potential to slow economic growth and increase the strain on the welfare state, so the government may be forced to consider taking action. Keeping people in the workforce is the obvious solution, but reskilling and upskilling is an ongoing challenge. The OECD estimates around one in three 55- to 65-year-olds lack computer experience or cannot pass technology tests.¹⁶ Such deficits in digital skills can be tackled with proper training, organised by the government, companies or the individuals themselves. Given the overall squeeze on jobs, expect discrimination in both retention and recruitment to be an ongoing challenge. As jobs change, people will be forced to adapt, with those with experience in a declining or obsolete sector obliged to retrain. This is not easy, so some may be unwilling or unable to do the work which becomes available.

Moreover, educational systems have not kept pace with the changing nature of work, resulting in some employers saying they cannot find enough people with the relevant skills. Too often, the future for which students were asked to prepare did not arrive, and there is a danger the same will happen with the futures we are told are ahead of us this time. Some propose that this can be addressed by a shift away from front-loaded education systems to ones where learning is more evenly distributed across a working life, so skills can be continuously updated in order to match our changing requirements. Rapid reskilling is needed, and this requires much shorter interventions and a different system to recognise those skills; expect microcredits to replace traditional degrees in many cases. Alternatively, a question recently raised was ‘what could a 20-year degree look like?’ – The view was that individuals will dip in and out of education when it best suits their career development and shifts.

In addition to how to learn, what we learn will also change. Rather than teaching how to do routine tasks for jobs that may not exist for much longer, the focus should be on acquiring those skills that computers cannot perform. As the UK recovers from Covid-19 and establishes more autonomous and resilient national production and manufacturing capabilities, production may become more localised, so there may be a greater requirement for skilled workers in engineering and associated trades. Alongside improvements around STEM, a greater concentration on soft skills is necessary, and we may see a new emphasis on creativity, as well as critical and systems thinking. Some organisations, such as consultancy firm Deloitte, believe that soft skill-intensive occupations will increase over the next decade, accounting for two-thirds of all jobs by 2030 (up from 50% in 2000), with soft skill-intensive jobs growing 2.5 times faster than other jobs. Given the emphasis on leadership, strategy, logistics and organisational skills within the Armed Forces, this is good news for those in transition. Ensuring they understand the commercial value of skills such as these, and are able to articulate them in a way which their civilian employers can understand, should be a key priority.

As will be explored later, some in the Armed Forces are well placed to take advantage of the training they receive while serving. This is not only for STEM skills but also for softer skills, “but only if personnel are able to display them with confidence and conviction.” And there’s the rub. Many in transition lack the confidence and skills necessary in a business environment. Although the MOD is the highest provider of apprenticeships in the country, it seems that “if this perception gap is not bridged, then some fantastic skills won’t be taken advantage of”. One solution would be to make the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) mandatory for all – including early Service leavers. As one workshop participant commented, “It’s not a new idea, but that doesn’t mean it’s not worth reconsidering”.

Finally, while it is clear that automation is transforming the workplace, previously secure jobs across myriad professions, from truck drivers to pharmacists, are now vulnerable, and those in transition will have to think carefully about which career to choose next. Given the MOD predicts the percentage of working age veterans is projected to increase from 37% in 2016 to 44% by 2028, greater focus should be given to ensure they have the skills, experience and appropriate qualifications to adapt to the new world of work. In the short term, with unemployment rising and the world economy shrinking, increasing automation could have significant negative impact. At a time when the CBI, the employers’ organisation, estimates nine out of ten will need to learn new skills for their own jobs by 2030, those in the Armed Forces should consider carefully what courses, roles and skill sets they should foster to prepare themselves better for civilian life.

Example Implication: Ensuring those in the Armed Forces are conscious of, confident in and able to clearly communicate their transferable skills when they enter civilian life is a priority.

“If this perception gap is not bridged, then some fantastic skills won’t be taken advantage of”.



Section 6 | Foresights – Armed Forces Transition

We now turn to the particular shifts taking place that will directly impact those in transition from the Armed Forces. These were first identified during the initial interviews carried out between March and June 2020, and then discussed in greater depth, enhanced and added to throughout a series of workshops from September to November 2020.

The following Foresights were identified and detailed in workshops as areas of impact and change over the next decade that will impact future transitioners:

1. Changing Perceptions
2. Continuous Transition
3. Fitting In
4. Holistic Transition
5. Landing Well
6. Living in Civilian Society
7. Measuring Progress
8. New Transitioners
9. Regions of Connection
10. Smarter Talent
11. Supporting Civilian Authorities
12. Greater Integration



6.1 Changing Perceptions

As public understanding of the role of the Armed Forces declines, so does the support to recognise veterans' capabilities, actions, and contribution to society.

Many in the workshops consider there is already “a positive, but false, outdated view of what the military do today”. The concern, which unless addressed, is that “we are in real danger of consigning ourselves to obscurity”. As one expert saw it, “the biggest threat to the Armed Forces is a complete loss of public understanding about the role the military plays.” Although some believe “that’s a positive – it means that they don’t have to worry about the military, because we live in a fairly safe place,” this will have consequences for the public understanding of veterans and their ongoing role in society.

Part of the reason for this disconnect is that the capability of the Armed Forces is having to adapt to changing needs, as Britain’s influence on the world stage declines. Although it still defends the nation, it is, for example, increasingly active in supporting civilian authorities. There are pros and cons to this. “Some civilian tasks are very laudable – but there may be others that are a bit more contentious. They will put the Armed Forces on the front line and have an impact on the way they are perceived.” Another issue is in the way that the Armed Forces view themselves. “They purport to have a set of values and standards that set them apart from society, and then behave reprehensibly at times towards their own people – poor behaviour court martials, bullying – look at the Wigston Review. This doesn’t sit well with public perception.” Or as another put it, “are today’s Armed Forces internally living up to the standards they are espousing? I do question it, because sometimes when I see them in public, I do not see it being lived. We need to tell the truth.”

There was widespread agreement that the decline in understanding is generational. "Older people see veterans as the WW2 'Great Generation'; people who made a sacrifice – people to look up to and respect." But as time goes by, and the personal connections diminish, it has become harder for subsequent generations to translate that view today. "We are assuming that the regard which the public hold for the Armed Forces will be sustained, and I am not sure it will be." For some, the very notion of warfare might be an increasing challenge: "Among the young, more generally there is a view that [the UK] shouldn't meddle in others' affairs, perhaps there are more pacifists." One view was that "historically, there was an automatic regard and respect. We may be moving into a period with a lower level of regard." The explanation for this is complex, but many agreed that the fact that the current role of the Armed Forces is "less easy to explain and make relevant to people," does not help. Others were less concerned. "I'm less convinced the reputation is slipping - it builds slowly and declines slowly." Many agreed that "a major war would change everything."

Over-generalisations have not helped either. "It's easy to get too narrowly focused on the traditional veteran, rather than the whole community." Like many large corporates, the Armed Forces are made up of a wide range of individuals from multiple levels of society, offering myriad skills. Some spend most of their professional life in uniform, others leave to establish a second, or even third career in a different capacity in civilian life. However, "continued classification of veterans as one size fits all does not highlight the individual skills on offer." The reality is that most who serve leave to go on to lead successful civilian lives, but "that is different to the perception. Only 2-3% do have difficulty – the rest get tainted by that."

Part of the problem may be that there was a lack of clarity within the Armed Forces Community around what the public perception of the Armed Forces should be. "If the Chief of the Defence

Staff were here, he would say he wants empathy not sympathy." Some suggest the most effective approach would be to "shift from a hero to a warrior brand, constantly engaged in 'doing good things'. From a civilian perspective there are other competing groups who will gain the mantle of the public's affection and respect - take the NHS, for example."

Most we spoke to agreed that something should be done to facilitate the transition process. "We need to demonstrate in a more sophisticated manner the true value our personnel have," and "promote the skills, attributes, morals and values – and how we can actively make use of those in the workplace and wider society." However, agreeing the detail and which specific department should be responsible was not so easy. "The MOD have been challenged to change the perception of veterans for the last 3 years. It is now the OVA's responsibility. But they are not doing it."

One of the difficulties is that those in transition are used to a career where their role is innately understood. This does not translate into civilian life. Therefore, some face a difficult balance about how they articulate their experience. On the one hand, "we need to stop regarding ourselves as special, as many people don't share our values and don't regard us as special." On the other hand, "if correctly packaged, the idea of a group of individuals who are more disciplined, have soft skills – and are different to those in society, can be perceived as a good thing... We need to be careful in encouraging a more vanilla approach for our military as some way of fitting in."

Given all this, it is unsurprising that some civilian organisations are biased against returning Service personnel, perceiving them to be difficult to employ. This is manifestly not the case for the vast majority. Helping those leaving the Armed Forces to translate and articulate their military skills and capabilities, in a way which can be understood by civilians, has long

been part of transition support services. But it is a hard nut to crack.

We heard several practical suggestions which might help open doors. For example, by enabling military sabbaticals, so Service personnel can experience civilian life while still in uniform, corporates can become more aware of the potential skills that the Armed Forces provides. This, it was suggested, could be developed as part of a super-charged MOD Enterprise Initiative. Another recommendation was that more time should be given to educate young people, in order that they can better understand geopolitics and the purpose of soft and hard power. “We should be engaging with the education system to prepare our children in a more meaningful way about our country, and why it is important to have a coherent foreign policy. This is going to be more important given we have left the EU.” Others are, however, cautious: “As a mother of a 6-year-old son, I’m not sure. The blue light forces are part of British society, and they help run it and we see them on the streets. The purpose of the military is different.”

Some pointed to the way that charities have, unintentionally, skewed public opinion by focusing on those who are in need of help; “they sometimes use highly emotive case studies.” Research has supported this; “The majority of the public believe that veterans will be damaged in body or mind by their Service.” This is a little unfair. A longitudinal study conducted by the King’s Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR) reckon the overall rate of probable PTSD among a sample of current and ex-serving regular military personnel is 6% in the 2014/16 cohort, compared to a rate of 4.4% within the civilian population.¹⁷ Perceptions, however, can be particularly damaging for the younger personnel in the community – not least because they don’t see themselves in that way. This has had a knock-on effect in the corporate world. “You find today that businesses are almost invited to employ Service personnel as some sort of national duty. It is not, or at least shouldn’t be, national duty. The reason that

they ought to employ Service men and women is because they are very good.”

Example Implication: An ongoing campaign celebrating the transferrable skills acquired while in the Armed Forces would assist in countering misconceptions of transitioning personnel and the contribution they bring to business and society.

“The biggest threat to the Armed Forces is a complete loss of public understanding about the role the military plays.”



6.2 Continuous Transition

With shorter careers and a recognition that transition is an ongoing process and not a single event, expectations and preparedness are managed from the start.

For some, considering time in the Armed Forces as only one element of an overall career that will comprise a number of different jobs, possibly in a number of different sectors, will reset expectations of its significance in a progressively longer working life. “We should think about the Armed Forces as a job, not a life.” With ten-year occupations increasingly the norm, including in the military, moving between roles and employers is more usual in today’s workplace. However, given the commitment those in the Armed Forces are expected to make to their profession, how best to ensure they are able to move on successfully is particularly challenging. There is a need to include retraining and reskilling as a necessary component of working life.

It is clear that for the vast majority, as they make their way through their careers, they achieve “lots of mini transitions.” Joining, being part of, and leaving the Armed Forces is just part of the journey, even if it has some major strings attached, “I left 20 years ago, but I’m still on notice for call up.” However, many people join the Armed Forces when they are young and impressionable, and they therefore form their workplace ethics based on this experience. Much is expected from them and this personal investment and lifestyle experience sets the Armed Forces occupation apart from most other professions. Given that it provides all the necessary personal and pastoral needs an individual requires, learning to adapt to a new life can be particularly difficult, as it combines the shock of coming to terms with a new profession and new domestic and personal circumstances.

This scale of change is difficult for anyone to adjust to, and will take time. However, most transition training is currently “crammed into your last years of service.” Some argue that this is one of the reasons why it is so difficult for people to adapt to civilian life. One possibility is for the Armed Forces to acknowledge this right from the beginning. “You should start thinking about leaving the day you join. It’s a mindset we haven’t had before, and will increasingly become a necessity.” Although perhaps true in an ideal world, others responded to this suggestion with a degree of scepticism. “There is a gap between rhetoric and reality. The MOD says that preparation for leaving begins on the day you arrive, but in practice people say: ‘not a chance’.” More pragmatically, several see that “it’s about connecting the two worlds better, and making it clear that the military or Armed Forces can be seen as one career, not as your life.” Moreover, “helping personnel to consider life beyond the Forces throughout their service improves their ability to transition well on leaving.”

Some sectors of the Armed Forces are better able to manage ongoing transition challenges and opportunities than others: “It’s sort of easy

in some of the more technical areas,” such as flying, where “getting the airlines involved early is a sort of managed transition out.” However, others found the idea of a managed transition process unappealing. “If I’m the officer in charge of a troop, I might feel that I prepare them too well for transition, and become concerned that they might leave.” Moreover, “one of the areas of tension is that you don’t want them to be vulnerable when they leave, but at the same time, don’t want to speed up their departure – if you keep putting the idea of leaving in their head.”

There is a considerable financial incentive to ensure that as many people as possible transition successfully. “There is an eternal tension between the broader interests of government and the MOD around transition. Government wants highly successful veterans and wants to reinvest their skills into the economy; the MOD is more focussed on delivering operational capability and effectiveness.” This tension goes some way to explaining why finding support during transition can sometimes be difficult.

Whenever you start, there is widespread recognition that “the Forces need to do more to prepare its members for transition well in advance of those people leaving.” Many think that the answer is “something to do with better education while they are in uniform.” Being prepared for the future may necessitate a different approach to training and skills development. “What would be good is if those coming to the end of a military career are equipped with the mental approach and skills designed for the world we live in today. We should think about creating a lifelong learning environment, rather than training people for a platform or operating system.”

Alongside professional skills, a common priority for many exiting the Armed Forces is the acquisition of life skills, especially those around basic finance. “They were not managing their money very well. They have everything done for them financially. It’s

no wonder they come out and don't know how to do things." This is particularly important for those who may have had challenges before joining up. "If they join as perhaps a 17-year-old with few qualifications, and maybe with issues from their home environment, they can find a new home in the military. The trouble is, when they leave, inside themselves they might be that same 17-year-old, lacking in confidence and with the same issues that they arrived with – and maybe now a couple of other issues like physical or mental injury." To support individuals such as these during Service, "we should be able to look at the military in its entirety, in terms of Service, in terms of family, flexibility, lifespan, thinking about a career, but also about their transition. We need to be preparing them for civilian life and offer a direct link into the welfare state organisations, so that they know where to go for support, if things do become difficult."

In addition to training their own personnel, it was often pointed out to us that the Armed Forces should do more to ensure that business better understands the skills that transitioners can offer the corporate world, particularly given the government investment that is made in their training. We heard from one senior executive of a global organisation that "The Armed Forces are unequivocally a great source of future leaders. Even a squaddie who joins and completes basic training has more investment in them than most people will have, perhaps across the entirety of their corporate life. Whether the individual reflects on it, or has absorbed it – it elevates the individual. It is an innate understanding of what leadership and management means, and can then reflect on what good and bad leadership looks like. And what is motivating, or not. This needs recognition." One way of demonstrating this could be through the development of military sabbaticals; "this may help perceptions outside the military, but also assist in bringing commercial skills in."

Example Implication: A career in the Armed Forces becomes more widely recognised as the starting point for a multi-role career, providing hard to learn leadership and soft skills.

"We should think about creating a lifelong learning environment, rather than training people for a platform or operating system."



6.3 Fitting In

With more ageing, migration, and mass unemployment all having an impact, the speed of change in local society is accelerating. Some adapt but others are marginalised.

Perhaps faster than at any other point over the past 50 years, UK communities are changing – in their demographic, economy, and structure. Overall, the population is expected to grow significantly, age dramatically, and at the same time, become more diverse. Alongside this, accelerating technological change, and our response to climate change, will transform how we live, work, communicate and consume. Younger generations are expected to find themselves at the sharp end of a less secure labour market, and victims of a looming housing crisis. All of this means we are likely to see an increase in the divisions in public attitudes; between metropolitan and rural, blue collar and white collar, internationalism and nationalism.

Even before the pandemic, decades of under-investment have already increased national inequalities. Not only have they taken their toll with major infrastructure projects from broadband to sewers being put on hold, but they have also affected welfare provision, including health and education forces. The north-east of England, an area which is traditionally a strong recruitment ground for the army, in particular, has been especially hard hit.

Many who feel their lives have already been blighted by this have become disillusioned, unsupported by a

system which, they believe, is skewed against them. This sense of alienation has led to some becoming attracted to extremist philosophies, generally of right-wing organisations. Some we spoke to suggest that transitioning Service personnel will be particularly vulnerable to this. Indeed, we heard from one that “the mobilisation of the extreme right wing is seen as the biggest threat to UK security.” Significant effort may be needed to protect those who are identified as at risk from becoming engaged in extreme right-wing activity, not least because of their potential to harm others, “You have people coming out of the Forces who are battle trained, with the capability and skills that could cause bigger harm.” Identifying those at risk is a challenge, “We usually first find them at a point of crisis, for example in the criminal justice system.” The inclusion of a veterans question in the 2021 census (with the exception of Northern Ireland) may go some way to address this.

Many who join the Armed Forces are transformed by the experience, and return home with very different life experiences to those of their peers, who remained civilians. This has long been acknowledged as an issue that can make the process of reintegration difficult to manage for all involved. Over the next decade, this is likely to be amplified by the expected speed of change in communities. Increased competition for jobs, particularly in a post-Covid economy, additional pressure on housing, not to mention increased stress on social forces, will not help, and those who are unable to articulate the benefits of skills they gained from an Armed Forces career may fall under the radar.

Many we spoke to agreed that without proactive intervention, “there is a risk that the Armed Forces may be a minority class within society; one that operates in increasingly different ways from the mainstream. As the Armed Forces become proportionally smaller, there is always the risk that they could become a ‘caste apart’ – they could get even further out of step.” But not everyone suffers – “those with tech skills get employed”.

Given the expected pressures on the UK economy as a whole, most agreed that affordability will be a key issue, and as such, there is a need to identify those most vulnerable. “Those that have the most difficulty in transitioning are those that are the least well equipped to find other jobs – such as Early Service Leavers, those who spend less than four years in Service. If we are short of resources, the focus should be on the people that will struggle the most.” We heard that currently “there is a small but significant group who have an abrupt end to their Service career. We remove their life support immediately, then throw them on the heap. We say we are good [at looking after leavers], but we fail to look more broadly at some people who need more help... the ones we have most problems with are the ones who are not exposed to a transition process”. Better data and segmentation around vulnerable groups such as these would be helpful. “For the most needy, it’s not more support that is required, it’s the offer of any help at all”. The Joint Service Publication document, JSP 100, recognises this and now requires every individual to be assessed, including those who are summarily discharged. It gives clear instruction on how to deal with their transition. It is up to others in the Armed Forces Community to ensure they follow through.

Example Implication: At a time of economic uncertainty, timely interventions and long-term support of those in transition can protect the most vulnerable from being dislocated from mainstream social thought. Failure to do this may put the wider population at risk.

“Those that have the most difficulty in transitioning are those that are the least well equipped to find other jobs – such as Early Service Leavers. If we are short of resources, the focus should be on the people that will struggle the most.”



6.4 Holistic Transition

To help ensure a lasting, stable transition, support design moves beyond the basics of employment and housing to include wellbeing and involving the needs of the leaver's family.

The findings of the ethnographic work, including the transition journey phases, make it abundantly clear that the process of transition is far more than a set of functional transactions, such as finding a home and getting a job, that happen at a single point in time.

In itself, this is not a new foresight. The MOD's 2019 Defence Holistic Transition Policy, Joint Service Publication, JSP100, is specifically designed to support Service leavers and their families to adjust to other aspects of the transition to civilian life.¹⁸ It aims to complement the existing resettlement policy and the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) to ensure that those in transition consider all aspects of civilian life that may differ from military provision, including housing, health matters, budgeting and life skills. At its heart is the Life Skills training package, which will be delivered to Service personnel and their families throughout their Service career, to allow individuals to make appropriate plans, preparation and informed decisions about their future. As we heard: "The terminology of transition is not helpful. It's about thinking about life after the military while they are in Service – that's why we call it Life Skills – these skills are applicable in Service, as well as after."

This shift in emphasis was seen as an important and very welcome development, but as we heard from participants, a broader shift in culture and focus will be required in order for transition to be truly holistic. For example, the need to view transition as a journey through time. "A cultural change both inside and outside the Armed Forces is required.

We need better preparation to help transitioners and their families plan how they will leave, how they manage their transition and then provide joined-up service provision after they leave." Another example cited was a need to place more emphasis on self-awareness, and the role and responsibility of the individual for their own behaviour through transition. "It is critical to nurture self-worth and self-determination at the same time as providing support. The Armed Forces are not the God's gift to the community they think they are. There are too many Service leavers with an arrogance that they think they know how to lead; to do this and that. When I left the Forces, I learned that all behaviour is contextual, and ex-Service people are not always good at changing context. If I could do one thing it would be to start teaching them from day one on how to manage their own behaviour". The provision of support to partners and families was also identified by many as an area where more focus over the next decade would be welcome and helpful for situations such as establishing community roots, locating schools for children, and potential employment opportunities for transitioners' partners. One way of doing this could be to break down any perceived barriers between those who are currently serving and those who have served: "We have long argued that the hard wall between serving and ex-serving people needs to become far more permeable ... An almost institutional change is needed to bring the serving and ex-serving communities closer together."

Identifying the change required is one thing, delivering on it quite another. As one workshop participant put it: "Delivering selflessness to your unit – that is absolutely crucial. We don't want them to be thinking about transition, we want them to be thinking about the unit. It's a tension we haven't quite worked out yet."

Some believed a much harder line might need to be taken in order to help ensure a more robust and holistic transition, such as compulsory sign-up to relevant training. We heard: "We need to be really

mindful of how huge a shift this is for the Armed Forces Community – and trying to get the message from the top all the way down is so hard. At times, the Career Transition Partnership team get highly frustrated by the number of people (i.e. very few) who take up the amazing offer. There isn't the right attitude across the military to get people to engage. In the future, it has to be compulsory, not an opt in."

Looking forward, what seems clear is that there will be increased emphasis given to the transition journey of an individual and their family, over time and from an emotional, more inclusive standpoint. Doing so will assist in delivering an easier transition for many.

Example Implication: The Armed Forces formally recognise the value of including all elements of transition as part of its mandated training and development programme.

Life Skills is about other areas of life – e.g. emotional wellbeing – that everybody, whatever their age and stage, will benefit from. Getting this right will assist in a successful transition.



6.5 Landing Well

Greater emphasis on improved public awareness of the skills developed within the Armed Forces allows for a more aligned transition to civilian life.

As discussed, and detailed further in our ethnography work, landing back into society is a key step for all those transitioning from the Armed Forces. Doing this well is a two-sided coin and requires the veteran and their families to be ready and equipped, with reasonable expectations about how the future may unfold. At its best, it also

requires the community to be open to and ready to receive those in transition, recognising all the strengths, qualities and experience they bring – but also appreciative of the difficulties they may face as they transition into the civilian world. As one workshop attendee observed, "The qualities of military personnel are very strong and are likely to fit very well with the future – but they won't be well understood by those who are receiving them. So those receiving are as critical as those that are in transition. We need to look both at the work we do with people arriving – and also with those who are receiving."

We frequently heard of the need to prepare communities to receive veterans and those in transition. While this sounds an ambitious goal, much has already been achieved. The 2020 Covenant Annual Report shows that over 6,000 organisations have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, and 800 GP Surgeries are now accredited as 'Veteran Friendly'¹⁹. Lessons can also be learned from other countries; in the US, the US Department of Veterans Affairs has set up a Veterans Experience Office, and one of their initiatives, the Community Veteran Engagement Board (CVEB), facilitates collaboration among local veteran-serving organisations. Each CVEB is a community group composed of veterans, advocates, veteran-serving organisations and other civic leaders who collaborate to deliver needed forces to the veteran population. Although they each act autonomously with minimal oversight, best practice is often pooled and shared across the network.

Better communication is vital, and links to the wider foresight on 'Changing Perceptions.' Indeed, many in our workshops felt that there was a lack of understanding among 'receiving' communities of the values, strengths and assets that military personnel can bring back to the community. Some believed that communicating these benefits to communities in general should be a key focus to help connect things up better in the future. Others felt that prioritising action on those communities that

received most transitioning Service men and women would enable limited resources to go further.

Certainly, greater awareness may help identify transitioners and offer them support before they have a crisis. However, identifying who that is can be extraordinarily difficult for the public sector; there simply isn't enough data, and many choose not to ask for help. Often those who are Early Service Leavers, who in 2020 made up 34%, 31% and 18% of all leavers from the British Army, Royal Navy and RAF respectively, may not even consider themselves to be veterans.²⁰ Local authorities repeatedly made the point that early preventative intervention can make all the difference. To some extent, the 2021 census in England and Wales (2022 in Scotland) will help, as veterans will be asked to identify themselves.

Local Social Enterprise Partnerships were recommended as a way of providing additional support. One suggestion was to use the social enterprise structure to provide business and enterprise training for ex-forces staff, and then to help them set up social enterprises (possibly using seed funding from the trust/foundation sector), with some of the 'markets' being goods/services related to the specific needs of ex-forces staff.

Example Implication: Identifying transitioning personnel before they reach a crisis point significantly increases their ability to "land well". Better data is needed to ensure the right targeted support is offered at the right time.

"The qualities of military personnel are very strong and are likely to fit very well with the future – but they won't be well understood by those who are receiving them. So those receiving are as critical as those that are in transition... We need to look both at the work we do with people arriving – and also with those who are receiving."



6.6 Living in Civilian Society

The Future Accommodation Model helps to prepare many better for life after Service, but makes traditional methods of maintaining trust and comradeship more difficult.

In part as recognition of the challenges that Service personnel, their families and those in transition face, the MOD are encouraging them to buy their own homes and put down roots whilst still serving. Rather than confine everyone to living "behind the wire", this new approach to accommodation offers greater choice and flexibility, including the option to live in rented properties, or buy a home with loan support from the MOD. It is currently the subject of a three-year pilot across all three Services. Interest in the initiative is high, "I think this is the biggest impact on our Armed Forces – it's a totally different way of living."

Although we heard support for this initiative, we also heard caution. On one level, the separation and asymmetry between the Armed Forces Community and the rest of society will be reduced, and this will likely assist in allowing them to build deeper community links which inevitably help with transition. On another, there was concern that domestic disbursement would mean a loss of comradeship, key to fostering trust among serving men and women. As one put it, "The same thing that builds the really strong camaraderie, particularly the Army's more paternalistic approach, is the very thing that makes it hard to transition. It's a wrench to lose it. By breaking people up and making them live among the community, I can see why there is resistance, but in the long run it will make it easier for them to assimilate back into civilian society".

Here perhaps more so than in other aspects, the culture and ethos of the three Services have an enduring impact. The Royal Navy has for many

centuries separated and deployed its serving personnel for extended periods whilst families live and are fully integrated into civilian communities; camaraderie can be built at sea. The British Army, however, has taken a different approach, and includes families almost as a constituent part of the force. The Royal Air Force had tended towards this 'garrison' model, but private home ownership has gradually accelerated as mobility has reduced. Compare the Cold War laydown, where approaching 100,000 serving members of British Forces Germany were outnumbered by their dependants (families) living alongside them, with that of the Royal Navy's nuclear deterrent submarine force, where families had little direct interaction with other members of the Armed Forces. The Service as a whole still has the longest limit on separation at 660 days in three years, compared to under 500 for the Army and Royal Air Force.²¹ It is unsurprising that Naval families have the lowest rate of living on base, or in Service Families Accommodation. Unaccompanied expeditionary warfare akin to that operated over the last decade from a UK firm base is also seen as the future profile, which together with initiatives such as the Future Accommodation Model suggests that there will be continued movement towards greater stable civilian community living, and an acceptance of adverse impact on the moral component of fighting power.

Stable accommodation is certainly one of the issues that makes it difficult for the partners of serving personnel to establish themselves and build a career. However, it seems that, although they will be encouraged to rent or buy housing from civilian stock, little will be done to address the challenge of short-term postings. Many we spoke to saw this as one of the key problems for families. The disruption is not therefore solely based on accommodation issues, rather it is the length of time in a posting. Sometimes, families have to make the choice to either stay together as a unit or face separation, in order to build a career or ensure a stable education for children. One suggestion we heard to counter this problem was to have more government support to attract large employers to areas in which military bases are located.

Looking ahead, it seems likely that the Future Accommodation Model will be rolled out more extensively, not least because it allows the Armed Forces to address the shortfalls in its current accommodation stock. But not all we spoke to were confident that the current pilot will be a resounding success. "There is a move for people to shift out. But I wonder if before too long the pendulum will swing back the other way – as accommodation gets more expensive, as we rediscover that what binds units together and makes them effective on operations is the shared experience of living together in a community. We should reflect the communities from which we come – but those in the Armed Forces are different – these individuals are being asked metaphorically to stick bayonets in the Queen's enemies".

Example Implication: Reducing the length of postings enables personnel to more easily maintain family relationships and establish community roots, but this also jeopardises the strong bonds between colleagues which are vital when working under pressure.

"I think this is the biggest impact on our Armed Forces – it's a totally different way of living."



6.7 Measuring Progress

Shared metrics are adopted across the transition journey to track sustained progress and accountability towards the Strategy for Our Veterans ambition.

With its 10-year scope, Strategy for Our Veterans sets the intent for delivery of public services to veterans across the UK. In particular, it states that by 2028, "every veteran will feel even more valued, supported and empowered, and in accordance

with the Armed Forces Covenant, and in Scotland, *Renewing Our Commitments*, will never be disadvantaged as a result of their Service.” This is in support of the UK Government vision to make “the UK the best place to be a veteran anywhere in the world”, and acts as a call to action for all support organisations around the UK. But how will we define “best”, where are we today, and how will we measure our progress?

Management thinker Peter Drucker is famous for saying “you can’t manage what you can’t measure”. To date, a significant challenge has been the absence of and consensus around accurate information about veterans in general, and those in transition in particular. If ensuring that veterans feel valued is the key metric for success, or failure, then identifying who they are and where they live, really understanding their personal circumstances and ascertaining their perception of what constitutes value, support and empowerment, are important. It’s tricky to find out this sort of thing at the best of times, but it is particularly hard for the veteran community; think of the ESLs who may not even consider themselves to be part of the Armed Forces after departure. Many we spoke to regret the paucity of baseline data from which to measure the success or failure of the myriad initiatives that are currently underway.

One ‘old chestnut’ that again surfaced in our discussions was the definition of the term veteran; a charged and lingering issue for some. “A key issue is whether or not we continue with our current definition. Only 2% of the British population can identify correctly what that is (defined as anyone who has served in Her Majesty’s Armed Forces, regular or reserve, or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations),” and “one of the barriers for doing more for veterans is our daft over-inclusiveness in the definition. As the finances of both charities and the state implode, this will likely be looked at (though it is not currently being reviewed).” This is important, because this definition helps to demarcate accountability – where,

for example, does responsibility lie for an ESL who enters – and exits – the Armed Forces with poor qualifications and behavioural challenges? Should that be the social services that ‘failed’ to provide sufficient family support, the school that ‘failed’ to deliver sufficient education, or the individual themselves because they simply chose to reject the opportunities they were offered? The answer may well be a combination of all of the above – but better measurement of these factors would certainly help identify where the gaps lie. Of course, the real reason for strategic measurement is to help build an accurate record of progress towards an objective. Importantly, it makes it possible to set goals and establish accountability. When discussing accountability across the sector, for delivering *Strategy for Our Veterans*, most people we spoke to felt that trying to do this has been an ongoing challenge for the MOD. “I don’t think [unclear accountability] is a ‘new’ Foresight. It’s not something that has changed from the past. I’m not sure there has ever been clear accountability – it’s been so for 100 years, hence why we have built charities in the first place to support people.” Some felt the problem is still not being addressed, “The Armed Forces Covenant? It’s a paper tiger, it’s a wonderful political statement, but the execution has been very poor.” All this matters, not only because of the cost implications, but because without it, it will be “increasingly difficult to hold the Government and authorities to account for the Covenant.”

Given the huge amount of work that local authorities, charities and other organisations do to support veterans, some might argue that worrying about measurement and accountability, although interesting, is not vital, particularly for the Armed Forces Community. By nature, veterans and those in transition are very self-reliant, and therefore, for the vast majority of issues, they are well equipped to help themselves. Some suggested that this is happening already, and pointed to a growing number of breakfast groups where ex-Service men and women are supporting each other through transition. However, this is currently an informal

approach and does not work for everyone – particularly those with complex issues. Sometimes, “people get buffeted by the system” and are unable to find the support they need; “those that can’t cope will be in even more trouble”. A more transparent understanding of the different roles and responsibility, particularly given the increasing fragmentation of services, would help mitigate this and make it easier for those looking to find the appropriate help.

Many we spoke to are concerned about the future. Despite the public pronouncements by the government, they felt that the next decade would see growing pressures on all sectors, with Armed Forces charities particularly vulnerable to financial challenges. If the government is not held to account, they fear the risk that it will not keep its commitment to serving the needs of the Armed Forces Community. “It’s more about the potential change in the balance of the support ecosystem. Consider this in the context of charities falling over, and pressure on government finances and the role it should play; then you can see the issue.” Greater accountability would do much to allay this.

It is evident that a clear roadmap towards the stated vision, with supporting measurement of progress, is sorely needed. This would help clarify the relationships between central government, local authorities, third sector providers and the transitioning Service personnel and their families. It would also provide a more robust overview of and Foresight about how care and support is distributed, and which organisations are responsible for its delivery. Above all, this would reduce the risk of the most vulnerable becoming “lost” in the very system that was created to help them.

Example Implication: The absence of robust and transparent measurement and accountability risks seeding a lack of trust in government to deliver on its commitment to make the UK the best place anywhere in the world to be a veteran

“The Armed Forces Covenant? It’s a paper tiger, it’s a wonderful political statement, but the execution has been very poor.”



6.8 New Transitioners

New structures of military service provide a counter to the shocks associated with today’s transition journey, simplifying some stages of transition but adding more complexity in others.

Key to this conversation is to observe that those in transition in 2030 will be significantly different to those transitioning today – in demographic, attitude and behaviour. There are a number of reasons, not least because, as previously discussed, methods of warfare are changing, which will be reflected in the make-up, size and scale of the Armed Forces. As a result of the natural decline in the number of those who took part in National Service, expect a younger cohort. Most will be nowhere near retirement when they leave the Armed Forces, and will have joined up as part of their career, rather than as a lifetime commitment. They will be more diverse culturally and ethnically, and with a growing proportion of women. They and their families are also likely to have more stable home lives, as the Future Accommodation Model will reduce the need for regular relocations during Service.

On top of this, the proportion of Reservists may well increase, and as a result, there will likely be more fluidity between the Armed Forces and civilian life, as more people join because of their existing skill set rather than to develop them. As one workshop participant observed, “This is particularly true of Reservists. We are becoming less fed from the bottom up by young recruits. Rather we are looking for skill sets. I can really see this growing – so perhaps people will enter the Armed Forces as a 2nd or 3rd career, rather than as a first job.” Given

this, the old understanding that a career in the Armed Forces requires total dedication, and as a result the state has a responsibility of care, may no longer be publicly acceptable. Therefore, the terms of Service for men and women in the Armed Forces may well be adapted to reflect this.

Most see the changing nature of the transitioner population, and the different experiences they will have, as providing a counter to the shocks associated with today's transition journey, smoothing out and simplifying the distinct phases that occur after the 'Threshold' stage of the Transition Journey. As a result, many we spoke to believe that most of these changes are positive, and will assist in transition for most being easier in the future than today. Indeed, this is in part the intent behind much of what is already included in JSP100. As one participant put it, "maybe the Armed Forces over time will become a more normal job – and if that is the case, then transition will be less difficult". However, others argued that while the numbers of those in transition will decrease, the complexity of their need profiles may in fact increase. Not everyone, they point out, will benefit from the Future Accommodation Model; there will still be boots on

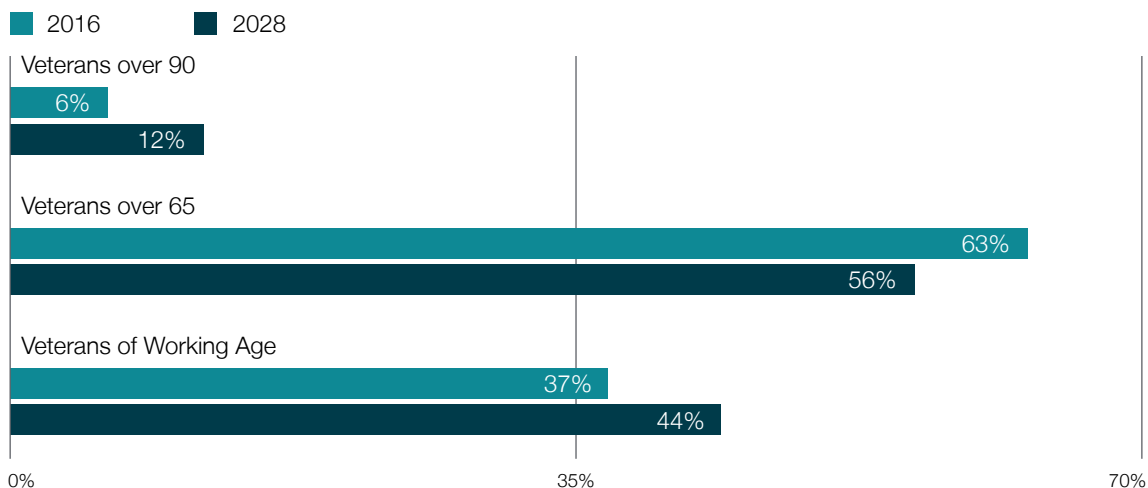
the ground in dangerous places, and although fewer may find themselves in direct combat situations, the mental strain of increasingly targeted and personalised warfare may result in mental trauma which has its own lasting effects. Finally, as long as the current definition remains in place, there is a responsibility of care for those Early Service Leavers who today make up almost a third of those going through transition, and an even higher share of those who require support.

Example Implication: While the numbers of those in transition over time will decrease, the complexity of their need profiles may increase and require more specific support. Expect a requirement for more segmented and psychological support.

"We are becoming less fed from the bottom up by young recruits. Rather we are looking for skill sets. I can really see this growing – so perhaps people will enter the Armed Forces as a 2nd or 3rd career, rather than as a first job."

Veterans by Age

Source: MOD Population Projections, 10.1.2019





6.9 Regions of Connection

With MOD spending and bases focused in select areas of the UK, other regions have less understanding of, connection to and empathy with the Armed Forces.

Although maintaining a unified national military, understanding of and connection with the Armed Forces across all the regions in the UK vary. “Different regions of the UK are more predisposed to the military than others.” In England, the South West and South East, and across Scotland, there are strong cultural and economic ties; elsewhere, this is less so. In some areas, where job opportunities are limited, signing up to the Armed Forces is considered a gateway to new and better opportunities. “The North East of England generates squaddies as a form of escape ... consequently, if they go back, their communities are less receptive and less absorbing.”

Some areas have long provided a home for the Armed Forces. Consider bases in South, Central and Eastern England (e.g. Aldershot, Brize Norton, Portsmouth & Gosport), South West (Devonport, Culdrose), Scotland (Faslane, Lossiemouth, Rosyth), and Lincolnshire (Cranwell, Waddington, etc.). Although their future size might be reduced, it is likely that their relationship with the Army, Royal Navy, or RAF will continue bringing with it the increased economic benefits of an MOD presence; “The RAF and the Royal Navy are probably better at this than the Army.” Maintaining this connection is one reason why many transitioning personnel choose to remain in the area: “In the South West, there is a close connection with the Royal Navy – it is visible, the dockyards are major employers, and sailors are welcomed into the maritime communities.”

Looking ahead, and with the likelihood of fewer uniformed personnel visible to the public, lower

defence-driven economic activity, fewer bases across the UK, and without an effective public engagement process, general awareness of the Armed Forces may well decline. “No one teaches our children why we have a military mechanism, its role, or how we create security. Because they don’t see it, they don’t understand it. So the connection returns to sympathy, but not empathy. People don’t see the benefit that can be brought back to the community, and perhaps into the workplace.” Inevitably, this lack of understanding will impact the future prospects of transitioning personnel.

As communities change, their ability to accommodate ex-Service personnel, particularly in the phases that come immediately after leaving Service, changes too. Under-investment in communities, rising inequalities and political division may all serve to create more challenging environments for those seeking to integrate and settle within them. This risks a more prolonged period of alienation for ex-Service personnel re-entering civilian life. It also possibly brings greater challenges during the ‘Integrating’ phase of their journey. Where today this is a time of active, and for most, positive, rebuilding of stability; in the future, the challenges associated with the ‘Confronting’ phase could be carried forward for longer into their attempts at re-integrating.

Example Implication: Without proactive local engagement and education initiatives, the Armed Forces are misunderstood, making it harder for transitioners to communicate their value both socially and professionally.

“No one teaches our children why we have a military mechanism, its role, or how we create security. Because they don’t see it, they don’t understand it. So the connection returns to sympathy, but not empathy. People don’t see the benefit that can be brought back to the community.”



6.10 Smarter Talent

The increasing use of technology, especially within the Royal Navy and the RAF, makes the Armed Forces a leading source of recruits for the smarter talent pool.

Modern warfare requires highly qualified recruits; it offers them leading edge training, and thereby produces smarter talent which is also highly regarded in civilian life. A more technological Armed Forces is already a leading source for the smarter future talent pool. We heard that “the Armed Forces, particularly the Royal Navy and the RAF, are very technology literate. They are dealing with technology first and foremost.” Indeed, in several fields, such as cyber security and surveillance, the expert opinion is that “military capability is a long way ahead of the commercial world.” Not all sectors of the Armed Forces will benefit from this increased training, however. The Army has a history of recruiting individuals who are less educated. “The Army is less exposed to cutting edge technology in their careers”. The type of skills necessary to patrol the streets in, for example, Helmand Province, do not require significant technical knowledge, and because of this, the transferrable skills of military recruits is sometimes lower: “The average reading age in my regiment was age 11. We had a concerted effort to get that up to age 14, so that everyone could use the tech that they were given.” In addition, although highly trained, many of the skills learned in the military are not transferrable. This deficit may be reflected in the higher unemployment rates of private soldiers, compared to other veterans; 8% of Army veterans are unemployed 6 months after leaving, compared to 4% for Navy and RAF veterans.²²

Looking ahead, we heard that greater support is needed for the more vulnerable recruits. While some in our workshops noted progress and future intent,

there would appear to remain a gap, particularly for those who may be least well equipped. As one put it: “For the Army, there is already real drive to support people to get basic minimum qualifications in certain areas, but I wonder if basic business skills training needs to be included, even before we get into deeper CTP offers. CTP is not mandated, particularly for Early Service Leavers - and these are often the most vulnerable – so why are we allowing these people to leave without these basic skills? Making CTP mandatory is not a new idea, but that doesn't mean it's not worth re-considering.”

Some see a change ahead. “Inside the Army, they certainly aspire to recruit people who look rather more like those in the RAF or the Royal Navy. The Army is much more technical these days, so will seek to have a community of people that look more like the other two Services and can work the toys.” With “political concern about cyber warfare and new threats,” the steady shift to a more technological Armed Forces is evident. There is already an increase in spending on digital tech, and expectations of the need for (and affordability of) fewer planes, ships, and tanks. One concern which was frequently made was the lack of STEM skills among potential recruits. “Unless public education improves, some of the problems we have already, particularly with those from disadvantaged communities, will continue.”

It is clear that future skills acquired while in Service will be both smarter and more in demand in the wider world. “We will have seen an acceleration in the revolution that digital tech will bring – we are still near the bottom of the S-curve.” This will also move beyond just officer level: “Led by the Army Intelligence Corps, there are many soldiers with degrees. It will change, but it will not happen quickly.”

Given the increased use of technology in the civilian environment, several consider that demand for ex-military talent may further expand. “The biggest

challenge for many organisations is the increasing focus on technology, and those that are trying to find their way through it need experienced support to manage it well. It's an opportunity for Service leavers. Financial crime and fraud are very relevant – this area has opportunities for IT security, risk management, prevention and follow up, and dealing with financial crime.”

Alongside technological skills, the Armed Forces also train personnel in other ways that organisations, large and small, find useful. Think, for example, of leadership and problem-solving abilities, not to mention “discipline, loyalty, leadership, communication – being very organised and thoughtful.” In addition, they tend to be more focused, so “as organisations become less easy to understand but more purposeful, it should suit military personnel well.”

One proposed solution is to increase transparency between the MOD and future employers in the civilian world. “I would like the employer of active Service people (MOD) to have a completely transparent relationship with business, so that there is complete understanding of the skills that individuals can bring from their former profession into the ‘new world’ – it’s the “holy grail.”

Example Implication: Many see significant opportunity to build stronger, more dynamic pathways between commercial technology-based firms and those in, or transitioning from, the military. Greater collaboration between senior military and civilian leaders is needed.

“ We see that service leavers are outperforming their civilian peers. However, we are finding a lower rate of retention. We also see job hopping and lack of sense of purpose as many ex Service personnel find it hard to find an organisation that has the right sort of values.”



6.11 Supporting Civilian Authorities

In times of need, Armed Forces support for the emergency services increases, and the boundaries of what this entails are tested.

Although there were clear levels of discomfort with the idea of the Armed Forces patrolling the streets at times of national crisis, many we spoke to felt it is likely that they will play an increasingly public role in support of civilian services such as the police, the medical services, coastguards or fire brigade over the next decade. After all, “it’s not just about going to war,” they have a lot of useful capability. The Armed Forces are good at mounting big, complex logistical operations at short notice; they are trained to provide transport and engineering support, and their medics can operate with poor infrastructure and strained resources. Most recently, this was demonstrated by the 2021 vaccine delivery programme, the 2020 construction of the NHS Nightingale Hospitals, the involvement in the rescue work at Whalley Bridge during the 2019 flood, and stepping in to help during the 2012 Olympics.

The support of the Armed Forces to civil authorities in the UK is officially termed Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA). Unlike some other democracies, there are strict legal boundaries around this which are already covered by the Civil Contingencies Act. This provides the government with powers to create emergency regulations at times of national crisis and threats to safety (including wartime), emergencies that threaten “serious damage to human welfare”, or to the environment or the security of the UK. This means that, in addition to the logistical support, the government can call on them to back up the police if there is widespread disturbance.

That said, almost everyone we spoke to felt that military involvement in domestic matters should be kept to a minimum, even at times of national crisis.

“The Forces are not for law and order, but can relieve the police of back-room tasks, so they can do front of house.” With the exception of Northern Ireland, there was also an acknowledgement that over the next decade, it is likely the number of crises may increase, as the UK deals with the consequences of Covid-19, Brexit, and other escalating issues.

The Armed Forces will have to tread carefully when managing domestic issues. “The conflict we’ve already seen between crowds and the police – I think we are in for a sticky future.” And “we are short of 20,000 police officers, so we will not be able to cope with nationwide marches.” We heard concern that any increase in military deployment may not only challenge the constraints of the Civil Contingencies Act, but it may also shape public perception about the role of the Forces in general. “What people really understand the function of the military to be has already changed; it has been undermined by a lot of political bashing.” Looking ahead, as budgets are expected to be tightened, the Armed Forces may find it challenging to fulfil their primary role to defend the nation from attack, at the same time as supporting the police and emergency services at home. Too much involvement in domestic affairs may mean that “if the military’s role becomes less about foreign wars and more about support of the home nation you will just lose public backing and engagement.” Certainly, with more UK-based activities and an increasing public awareness and respect for others in uniformed services, including healthcare workers, veterans may well find that there is increased competition for public support.

Example Implication: An increasingly blurred understanding of the boundaries of accountability challenges public recognition of the role of the Armed Forces, particularly in domestic situations. This shapes their opinion of veterans.

“If the military’s role becomes less about foreign wars and more about support of the home nation you will just lose public backing and engagement.”



6.12 Greater Integration

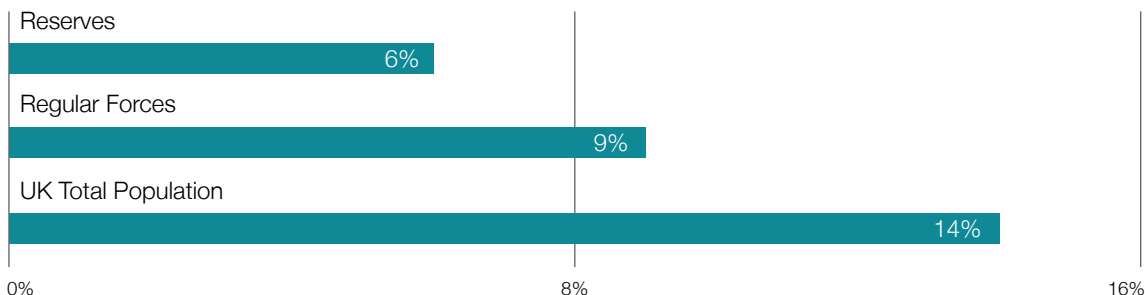
As military personnel policies seek to reflect changes in broader society, traditional boundaries are challenged by changing family structures, increasing diversity, and a drive for equality.

In general, we heard that the Armed Forces are becoming empathetic to the real needs of family life, are keen to embrace diversity, and are looking at new ways to provide greater opportunity to more people. It is also fair to say that not everyone felt completely comfortable with the idea of traditional hierarchies being challenged. “Diverse workforces have more successful outcomes. But they are not the military. Should we reflect society? I’m not sure.” However, despite the reticence of some, Armed Forces personnel are increasingly beginning to reflect the social and demographic changes taking place within the wider community.

Some suggest that because the Armed Forces have traditionally lived within a closed community, or “behind the wire”, becoming more diverse has taken longer to take effect than would otherwise have been the case. But as more Service men and women choose to live within the wider community, barriers are being broken down.

Non White Population in UK Armed Forces (2020)

Source: Biannual Diversity Statistics Publication, October 2020



Greater interaction with civilian life certainly makes the transition out of the Armed Forces easier. It also makes it easier for family members to build a life of their own, forging a career, or for children, going to school with a wider cohort. Some suggest that in the future, “maybe a family will never have to live behind the wire. It will just become commonplace to live close to your work, like others do.” Others disagree. “I don’t think it will go that far”, as “being in the Armed Forces is not a job, it’s a life. It’s 24/7.” So often “there is no need to go beyond the wire and no need for life beyond the wire to come to you.”

One expert proposed that overall, “there is a huge blind spot around families.” In particular, “veteran families are a hidden group”. Whether on or off base, greater understanding of the challenges and different needs of family life is clearly needed. Perhaps this is down to a lack of appropriate leadership. With its still largely male focus, several consider that “the military is not remotely there in equality and diversity.” For example, we heard reference to senior leadership of both the Armed Forces and also the charities that support them being “stale, pale, and male.” Certainly, even a rough review of the makeup of the senior members of both these groups shows a lack of diversity and representation. This was acknowledged by some in senior positions who we spoke to. Some hoped that, as they retire, “boards do not appoint in their likeness, but instead bring fresh, different approaches to their leadership.”

Despite the stated intent to be more receptive to family needs, the knock-on effect on family life was often mentioned as a reason for leaving the Armed Forces. This disproportionately affects women, as “a lot of women leave the Armed Forces because of the challenge of balancing kids, where primary care givers are still mostly women.” This was evidenced in a number of our interviews, “It was a real hardship to leave, but the reason I left was that the military made it incompatible to serve and to bring up children.” To be fair, the MOD is increasing its investment in childcare support; however, as yet, this has had little positive effect. We hear, “children of serving personnel have been found to be at greater risk (compared to children with non-military parents) of emotional and behavioural problems.” Consequently, “you choose your career, or you choose your children.”

While “there are more female veterans out there,” according to the Biannual Diversity Statistics Publication, they currently comprise only 11% of UK Regular Forces and 15% of Reserves. As a result, integration back into society can be a lonely process. “It is doubly difficult being both a veteran and a woman.” Several we spoke to suggest it is “amazing how little dedicated provision there is for female vets.” In part, this is because “most studies focus on men, with limited evidence based on the experience of women and families.” As more women are joining the Armed Forces, the problem is becoming more pressing. “If this is not addressed,

then those problems will magnify if nothing is done about it now.” Few we spoke to believe that the Armed Forces are alone in managing this challenge. One female veteran told us, “I have experienced more sexism and more opposition in the corporate arena than I ever did in the military. In the military, your value was determined on what you contributed, on your analysis or intellectual dexterity, and I miss that.”

In addition to problems around childcare, “one of the most commonly recorded reasons for personnel leaving the military is unsuitable employment opportunities for spouses and partners.” Most we spoke to agreed that more should be done to support them, not only during Service, but also during transition. “There is still not enough follow up sometimes. It seems that this is due to focus; there are simply too many other priorities to be dealt with.” It’s also due to process; “at the moment, the military can only contact families through the Service person. So lots of information gets lost.” Given this, it would seem, although the intent to better support families during transition is often stated, in truth, little real action has been taken to do anything to drive change.

It has been difficult for the Armed Forces to recognise the complexity of modern family units, and we often heard the suggestion that the “concept of family needs to be carefully considered, as there are lots of different styles of family.” Several felt “a huge relief when the MOD recognised gay marriage and civil marriage,” but “the serving community is a small ‘c’ conservative community” and needs to continue to move forwards. Much can be achieved if the right tone and language are used. However, “at a recent Mess dinner, I heard some stuff that made me think that people don’t understand the terminology – they are struggling to see people as just people.” In terms of the MOD keeping pace with society, some have the impression that, rather than becoming more aligned, “... the two have diverged more over the last 20

years. Civil society and its ideas are racing ahead – but the Armed Forces find it difficult to have open and unembarrassed conversations. That worries me, because I see a loss of relevance.”

Issues around racial, ethical and sexual inclusion have caused problems such as bullying and exploitation in the past. The MOD has acknowledged this and in response, commissioned the Wigston Review which made 36 recommendations, all of which were accepted. Some of these are about improving the complaints system and processes, but the majority are about preventing instances of inappropriate behaviour occurring in the first place. Most noticeably, we heard of the need to rebuild trust in the system. Sometimes, victims felt that their complaint will not be understood or taken seriously. Cultural differentials do not help here; the chain of command is not normally representative of those under their command, so people fear – or experience – unconscious bias.

Senior figures are trying to address this in a number of different ways. For example, General Sir Nick Carter, Chief of the Defence Staff, recently called on all personnel to see the potential in every recruit, irrespective of faith, colour, gender or creed, and to value them for their abilities, “not for what they look like or where they come from”. Despite this, incidents of racism persist, and many we spoke to acknowledged further practical actions are needed.

Alongside the moral reasons for this, there are practical considerations to be taken into account. Given that the young cohort from which the Army in particular recruits is more ethnically diverse than the population as a whole, it needs to improve its image among BAME people to keep its numbers up.²³

The Armed Forces clearly are on a journey to improve diversity. They are not alone. As one interviewee put it, “I thought the military was medieval on racism, until I left and worked elsewhere.”

Example Implication: Greater understanding of and support for the needs of those of different gender, faith and ethnic groups will encourage wider diversity among the Armed Forces and reduce undesirable attrition.

“I thought the military was in the dark ages on racism, until I left and worked elsewhere.”



Lifting Our Sights:

Beyond 2030



Section 7 | Foresights - Charitable Sector

This section identifies ways in which the Armed Forces charitable sector could adapt to the changing needs of its beneficiaries at a time when attitudes towards charities are changing. It explores:

1. The Digitisation of Services
2. Deeper Collaboration
3. Embracing Movements
4. Greater Competition
5. Ideological Rethink
6. Reduced Support



7.1 The Digitisation of Services

The charitable sector embraces digital platforms to improve information flow, data sharing, transparency, and the visibility of impact being delivered.

As with many sectors, charities will progressively seek to use digital platforms, not just to make the most of the increasing quantity and quality of data available, but also to reinvent how their services can be delivered or extended. Although some are still cautious about its potential, “digital has suddenly become a panacea in the eyes of some researchers, who believe apps are needed for everything,” most believe we are at the start of significant change: “It will help charities to drive thinking, identify where the gaps are, and where they can most effectively make a contribution.” Innovative initiatives such as DevicesDotNow, which helps to provide internet access to those who are currently unconnected, and the Coronavirus Tech Handbook, were cited as good examples of the transformational potential data can offer.

Although starting from a pretty low base, as “there is a huge data gap – we don’t even know how many veterans there are”, most consider that we are now at a point of inflection: “The Covid-19 crisis has driven home to most charities that you must have digital channels.” But it has also made digital inequalities more obvious; “those who are already in the most at-risk situations generally don’t have access, so digitisation is compounding their risk.”

Some charity executives “look at digital with a degree of apprehension, rather more as a threat than an opportunity,” and it is clear that adapting to the digital environment will take time and upfront investment, and will present challenges, particularly for established organisations dependent on volunteers with little or no experience. “We are

possibly in a generational shift, in the interregnum and not dealing with it very well. But it's a generational shift on steroids, so we will have to adapt."

Although this may still be disorienting for some, there is a sense of optimism that there will be significant positive change in the decade ahead. "Data is much more powerful, in a way, than charities simply reporting on their outcomes – it shows what people really need." If used collaboratively, it can certainly help the sector better understand the needs of their beneficiaries and their families. On one level, it provides granularity about those who are vulnerable; "we have data from financial hardship charities and grant-making organisations in this space, and can now look geographically at where demand lies regionally." On another, it "offers further user involvement – there is more space for veterans themselves to help shape the strategy of Armed Forces charities ... I don't mean those on the board; I mean those likely to need to use the services."

Of course, there are likely to be changes brought about by increasing the use of digital platforms to address the challenges of transition by ex-Service personnel themselves. But more significant is the possibility for service providers not only to find new ways of reaching out to those in need, but also to deliver far more personalised services based on better data and more integrated datasets. Looking specifically at the Transition Journey, digitally delivered and recorded resettlement packages provided during the 'Preparing' phases of the journey, for example, could be connected with the kinds of service provision that are sought and given during the 'Integrating' and 'Settling' phases. Similarly, digital health records (or other records of service use) could be used to greatly enhance the ability of the service providers encountered in a later stage to deliver meaningful help to ex-Service personnel experiencing hard times.

Example Implication: Digital-first service delivery will allow bespoke support pathways to be created and easily accessed by beneficiaries, but this may challenge established working processes.

"We are possibly in a generational shift, in the interregnum and not dealing with it very well. But it's a generational shift on steroids, so we will have to adapt."



7.2 Deeper Collaboration

Common ambitions, better partnerships, co-design initiatives, and shared funding allow some charities to align their activities for more effective impact.

Many of those we interviewed agreed that, accelerated by austerity and Covid-19, the UK Armed Forces charity sector is entering a period of significant readjustment. This, in part, reflects concerns over future funding, but more a belief that there are probably too many of them for the projected size of the veteran community in the coming decade, albeit a community with an increasingly diverse range and complexity of needs. Many agreed that "we must do things radically differently. We will be more collaborative, more systemic, and make time to take a moment to pause and work out what we were trying to achieve in the first place." The hope is that when organisations with a common aim work together, they can cut costs, improve outcomes, and reduce duplication. As a result, they can better reach and support the beneficiaries and their families over a longer period.

Co-designed opportunities include the gathering of data and the sharing of information. Although “it is not as well developed as in the wider charity sector”, initiatives such as the Veterans Gateway offer good examples of how recent and long since-served transitioners and their families can be helped, by providing access to relevant resources and information from a network of organisations. From a government perspective, the recently established Office for Veterans’ Affairs (OVA) aims to facilitate collaboration between departments. Hopes around its future impact are high: “If the OVA took the generation of research under its wing, then you would have evidence already inside government, and it would really help to make a difference.” Also, “if it does its job right and builds the environment in government that understands veterans’ needs, within the context of what wider society needs, and has great services for them so that for each department, veterans are business as usual, then in ten years’ time we shouldn’t need it.”

In addition to collaboration between each other, some propose greater partnerships with the police, the emergency services, and other organisations dealing with similar sorts of issues. The Armed Forces Covenant supports this type of cross-working. It sets out the relationship between the nation, the government, and the Armed Forces, and establishes how the Armed Forces Community should expect to be treated, offering the basis for future co-operation between charities, local government, and multiple corporations. Some felt that its very existence has already been sufficient to drive change: “Sometimes I feel we are done here.” But others disagree: “You are supposed to have veterans’ champions within a Local Authority, but there is a massive disconnect between Armed Forces life and what local government can provide. More needs to be done around mental health and housing provision. All of these things can only be solved at local level, but I’m not sure the understanding is there.”

Some felt that the problem around collaboration really lies more specifically with the Armed Forces charity sector itself, although work is being done to address this.” On a practical level, it seems that most charity staff are prepared to co-operate with each other; “the issue is how to get senior leaders working collaboratively better. They talk a good game, but people still have an urge to make their organisation look the most effective.” Sometimes we heard little enthusiasm for the idea at all; “charities, for all the thunder and lightning, are still business organisations. While they determinedly work for beneficiaries – I suspect they are blind to their own organisational ego, and the sense of self-preservation that this places on themselves.” As one participant observed, “this doesn’t actually benefit the ultimate beneficiaries.”

New collaborative models are already being explored by some. Expect others to follow suit; “For some time, we have been aware of the need to drive efficiency and rationalisation in our sector – too much duplication, too many organisations, too many staff – not as much as people think, but still, change is needed.”

Example Implication: As funders align on key priorities, a series of under-resourced but possibly high impact common interest, niche service gaps are emerging.

“For some time, we have been aware of the need to drive efficiency and rationalisation in our sector – too much duplication, too many organisations, too many staff – not as much as people think, but still, change is needed.”



7.3 Embracing Movements

More nimble hybrids combine the strength of charity with the fluidity and freedom of people-powered movements.

Today, more people are tiring of traditional fundraising organisations and are uniting around particular issues that matter. People-powered movements are on the up. The growth of decentralised networks and the immediacy of social media have made it possible to connect millions to a single cause. All over the world, individuals have self-organised behind a hashtag and, through this, have tried to drive significant change for something that matters to them. Many find this liberating. “These organisations are seeking to avoid being formalised, which is part of their attraction.” Established charities find this is both an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity is to develop an ongoing relationship with an energetic new support base. The challenge is how to embrace or work with them within the constraints of charity regulation, particularly when there is often no defined leadership or governance structure in place, and they do not have the infrastructure to deliver services.

Capitalising on grass-roots support is of course not new. Indeed, in the UK, the Armed Forces charity Help for Heroes is well known for its ability to motivate millions over a short time period. Inspired by the seemingly inadequate care given to injured soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, it sparked a wave of idealism and patriotism among its supporters and was able to grow into a multimillion-pound phenomenon as a result. “Help for Heroes appeared because there was a glaring gap in provision, and so a new organisation stepped in to fill the gap.” Much has been learned from successes such as this, but ten years on, when support for causes is even more fluid and informal, we heard caution, “I don’t think the Cobseo charities

are thinking like that – not thinking about it with a broad holistic agenda.”

Movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM), #MeToo, and XR (Extinction Rebellion) all provide examples of the way in which people are now choosing to spend their energy, and importantly, donate money. They believe that giving directly to a cause, rather than through a formal charity, provides a flow of future cash directly to the front line. “These organisations are seeking to avoid being formalised, which is part of their attraction for people.”

This allows flexibility, and as long as change is happening, few have questioned where the money flows. “XR or BLM – these are unregulated; no one quite knows where the money is going, but people can see the impact.” This lack of clarity may only be acceptable in the short term. As they evolve, some see the inevitability of movements becoming less fluid, in order to continue to drive and measure positive impact: “If they want a financially resilient model, they may have to change, because with that, and the need to attract funds, comes greater governance and safeguarding.” Already there are, for example, “lots of internal conversations in XR about having a legitimate arm to collect money.”

Movements are also seen by some as the fastest way to create political policy change, particularly where orthodox advocacy has demonstrably failed to deliver change at pace. Greta Thunberg’s Fridays for Future international climate movement is a case in point. By overtly representing the voice of the people on a single issue, it becomes harder for policy makers to ignore, particularly when they themselves are elected democratically.

Looking ahead, this could go in two ways. Today’s cause-driven movements do indeed become hybrids – more formalised organisations that can fit within the established governance of charities. More disruptively, cause-driven movements scale and capitalise on the support for their new approaches – becoming major conduits for future funding flows, and so leaving traditional charities behind.

Example Implication: Foundations and charities change core policies to better enable working with appropriate grass-roots movements, and the charity regulation framework adapts to support these changes.

“These organisations are seeking to avoid being formalised, which is part of their attraction.”



7.4 Greater Competition

Reduced budgets and rising demand for services drives a shift in funding priorities. Demonstrating efficiency increases competition between charities.

Across all sectors, many are struggling to cope with significant financial shortfalls caused by years of austerity, soaring demand for their services, and more recently, lost income due to the coronavirus pandemic. Those with more diversified income streams are often more resilient. Looking ahead, many charities will be obliged to compete for a shrinking amount of financial support. “The sector is going to undergo a painful few years – there is a large number of charities – this is unsustainable; there are too many people chasing the money.”

The absolute amount of charitable giving in the UK generally stays remarkably stable, both through economic cycles and over time. However, which organisations benefit does change; “If people give to disasters or emergencies, they tend to give less elsewhere.” In recent years, there has been a swing towards better-off people shouldering more of the giving and lower participation by the less well-off. Looking ahead, it seems likely that the economic consequence of the pandemic will hit the incomes

of an increasingly large cohort, so charities may do well to review their fundraising efforts. “There’s an economic crisis looming, and we don’t know where it is going to land. Government funding will be cut, and so will funding for the third sector. It will be brutal in the next 3 years, which will have impact over the next 10.”

Alongside economic pressures, rather than public support for the Armed Forces, the environment, racism, health and mental health issues are often top of mind. This change in attitudes is particularly clear between generations. Frequently in conversations with informed leaders, we heard comments such as, “my 20-year-old children think fundamentally differently to me on racism, collaboration, and the environment.” This has an impact on their philanthropic interests and where they choose to give support.

People donate funds for myriad reasons, and these can change depending on circumstances. We heard, “Whether people care more about themselves and their family or the community generally goes in big pendulum swings. The pandemic has caused a shift in national consciousness; it feels like we’re in a community moment.” Although it is important to ensure that charitable funds are put to good use, for many the efficiency of these funds may not be the primary reason for donating. Quite basic items like religious affiliation and values, to do with responsibility and compassion, are still important. Over the next decade, the changes in what people find important may present a challenge for the Armed Forces community. As the generation with deep-rooted family connections to the military grows old, alternative sources of revenue may need to be found. “The Armed Forces Community is shrinking, and therefore the veterans’ Community is also shrinking.”

In the years ahead, all charities will face challenges in raising funds. Those organisations which have not had a high profile during the pandemic will face the difficult task of attracting support, when the public's attention is elsewhere. Moreover, certainly for the foreseeable future, they will be limited in what they can do to raise money. Pretty much all fundraising events in 2020 and 2021 were cancelled. Many charity shops had to shut because of the lockdown, and confidence in the safety of public gatherings is at an all-time low. The prevailing view during many of our discussions was that over the next decade, "The Service charities will have difficulty, simply because the profile of the military will have significantly declined, as the WW2 cohort will have left us; and it is unlikely that a major conflict is on the cards to raise the profile. The Service charities will be in a tough financial place at the same time as the government runs out of cash."

It is not all bad news. We often heard the view that the Armed Forces charities provide a vital role, and that central and local government are attracted to operating with their support, because of the sense of mission, independence, and trust they bring. Although many face "a perfect storm of increased requirement and reduced means," the need for their services remains hugely important. The challenge is to preserve these qualities, even as some are called upon to deliver what were traditionally considered to be public services. Over the next ten years, we may well see "a new phase of (more) professional but smaller number of charities – with potential for closer engagement with government, and recognition that the charities are doing what the government should really be doing in accordance with the Covenant." Moreover, as more data enables greater transparency, the ability to better interrogate individual charity and grant performance will increase substantially. This drives both greater internal efficiencies, as well as easier comparison between organisations.

Example Implication: As public priorities change, support for the Armed Forces charity community

may be marginalised in favour of different causes and calls to action. As a result, there will be increased scrutiny of charities' relative effectiveness and efficiency.

"The Service charities will be in a tough financial place at the same time as the government runs out of cash."



7.5 Ideological Rethink

Increased pressure on services heralds a realignment around charitable purpose. There is a greater focus on responding to immediate needs, rather than policy development.

In 2020, the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, publicly described charities' "gentleness" as their hallmark contribution to the national effort against Covid-19: "At this time, when many are hurting and tired and confined, we need the gentleness of charity in our lives." We heard a number of different views in reaction to this comment. To some, it marked a clear ideological shift from previous administrations, and a curtailment of power from the charities; to others, it was more a reflection about the centralisation of government. "This government is more ruthless, but also more romantic in a way." In the eyes of one charity leader, "Rishi meant his comment as a compliment. He is very far from being the only person to express a limited, partial view of charities, as if he were describing the whole."

It is certainly clear that this incident has served to highlight the need for the third sector to re-evaluate its relationship with the state. "It has been a real wake-up call. Charities thought they enjoyed a bigger profile with the government. It was around building and delivering public services, supporting

the Big Society, about volunteering and local action. But over the last six months, there has been a real downgrading of charities' relationship with government. Almost a hostility towards them." One suggestion we heard was that there are those in government who "wouldn't mind seeing some charities fail, for them to be replaced by volunteerism or local community support. They think there should be less lobbying or hard-edged, policy-based charity."

Not everyone agreed with this. Rather than see it as a problem, they prefer to turn it into an opportunity to shine a light onto the need to add new rigour into the delivery of services. They argue that influencing policymaking is a key tenet of the third sector, and because of their unique relationship with those in need of support, charities should continue to speak truth to power: "Many charities are rightly none-too-gentle, as they give voice to the oppressed, and challenge injustices like modern slavery, patriarchy, racism, environmental destruction, or the other evil giants of our day." However, they acknowledge the need to be more professional in the delivery of this "truth", and emphasise the importance of evidence-based research to identify need, and validate activity. Although many charities produce excellent evidence, based on their experience of service delivery, and indeed have achieved significant policy changes, this is not the case for everyone. We heard, "Some charities are extremely professional, but overall, one of the greatest problems with the sector is that the way they approach evidence is too simplistic." Looking ahead, "just frankly having some useful data built off strong qualitative and quantitative evidence – to show all stakeholders the areas where we need to work together to fix them, would really make a difference."

Example Implication: Charities need to develop the skills and capability to capture high-quality robust evidence, in order to make the case for change when needed. This should be recognised by those who fund their services.

"Frankly, having some useful data built off strong qualitative and quantitative evidence – to show all stakeholders the areas where we need to work together to fix them, would really make a difference."



7.6 Reduced Support

A struggling economy, changing welfare state and a challenged Armed Forces charity sector reduces the depth and breadth of transition support.

The consequences of the pandemic on the UK economy will be felt for decades and raise serious questions about future government funding, including its support of the MOD, the third sector and the labour market. Despite a rise in need, it is expected that services across the board will face a double hit, increased demand, and a decline in available funding. Limited resources will be the elephant in the room, and those who are most vulnerable will suffer.

Certainly, the pandemic's effect on the Armed Forces charities makes sobering reading. The Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report for 2020 states that members reported that fundraising had reduced by up to 60%, and that 30% of respondents were likely to have exhausted their reserves within 12 months. Worse still, 18% of charities predicted that they would have to close or merge within a year. The majority of charities anticipated a reduction in the services that they provide.

Most likely, the larger military charities have the resources to tide them through, and will be able to continue to earn income from providing government-backed services. At the other extreme, small organisations will likely also be protected because generally they have a particular role in local communities, and will therefore maintain support. Medium-sized organisations may suffer most.

Some we talked to believed a reshuffle of the charity sector would be beneficial in the long term. Although a recent report from the Directory of Social Change (DSC) suggests the contrary, they argued that the Armed Forces are over-catered for in comparison with others, and that a reorganisation would mean greater efficiency in service; “At the moment, there is an abundance of support for our serving personnel and veteran community. At times, there is too much.” They suggested a proactive approach is needed to make service provision more efficient. “Our challenge is about the delivery model. The question is less about a decline in funding – and more about how we apply the collective system differently. We should consider shared charitable funding, more collaboration, fusing organisations together and integrating services.” One suggestion was to include a risk analysis to identify which charities should remain funded by Government, and which by public donations; another was to instigate a re-evaluation of the Community Interest Company (CIC) as an alternative structure and funding model.

Looking ahead, we heard real appetite for the need for change, and recognition of the challenges that this could present. “It’s not that there isn’t a huge amount of support, but the co-ordination of it is a challenge. Cobseo is there in part to provide that – but there are inevitably politics ‘with a small p’ at play, with experienced leaders from a range of organisations who want to see their charity as the most important. Covid-19 might be the existential threat that makes people operate differently.”


This may mean that the spotlight on those in transition may focus only on those who need it most. “Those that have the most difficulty in transitioning are those that are the least well equipped to find other jobs. If we are short of resources, then the focus should be on those that will struggle the most.” Historically, the challenge has been a lack of data to help identify this cohort. Early Service Leavers are particularly difficult to reach, not least because many do not identify themselves as veterans.


Example Implication: The pandemic acts as a catalyst for fundamental change around the provision of support services for the Armed Forces. Although adjustment is difficult, the result delivers more targeted and effective care.


At the moment, there is an abundance of support for our serving personnel and veteran community. At times, there is too much.... Covid-19 might be the existential threat that makes people operate differently.”


Mapping Foresights to the Transition Journey


Mapping Foresights to the Transition Journey




















Joining

Serving

Preparing

Threshold

Confronting

Integrating

Settling

Landing

Impact

Change

Changing Perceptions									H	H
Living in Civilian Society									H	H
New Transitioners									H	H
Holistic Transition									H	M
Reskilling, Upskilling and the Skills Gap									H	M
Changing Characteristics of Conflict									H	M
More Devolved Power									M	H
The Blurring of Work									M	H
Continuous Transition									M	M
Fitting In									M	M
Reduced Support									M	M
Rising Inequality									M	M
Greater Integration									M	M
Data and Automation									M	M
Improved Digital Connectivity									M	M
Building Communities									M	M
Shifting Power and Influence									M	M
Climate and Ecological Crises									M	M
Smarter Talent									M	M
Greater Competition									M	L
UK Leadership in Key Sectors									M	L
The Digitisation of Services									M	L
Deeper Collaboration									L	M
Declining Economic Influence									L	M
Regions of Connection									L	L
Supporting Civilian Authorities									L	L
Landing Well									L	L
A Changing Demographic Mix									L	L
Accelerating to Zero Carbon									L	L
Ideological Rethink									L	L
Embracing Movements									L	L
Measuring Progress									L	L

Lifting Our Sights:

Beyond 2030

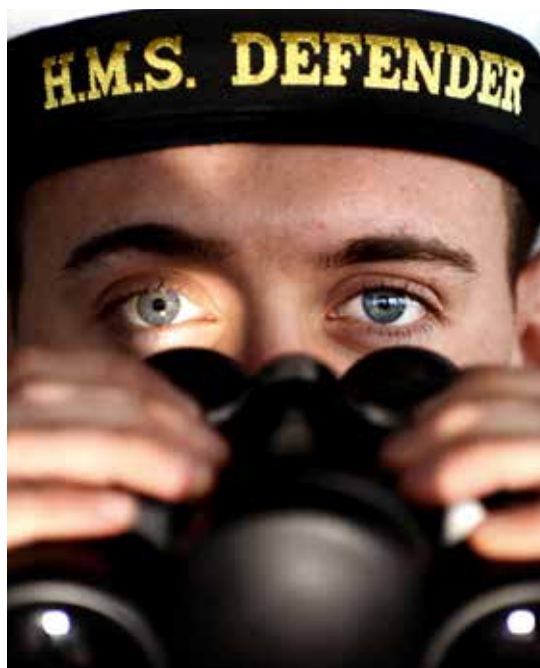


Section 8 | Implications

As the foresights have revealed, the next decade is one which heralds significant change for us all. This presents both opportunities and challenges. How to operate in a digital age, how to address the global threat of climate change, and how to build a more equitable society, are common concerns that organisations, large or small, will have to address. At the same time, advances in technology will mean that traditional ways of working are being upended, and changing social attitudes are heralding a shift in the public's support for traditional institutions. All this when the plethora of opinions and counter opinions have never been so extreme, contradictory and accessible. What then are the specific implications for the Armed Forces Community, and the men, women and families who, over the next decade, will experience transition?

The foresights in this report can, and we hope will, be applied by many of the organisations working to support those in transition and their families. Each will reveal a number of different implications and opportunities, depending on their particular needs and circumstances. However, to help cement our insights and recommendations into the current narrative, we have used as a baseline the 2018 Strategy for Our Veterans (see Appendix). In addition to providing a framework for further discussion, we hope to inform the next iteration of the strategy, which is due in 2023. We begin with what we see as wider priority areas that require action, and then, in Section 8, specifically address the key themes that are identified in the strategy itself.

Further information and a tool kit to help you strengthen your own strategy and innovation agenda can be found at www.liftingoursights.org



Priority Action Areas

To knit together the varied elements gained from the dialogue, we held three workshops to help to group and prioritise them in a way that would enable us to make recommendations and seed action. This yielded four priority action areas. These are not mutually exclusive, but help to clarify where there is most opportunity to impact outcomes for future veterans and their families. They are:

Priority Action Area 1 – Empowering the System:

Ensuring that the wider military and the civilian ecosystems that matter most have a collective understanding of the transition journey, and are supported by more collaborative data sharing, alongside greater clarity around measurement and accountability.

Priority Action Area 2 – Personalising the

Transition Process: Shifting support services so that transition is defined by the individual circumstances of serving personnel and their families. An important component of this shift is likely to be earlier dialogue, leading to earlier ‘pre-emptive’ support activity.

Priority Action Area 3 – Empowered Civilian:

Equipping ex-Service personnel to lead successful and fulfilled lives by helping them to take more responsibility for their lives in the military and beyond.

Priority Action Area 4 – Accurate Perception:

Broadening and improving public understanding of the role of the Armed Forces and the transferrable skills of Service personnel at a time of major change in society, the world of work, and the capabilities of the Armed Forces.



Priorities and Recommendations

Priority Action Areas				
	Empowering the System	Personalise the Transition Process	Empowered Civilian	Accurate Perception
Summary	Ensuring that the wider military and the civilian ecosystems that matter most have a collective understanding of the transition journey, and are supported by more collaborative data sharing, alongside greater clarity around measurement and accountability.	Shifting support services so that transition is defined by the individual circumstances of serving personnel and their families. An important component of this shift is likely to be earlier dialogue, leading to earlier 'pre-emptive' support activity.	Equipping ex-Service personnel to lead successful and fulfilled lives by helping them to take more responsibility for their lives in the military and beyond.	Broadening and improving public understanding of the role of the Armed Forces and the transferrable skills of Service personnel at a time of major change in society, the world of work, and the capabilities of the Armed Forces.
Recommendations	Common journey Precise accountability Data-led and enabled Target incentivisation Informed recruitment Greater collaboration	Segmented approach In-Service preparation Formalising exit Creating self-supporting communities Nimble services	My responsibility Essential help Technical standards	Narrow the perception gap Value recognition and attainment Increase permeability Manage the expectation gap

We now explore each Priority Action Area, and make a series of recommendations within each.

Priority Action Area 1 – Empowering the system

Ensuring that the wider military and the civilian ecosystems that matter most have a collective understanding of the transition journey, and are supported by more collaborative data sharing, alongside greater clarity around measurement and accountability.

High-level recommendations:

1. Common Journey. Adopt a common transition journey framework as a bedrock to improve focus, co-ordination and improvement of transition outcomes. Consider developing an ideal future journey to work towards and contribute to. An example is provided in Section 10.

2. Precise accountability. Ensure clarity of accountability, budget and target metrics at each stage of the transition journey – including independent governance and overall oversight.

3. Data-led and enabled. Develop and embed a universal system of metrics and data collection to assist with the support of and reporting on those in transition and their families. Determine how shared data can be used to measure, inform and enhance transition outcomes for existing and future veterans, and provide visibility to appropriate service providers.

4. Target incentivisation. Extend the Guaranteed Interview Scheme beyond the civil service and large corporates. Explore the use of other tactical employment incentives suitable for SMEs.

5. Informed recruitment. As the recruitment needs for the Armed Forces change, so too will the profiles of those who are in transition. Use data to better understand the changing characteristics of serving men and women, and map how these flow into transition outcomes across the UK. Support and recruitment can then adapt, based on the insights produced.

6. Greater collaboration. Actively promote co-operation and co-ordination between service providers. Initiate collaborative experimentation around emerging opportunities for new income streams and service provision.

The use of data is seen as critical to enabling better outcomes for veterans and their families in transition over the next decade. Establishing accurate data on the transitioning population is the key to better planning and resourcing across the sector. Adjacent to this is the need to develop and embed a universal system of metrics and data collection to assist with the support of, and reporting on, veteran outcomes.

In order to provide timely and effective support, it is important that transitioners and their families are seen, heard and understood. Having access to accurate data is key. A better understanding of the numbers, locations, age ranges and needs of the nation's veterans will enable the Government, the NHS, and Service charities to target resources and expertise where they can be most effective; measurable outcomes will also allow for greater accountability and transparency, so potential problems can be identified and therefore rectified in a timely way. The current challenge is that data is trapped in silos across multiple different systems. The new 2021 census information will rectify this to some extent, providing those serving in the military, regulars and reserves, veterans and their families with the opportunity to record their connection with the Armed Forces. However, it will only offer a partial picture. Our discussions repeatedly revealed the pressing need for richer, more timely data about those in transition.

To address this, we would suggest the creation of a database that, with their consent, identifies and monitors the needs of all transitioners and their families. The MOD, local government and the Armed Forces charities should be full and active partners in this process, contributing knowledge, expertise and their own existing data. Once established, this should be accessible to Armed Forces charities and government services, with a view to informing the allocation of resources across all veterans in this group.

There is also a need for greater collaboration. Many we spoke to see the need for a different way of working across and between organisations, and advocated for deeper and wider collaboration in order to make the most of shared assets, avoid duplication, reduce costs and identify need. This is of particular importance to smaller charities looking for ways to create a sustainable long-term future. Given the nature and variety of organisations involved in supporting ex-Service personnel, initiating wide scale collaboration may meet with some resistance. However, at a time when budgets are tight and the needs of those in transition are expected to become increasingly complex, a more pragmatic approach to care and support is clearly needed. The Directory of Social Change has recently published a holistic review of the organisations involved in the provision of care and the care pathways they manage, but as it is an ever-changing landscape, this needs to happen on a systematic and ongoing manner. We recognise that this will not be easy, given the number of small organisations without formal associations, but it will help to identify areas of duplication and potential inefficiency, and reveal wider collaboration opportunities and potential for new income streams and service provision.

Priority Action Area 2: Personalising the Transition Process

Shifting support services so that transition is defined by the individual circumstances of serving personnel and their families. An important component of this is likely to be earlier dialogue, leading to earlier 'pre-emptive' support activity.

High-level recommendations:

1.Segmented approach. To have maximum effect, resources must be prioritised according to need. Develop a needs-led segmentation across the full transition journey.

2.In-Service preparation. Build transition and life skills as part of mandatory training throughout a Service career, with the MOD having clear accountability for its outcomes.

3.Formalising exit. Leaving personnel to be offered a formal passing out/graduation ceremony on exit (e.g. a rite of exit as powerful as the existing rites of entry).

4.Creating self-supporting communities. Make it easy for transitioners to access the services and help that they need online - including informal peer support.

5.Nimble services. Regularly review transition service provision to ensure that it will cater for the future needs of a changing demographic, and changed future operations that will also be user led and individually tailored.

Whilst many of the issues faced by those in transition broadly fall into a set of identifiable buckets, the way in which they are experienced by each transitioner is often highly individual. Personalised transition support, as with the wider advances in personalised health and social care, will increasingly require more flexible approaches to service planning, commissioning and delivery. This shift away from 'one-size-fits-all' towards more personalised transition support, will also support the expected change in both diversity and experience of those leaving Service.

Service providers will need to be empowered and enabled to operate beyond the constraints of specific silos. Holistic assessments of need that include both ex-Service personnel and their families or support network, coupled with the ability to act meaningfully on the issues they identify, is perhaps an obvious call, but the broader landscape of transition will also need to be working in concert with such ambitions. For example, preparing those in Service to reach out for the help and support they might need once back in civilian life would allow for more effective self-referral, and more open conversation. Ensuring that families are involved in support plans and interventions, from the outset, would allow for more context-rich understandings of need, and more effective packages of support tailored to specific individual circumstances. Coupling emotional support with practical support services would help to ensure that the psychological impacts of the processes of transition are identified as they arise.

Whilst we recognise that many of these things happen already, albeit in part and informally, our suggestion is more targeted at a full re-orientation of 'the system' around these kinds of personalised service delivery. This would be matched by a simultaneous attempt to empower ex-Service personnel themselves, both during and after Service, with the right tools and skills to be able to confidently articulate their needs and reach out for help when needed, thereby taking a more proactive

role in defining and addressing the more difficult moments of their transition.

Priority Action Area 3: Empowered Civilian

Equipping ex-Service personnel to lead successful and fulfilled lives by helping them to take more responsibility for their lives in the military and beyond.

High-level recommendations:

1. My responsibility. Support Armed Forces personnel to take control and responsibility for their own career, both in the military and beyond; regular mentoring, support with CV writing, interview advice and training support are all currently available to those in transition; however, wider awareness of and easier access to this is needed to maximise uptake.

2. Essential help. Make registration [and initial contact] with Career Transition Partnership mandatory for all Armed Forces personnel, including for Early Service Leavers.

3. Technical standards. Ensure all Armed Forces personnel have a minimum standard level of literacy, and technological and digital skills.

Over the next decade, around half of all transitioners are expected to be of working age, so in all likelihood, the majority of those in transition will be looking for a job on leaving the Armed Forces. Ensuring they are prepared for civilian life and employment is not only important for their wellbeing, but it will also reduce the potential use of government services in the event that they need help. In addition to having to deal with the complexities of setting up a new home, the majority of transitioners are likely to be entering the civilian workplace for the first time, and so the working practices which others take for granted will be

unfamiliar. Hard and soft skills training, mentoring, and opportunities for day release and temporary work placements will help to familiarise them, as they prepare for the next stage in their career. Much of this is available on a voluntary basis through Careers Advice Training (CAT). This has already had noticeable success; an estimated 86% of Service leavers who used it in 2018/19 were employed within six months of leaving the Armed Forces, and a further 8% were either in full-time education, training or not actively looking for work. (Veterans Factsheet 2020). But it is not mandatory. We suggest that all Service leavers should be obliged to take part. In addition to technical skills training, there is a clear need for more advice around how best to identify and articulate the soft and hard skills learned while in uniform, and to explore ways in which these can be adapted and applied to the civilian world. Again, mandatory participation in pre-transition training would help to address this. In addition, better coordination and alignment around military qualifications, standards and accreditation, and among civilian employers, will help future employers understand how to make the most of their new recruits.

Priority Action Area 4: Accurate Perception

Broadening and improving public understanding of the role of the Armed Forces and the transferrable skills of Service personnel at a time of major change in society, the world of work, and the capabilities of the Armed Forces.

High-level recommendations:

1. Narrow the perception gap. Initiate and measure, with urgency and clear accountability, an ongoing programme of activity to ensure the public and business communities better understand the purpose, role and operations of the Armed Forces and those that serve or who have served. This could include closer collaboration with schools and

colleges, and best practice sharing across local government. There should be proactive initiatives to tackle the rise of misinformation, particularly on social media.

2. Value recognition and attainment. Better communicate the transferrable skills and qualifications offered by the Armed Forces to business. Provide resources to help business and society quantify and understand the value that Service leavers can bring to civilian life and identify ways in which these can be optimised.

3. Increase permeability. Broaden the extent and increase the volume of secondments and internships at all levels between the Armed Forces and business.

4. Manage the expectation gap. There is a perception that those in the Armed Forces are separate from the general civilian population. Although this may build team spirit and unity for those in uniform, it can also cause challenges for those in transition, as they search for their new place in society. To address this, greater investment should be made to re-establish a collective understanding of the commonalities between the values and behaviours of those serving in the Armed Forces and those of the wider civilian society.

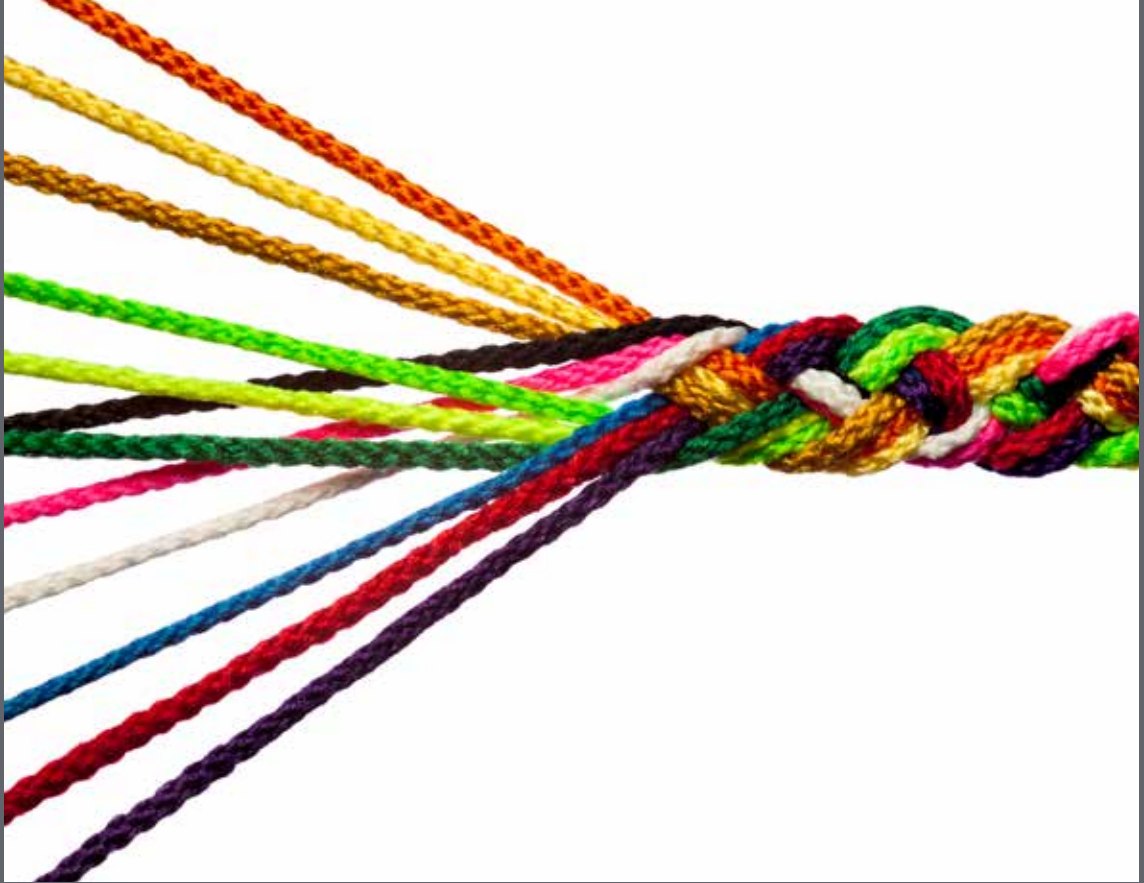
The Armed Forces are currently undergoing fundamental changes. As the 2021 Integrated Review and associated Defence Review both clearly state, alongside having to prepare for the more traditional battle grounds, emerging cyber, electromagnetic, and biowarfare threats are changing the very nature of defence.^{24,25} At the same time, there is little public awareness of the extent and variety of roles those in the Armed Forces are exposed to. Therefore it is difficult for prospective employers to understand the skills that future ex-Service personnel will bring, and the specific needs they might have in order to more

easily adapt to civilian life. Key to this is the unhelpful perception that the Armed Forces are different to civilians. Greater effort is needed to break down this cultural barrier. This in part will be helped by the FAM, but from an employment perspective, formal alignment around skills recognition is needed, including soft skills such as leadership, perseverance and creative thinking. Greater interaction between the Armed Forces and the civilian workplaces, through day release placements

or project-based initiatives, would help build trust and understanding on both sides of the wire. Rather than consider schools visits and local engagement initiatives as recruitment opportunities, the Armed Forces should consider taking a more educational role in the broader community, proactively explaining their role and purpose in civil society. Greater engagement with formal education initiatives would also help, for example by being included in the PSHE or Citizenship curriculum.







Section 9 | What does this all mean for the themes in the Strategy For Our Veterans?

Alongside a series of cross-cutting factors, the Strategy for Our Veterans (see Appendix) identifies 6 key themes affecting Veterans' lives. A 2028 strategic outcome was articulated for each. By looking in turn at each of these themes, we were able to identify the most relevant foresights, which Transition Journey stages would be most impacted,

identify the resulting key challenges and, as a result, make the following suggestions as goals for 2030. The aim here is to build future-focused tangibility to the 2028 strategy outcomes expressed in the current Strategy for Our Veterans framework.

1. Community and relationships

Relevant Foresights	Key Journey Stage	Key Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Living in Civilian Society• Changing Perceptions• Measuring Progress• Data and Automation• Holistic Transition• Landing Well• Regions of Connection• Changing Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Threshold• Confronting• Integrating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Holistic Transition.• Living in Society.• Regions of Connection

Suggested Goals by 2030 (as identified by the Lifting Our Sights foresights)

Service families and spouses are afforded holistic transition and resettlement support, as well as their serving partners, and where necessary, cultural reintegration to UK civil society.

All Service personnel in each UK posting must have at least one community commitment outside of the Armed Forces.

A common standard of training and education in understanding the Armed Forces Community and veterans' needs is achieved throughout Government public facing services, Local Authorities and the NHS.

A network of >30 exemplar communities are proud to welcome and are set up to integrate veterans and their families well.

2. Employment, education and skills

Relevant Foresights	Key Journey Stage	Key Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changing Perceptions• Measuring Progress• Data and Automation• Smarter Talent• Blurring of Work• Landing Well• New Skills• The Digitisation of Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serving• Preparing• Threshold• Integrating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blurring of work• Market and economic volatility• Empower individuals

Suggested Goals by 2030

The MOD provides all Service leavers with comprehensive transition and life skills training.

The MOD ensures all Armed Forces personnel have a minimum (set) standard level of STEM, technological and digital skills.

The MOD (working with charities) offers every Service leaver and their spouse, access to a mentor through transition.

The MOD offers members of the Armed Forces the ability to access civilian internships/placements.

Career transition training and preparation takes a more localised approach reflecting local economy and business opportunities.

3. Finance and debt

Relevant Foresights	Key Journey Stage	Key Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measuring Progress • Data and Automation • Changing Communities • The Digitisation of Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing • Integrating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK debt servicing • Financial complexity • Pensions challenged

Suggested Goals by 2030

All serving personnel and their families have access on a needs basis, to basic money management training and financial planning advice throughout their career.

All serving personnel and their families are offered training to ensure a good understanding of the financial realities of civilian life.

Existing credit union and savings schemes are extended and promoted to serving personnel to encourage building a firm foundation for transition, with flexibility to renegotiate terms for life after service.

Continued engagement over the next decade with the financial services sector, which should be encouraged to identify and remove disadvantage for Service Personnel and their families when accessing financial products.

4. Health and Wellbeing

Relevant Foresights	Key Journey Stage	Key Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changing Characteristics of Conflict• Measuring Progress• Data and Automation• Holistic Transition• Continuous Transition• The Digitisation of Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serving• Confronting• Landing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrating care• Unclear accountability exacerbated• Awareness of veterans in the system

Suggested Goals by 2030

All health and social care professionals receive education and training in the specific needs of the veteran community

Every Veteran is provided with direct access, where required, to expert mental and physical health services which can meet the needs of ex-Armed Forces and their families.

All veterans with service-related conditions and their families, where appropriate, are offered a free digital health and wellbeing monitoring service which provides connectivity to relevant service providers as needed.

Every service leaver and their family leaves the Armed Forces with an NHS and Social Care Plan record and registration into the NHS either via a GP or via a Summary Care Record.

Complete transparency of digital health and aftercare records is achieved between DMS and NHS (e.g. complete digitisation of DMS services and data sharing agreements in place).

Care-focused charity delivery and casework is founded on a common, secure architecture of data transfer, recognised and accessible by the NHS and Social Care.

5. Making a home in civilian society

Relevant Foresights	Key Journey Stage	Key Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in Civilian Society • Regions of Connection • Measuring Progress • Data and Automation • Changing Communities • The Digitisation of Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confronting • Integrating • Settling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living in Society • Changing families and households • Affordable and accessible rental accommodation

Suggested Goals by 2030

The MOD ensures that no Service leavers or their families leave without a stable and adequate housing solution, for the 12 months post-discharge.

The MOD engages with Local Authorities, providing information on Service Leavers moving into their area to assist them in planning, resourcing and scaling their provision of services.

The MOD provides greater data transparency on Service Leavers for Local Authorities, service providers and public bodies to understand the needs of service leavers in the community.

Local Authorities and other statutory housing providers (e.g. Housing Associations) operate a veteran-aware service for identification at the point of presentation and for subsequent support referral.

All Central, Devolved and Local Governments operate a common strategy on veterans homelessness.

6. Veterans and the law

Relevant Foresights	Key Journey Stage	Key Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changing Perceptions• Data and Automation• Landing Well• Holistic Transition• Reducing Support• The Digitisation of Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serving• Confronting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying those in most need• Poor mental health and substance misuse• Offender handling

Suggested Goals by 2030

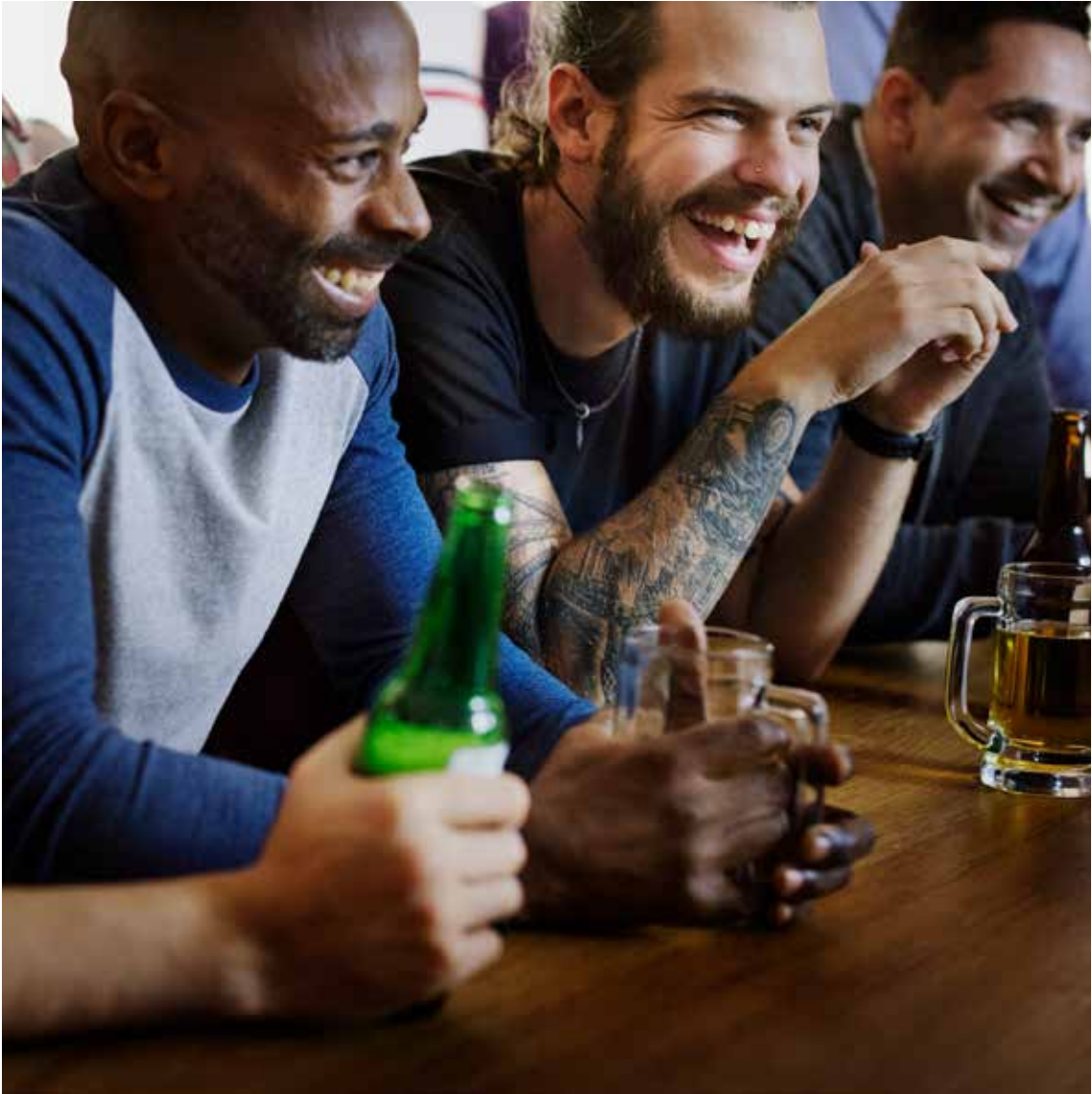
Identify on a needs basis, service personnel who would benefit from training on issues associated with offending after service. This should include preventative techniques and tools to build resilience.

Mechanisms are put in place to effectively identify ex-Services personnel and their families throughout the criminal justice system, with formal support available for families across the UK.

The MOD (working with charities) offers every Service leaver and their families, where appropriate, access to a mentor through transition (See also Employment, Education and Skills).

Adult social care agencies, charities, the police and HMPPS enjoy transparent information exchange on supporting offenders and measures to address recidivism.

All veterans within the UK's separate criminal justice systems have consistent access to effective support, and this support is based on robust needs assessments.



Lifting Our Sights:

Beyond 2030



Section 10 | Conclusion

The aim of this report has been to explore what it really means to transition from the Armed Forces into today's civilian society, and then to look ahead to consider, not only the global, national and sector-specific issues which will shape this experience, but, using the themes from Strategy for Our Veterans, to apply foresight to show how this experience could be improved. Designed to provoke thought across a range of organisations including policy makers, charity and public sector organisations, businesses and those directly working in the Armed Forces, we hope we will succeed in generating conversations that stimulate richer, informed debate around the necessary actions that could be undertaken now to best to prepare for the future.

The next decade is full of uncertainty. As the UK grapples with the consequences of geopolitical change, economic challenge and social unrest, so traditional institutions may have to re-evaluate their position in the public's understanding and consequent support. Charities that support the Armed Forces Community could suffer as a result. This in turn could put pressure on local government and social services – many of which are already hard pressed and overstretched. Much has already been invested in the individuals who serve in the Armed Forces, and many have skills and experience which are highly valued in civilian life, but unless there is better understanding of this among future employers, this investment and their potential could be wasted. This in turn could affect their personal life, potentially causing relationship breakups or family hardship. Providing timely support to ensure that those in transition are “civilian fit”, with the necessary life and professional skills that allow them to adapt to their new reality, is key.

In Section 2, we provided a view of what life is currently like for those in transition today. The picture it paints is of a world where the hard shock of change is difficult, challenging and, for some, too complex to manage. In order to illustrate a way of using the Transition Journey model, along with the various foresights we have shared in Lifting Our Sights, and to provide a useful set of targets to aim for, we end this report by re-imagining transition in an idealised 2030 Future Journey. In this, we assume the foresights presented in Lifting Our Sights have been fully considered and addressed.



Idealised Future Transition Journey

Joining



"When I joined up, I felt that time was taken to explain my future career pathways, both in and beyond the Armed Forces. I was told how the different choices I made whilst in the Armed Forces would influence my post-Armed Forces life. I was also immediately connected with my personal career counsellor, who even took the time to understand my life outside the Armed Forces and understood the world I would go back into. At the time, I didn't know why that was important, but now I am glad they made me do it."

Serving



"I was made aware of the value to the civilian world of every experience I had whilst serving. The skills I learned were described in both military and civilian language, so that I knew instinctively how to describe them to others. I was given lots of opportunities to gain formal civilian accreditations, many of which were paid for me. The implications for my post-military life, of every choice I made about where and how to serve, were clearly explained to me. All of my experience, skills and achievements were recorded in my digital record, in a format that made sense to me and to potential future employers."

Preparing



"Resettlement planning was compulsory. My personal career counsellor had a good sense of the different packages that would be best for me, and was able to refer to my personal record to ensure my plan was right for me. Packages were divided into clear and easy to understand categories, such as 'basic skills' and 'employability'. They ended with a thorough examination of my readiness to re-enter the civilian world, and with a clear plan around everything from housing to health and well-being for my first 100 days beyond the wire. Among my first tasks was a talk with my family to explain to them everything that might happen, and the challenges that might crop up, when I returned home."

Threshold



"On the day I left the Armed Forces, I was given a good send-off. I felt like my contribution had been recognised and that I was re-entering civilian life full of possibilities, and with a positive contribution to make. I felt like I had graduated. I may not have won any medals, but the award of recognition was enough. I had to hand in my Armed Forces ID, but being able to carry my record of achievement with me back to my family and friends felt great."

Confronting



"I found returning to civilian life hard, but I had my 'first 100 days' resettlement plan to keep me on track, and the 7-day-out contact with my personal career adviser was fantastic. I had been feeling down, and she referred me to places where I could get help very close to me. My 21-day-out contact was with an ex-Service person who I'd been introduced to before I left, and that was even better. My family had already met that person too, and we were all able to talk about everything that nobody else seemed to understand. I made sure that I kept in contact with them for a long time afterwards. My wife was also helped to access a social group just for family members of ex-Service personnel, which she says has been helping her to help me."

Integrating



"At first, I had to sign on to collect benefits. This process had been explained to me and I knew it was a common solution. It no longer carried any stigma for me. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do in the longer term, but my resettlement plan and digital record had good suggestions and signposts. Employers understood the skills I had to offer, thanks to my earlier work translating what I had learned while in the Services into civilian language. I felt like I had meaningful options available. I didn't find what I was looking for straight away, but I had already been introduced to the way that Job Centres worked and felt comfortable starting with short-term employment contracts. I never felt like I was moving backwards. I even used my ELCs to explore my passions! My local champion, provided by the local authority and an ex-Service person himself, also keeps in contact to remind me that this time is always challenging. He keeps me on the straight and narrow."

Settling



"Finally, I was able to find a good place to live, with a stable income from a job that suits me. It has been easy to network with old colleagues, thanks to the outreach efforts of local Armed Forces charities, and I have also been welcomed into new social networks through sport and adult evening classes. This has taken a lot of pressure off my family members. I feel comfortable in my new life as a civilian, and I know I have strong support there if I need it. Healthcare and digital connections are also getting better, and that helps to reduce the barriers to finding work and a good social life; things that my predecessors might have found more difficult."

Landing



"I will always be an ex-Service person, and I feel that the public understand what that means. It means I have seen and done some amazing things, and served my country, but that underneath, I am as ordinary as they are. It helps to get me involved more, volunteering with the local kids' athletics club, and jumping into a community gardening project. It turns out that my skills and training are more valuable than I had realised! The Armed Forces Community has done a good job of separating those who have served, from the wider politics and public debate around the military and conflict. Even when there is public controversy, I feel that the work done during quieter times, to make the public aware of who I am, means that I am protected from any anti-forces sentiment that might still exist."

Although the ideal presented here is only **one** way of describing the transition journey 2030, it does allow us to work backwards and think about the steps that might be taken, from today, that might give rise to it. What might it take to create a living digital record of Service, for example, that accurately translated Service experience into civilian skills and expertise? What might need to be done today to ensure that in the future, transition is considered from the moment of joining up? And how might resources start to be reorganised so that every Service person has a personal transition mentor on both sides of the wire?

The transition journey and foresights we have identified have revealed a series of recommendations that could make a significant difference to transitioning personnel, allowing them and their families the opportunity to enjoy happier and more fulfilling lives. We hope that those who read this report will find it a useful tool to make "the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran".

Appendix

The Strategy for Our Veterans

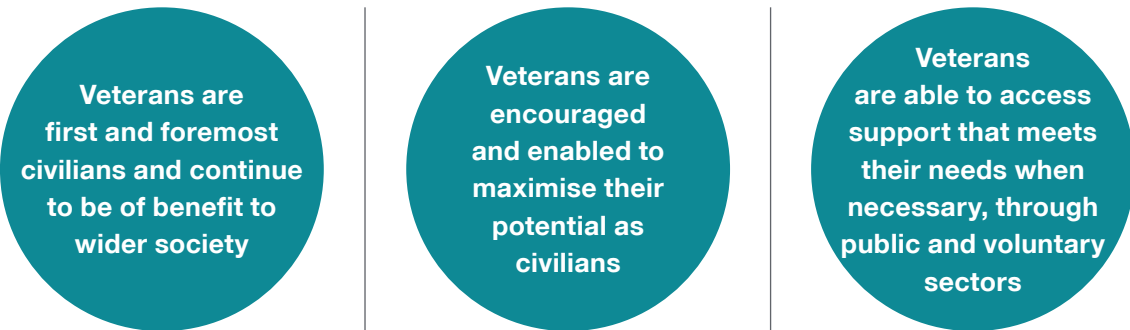
Vision

This Strategy has a 10 year scope to 2028. Through the 10 year timescale, the Strategy addresses the immediate needs of older Veterans as well as setting the right conditions for society to empower - and support - the newer generation. Initiatives and proposals will work towards an enduring Vision articulated by three key principles.

Those who have served in the UK Armed Forces, and their families, transition smoothly back into civilian life and contribute fully to society that understands and values what they have done and what they have to offer.

Principles

The Principles articulate in greater detail the Strategy for our Veterans' Vision



These Principles encompass Regular and Reservist Veterans and where appropriate, their families and the bereaved. The focus is on those Veterans of the UK Armed Forces resident in the UK. In due course, we will consider encompassing Veterans who return to or choose to live overseas. These Principles are consistent with, and underpinned by, the Armed Forces Covenant

Cross-Cutting Factors

That affect service provision for Veterans across all Key Themes



Key Themes

That emerged as affecting Veterans' lives



Community and relationships



Health and wellbeing



Employment, education and skills



Making a home in civilian society



Finance and debt



Veterans and the law

Summary of 2028 Outcomes

Cross-Cutting Factors		
1	Collaboration between organisations	Improved collaboration between organisations offers Veterans coherent support.
2	Coordination of Veterans' services	The coordination of Veterans' provision delivers consistent aims and principles over time and throughout the UK, ensuring Veterans, their families and the bereaved are treated fairly compared to the local population.
3	Data on the Veteran community	Enhanced collection, use and analysis of data across the public, private and charitable sectors to build an evidence base to effectively identify and address the needs of Veterans.
4	Public perception and understanding	The UK population value Veterans and understand their diverse experiences and culture.
5	Recognition of Veterans	Veterans feel that their service and experience is recognised and valued by society.
Key Themes		
1	Community and relationships	Veterans are able to build healthy relationships and integrate into their communities.
2	Employment, education and skills	Veterans enter appropriate employment and can continue to enhance their careers throughout their working lives.
3	Finance and debt	Veterans leave the Armed Forces with sufficient financial education, awareness and skills to be financially self-supporting and resilient.
4	Health and wellbeing	All Veterans enjoy a state of positive physical and mental health and wellbeing, enabling them to contribute to wider aspects of society.
5	Making a home in civilian society	Veterans have a secure place to live either through buying, renting or social housing.
6	Veterans and the law	Veterans leave the Armed Forces with the resilience and awareness to remain law-abiding civilians.

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Forces In Mind Trust

Forces in Mind Trust funds targeted, conceptually sound, evidence generation and influencing activities that allow policymakers and service deliverers to help us achieve our goal.

Each year, approximately 15,000 people leave the UK Armed Forces, and the vast majority transition successfully into the civilian world, their lives having been enormously enriched by their time in service. However, some need additional support, and it is these most vulnerable people that Forces in Mind Trust exists to help.

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