

Policy Summary: Employment support

The [Understanding the Transition from Military to Civilian Life report](#) (2025) identifies areas within Defence where in-career transition preparation could be strengthened to help ensure all serving personnel and their families experience a successful transition into civilian life and can achieve positive employment outcomes. Whilst we know the majority of Service personnel and their families make a successful transition, some do not. This report estimated the total cost of poor transition to government and the third sector in 2025 to be approximately £258m¹, with unemployment making up £46m of this cost.

This report highlights the positive changes that have been implemented to support and improve employment outcomes for ex-Service personnel. The Career Transition Partnership (CTP) has been modernised, with personnel now auto-enrolled along with improved online advice and lifelong access. In addition, Defence continues to invest in training and qualifications to help better translate Service skills to the civilian labour market. This includes the Veterans' Career Development Fund, the Defence Holistic Transition Policy and the Digital Skills for Defence transformation programme. The Government-led 'Great Place to Work for Veterans' initiative was also launched UK-wide in 2020 to encourage more veterans to join the Civil Service when they leave the Armed Forces. In the wider employment support sector, Op ASCEND, a Government-backed employment scheme, supports veterans and their families to grow their careers after service, offering one-to-one support and introductions to potential employers.

Strengthening employment support is beneficial for both Defence and civilian employers. Service personnel offer many in-demand transferable skills, such as leadership, problem solving, teamwork and communication, and specialised skills such as project management as well as risk and data analysis. Investment in these skills in-service can also improve retention and productivity for Defence capability. Future transition policy and support will need to adapt to the potential for military careers to be less linear and more interspersed with civilian or Reserve employment, as Defence increases emphasis on the Strategic Reserve and potentially adopts a 'zig-zag' careers approach.

The report found that of the Service leavers who engage with CTP support and reported their employment outcomes, 88% are employed within six months of leaving the Armed Forces. The report also found that the transition support available is focused on gaining employment. Whilst significant improvements have been made in this area, not all ex-Service personnel and their families achieve successful employment outcomes, with certain cohorts more likely to struggle than others. **In-career transition preparation should be strengthened** so all personnel and their families can find **employment that is suitable and sustainable**. There should be **targeted help for those individuals who are identified as needing additional support**. Barriers such as skills translation gaps, uneven in-career preparation, and employer perceptions can lead to underemployment and weaker career progression after service.

Policy Issues:



Underemployment and uneven progression

Most veterans secure work after leaving service. However, in some instances, they can enter roles that are below their skill level, leading to unsuitable and unsustainable employment.

Previous research has also identified that whilst most ex-Service personnel maintain employment over time, not all are satisfied with their civilian job or career, often citing lack of career progression, not being the right fit or being over-skilled in the role as reasons for the lack of satisfaction.



In-career preparation, timing and notice constraints

Some Service leavers do not undertake adequate in-career transition preparation. Reasons for this could include high work demands and high workload, lack of Chain of Command support, or having no immediate intention to leave. This can lead to missing deadlines for entitlements and missing out on available support. In some cases, such as when medically discharged, the sign-off period for serving personnel may happen swiftly and suddenly. This can compress timescales for preparation for resettlement and access to available support mechanisms before leaving the Armed Forces, which can impact employment outcomes.



Lack of localised cohort-specific support

Certain cohorts, such as women, ethnic minorities, non-UK personnel, disabled veterans, Early Service Leavers, and older leavers, can experience additional challenges when attempting to gain employment, highlighting that current support is not comprehensively meeting the needs of all Service leavers.

It is acknowledged that employment opportunities vary by region and devolved administrations, and Service personnel and their families can struggle to prepare for transition effectively if they are not aware of the local labour markets.



Lack of employer awareness and understanding of transferable skills

Despite progress with employers signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant and an increase in businesses becoming award holders of the Defence Employers Recognition Scheme, some organisations are still unaware of the benefits and transferable skills veterans can bring. There remains a persistent problem with employers' perceptions of veterans, including a view that they lack commercial experience. Due to a lack of understanding and awareness of veterans' transferable skills, veterans can be screened out early on during recruitment processes despite meeting the relevant and basic criteria for a job role.

Financial incentive schemes available to organisations for hiring veterans, such as the National Insurance Contribution Relief, are also often underused.



Inconsistent tracking of employment outcomes

There is a lack of research and data on longer-term employment outcomes, with data largely limited to two-years post service. In addition, CTP data only captures those who engage with services provided by CTP. Short-horizon metrics and fragmented tracking make it hard to understand long-term employment outcomes. A lack of robust data also reduces the ability to interpret who benefits from which support and where additional support may be required.



Lack of employment support for partners

Whilst some support is available for families, employment support primarily focuses on serving and ex-serving personnel, with less support for partners and the wider family.

In addition, families can often receive transition guidance and support indirectly, and in some cases, it is inaccessible behind firewalls. This results in families receiving relevant information via the serving person, which can lead to gaps in information or misinformation.

Policy Recommendations:



Reframe measures of success

Up until recently, the definition of a successful transition focused on whether the individual was in employment or not. This does not always provide a holistic picture. Different measures of success should be considered to improve data collation and the ability to interpret successful employment. This can be achieved by shifting measurements from employment within 6-months to career sustainability, progression measures and extending measures beyond the current two-year remit.



Targeted localised support for specific cohorts

Cohort-specific support should be introduced both pre- and post-leaving service in order to ensure those who may face additional challenges are provided with targeted and relevant support systems and services. The support required should be developed both through qualitative and quantitative data and regularly reviewed to ensure it is appropriate and useful to those in need.

In addition to the regional employment fairs and centres that are facilitated by CTP, a more localised approach to guidance and support should be administered, such as linking to local employers and training, to ensure effective transition preparation can be undertaken and expectations are managed.



Improved in-career preparation and emphasis

To normalise preparation and improve employment outcomes, Defence could consider further incentivising existing briefings or support to ensure every Service person understands their entitlements before giving notice, with access to CTP modules and warm handovers for those identified as requiring additional support.

Serving personnel should be encouraged to take active personal responsibility for preparing for civilian life, including understanding the realities of civilian life, and making the most of available training and education opportunities (including life skills training and gaining relevant qualifications) so they can find appropriate employment upon leaving the Armed Forces.



Coherent data tracking

Considerations should be made to introduce longitudinal tracking of employment outcomes over an extended period of time to obtain reliable, disaggregated and more nuanced employment data. To ensure robust data is formulated and is able to highlight where further interventions may be required, the data should be broken down by gender, ethnicity, and Service background, with additional consideration given to what data collation would be most feasible and beneficial.

Data collation should be centred around the ability to interpret successful and sustainable employment outcomes, with datasets collected and shared end-to-end across MOD, CTP and support services.



Strengthen employer engagement

To help improve employers' understanding and bridge the translation of military-specific skills, practical toolkits could be implemented and used. Considerations should also be made to ascertain if it is feasible to make civilian internships and placements more routinely accessible and available to serving personnel (not just Service leavers).

In 2021, the Government introduced a 12-month National Insurance Contribution relief programme for employers hiring veterans into their first role after Service. This tax incentive gave businesses potential savings of up to £6,200 per employee, while also allowing them to benefit from the skills and experience veterans bring. This relief has been extended until April 2026; the report highlights that take-up of this service has been relatively low. Further awareness of the transferable skills veterans possess and of the scheme itself would incentivise businesses to use the scheme proactively.



Improved employment support for partners

Employment support and guidance should be more accessible to all end-users, both in terms of readability and accessibility. This includes making relevant documentation available to families outside MOD firewalls where appropriate, and ensuring materials are written in clear, military-jargon-free language. This would enable serving personnel and their families to proactively understand transition policy and engage with available support for employment, empowering them to take personal responsibility for preparing for transition into civilian life. This would help facilitate and embed a whole family approach to transition.

¹ However, this could vary between £63 million and £546 million depending on how individuals experience the negative outcomes (e.g. severity of symptoms, whether they seek help, the type of treatment they receive). This does not include costs to individuals or private businesses.